

Community Sports Coach Scheme Case Study

Case study profile

A case study examining the impact of the Community Sports Coach Scheme (CSCS) from a National Governing Body perspective. It focuses specifically on Gymnastics and the impact of the CSCS on developing career pathways for coaches, the integration with other development programmes and the benefit of effective partnership working.

Area

National context with a specific focus on Hampshire

Project description and background

“CSCs have made a significant difference to an increase in participation over the last year. We have more after school clubs and new community sessions than before.”

National Development Officer - PESSCL, British Gymnastics

Almost 300 new satellite clubs linked to accredited British Gymnastics clubs have been established through the PE and School Sport Club Links (PESSCL) scheme during 2004/05. British Gymnastics' PESSCL target was for 18,900 young people to be in accredited clubs by March 2005. Actual participation stands at over 43,000 young people. In addition, there are an estimated 10,000 young people benefiting from the project to date that are not currently full members of clubs but have received quality gymnastics experiences.

This level of success is largely attributed to the employment of 68 Community Sports Coaches (CSCs) working with clubs and schools alongside volunteers and teachers, providing a catalyst for new activity. The Community Sports Coach Scheme (CSCS), particularly through paid full-time posts, has made a significant impact by enabling the expansion of clubs within existing facilities as well as the creation of satellite sessions in the local community by 'freeing up' and developing more high quality coaches during the crucial 'twilight period' from 3pm to 6pm.

Within gymnastics, there has been a long identified need for full-time coaches. Historically, the majority of gymnastics coaches have been voluntary and as such, work commitments have often made it difficult for them to coach during the 'twilight period'. The additional resource and availability of professional coaches through the CSCS to deliver after school coaching sessions, is considered crucial for meeting British Gymnastics' development objectives and to drive participation and performance nationally. British Gymnastics strongly recognises the role of full-time CSCs in supporting delivery of its Whole Sport Plan (WSP).

There are currently 68 gymnastics CSCs across the country (21 full-time, 42 part-time and 5 trampolining CSCs) making a significant impact on school club links. British Gymnastics part funds 40 CSCs, with the level of funding ranging from £750 to £5,000 per post.

In terms of funding, where the CSC is directly involved in school club links, British Gymnastics' contribution is funded by PESSCL grants. Other partnership funding for CSCs comes from the New Opportunities Fund, Clubs and local authorities.

Strategic fit

British Gymnastics emphasised the importance of CSC deployment being in line with local, regional and national strategic aims and objectives such as British Gymnastics' WSP, World Class Plan and four-year Regional Development Plans, as well as County Sports Partnership (CSP) strategies and School Sport Co-ordinator (SSCo) Partnership development plans.

“(CSCS is) an excellent opportunity to raise the level of participation in gymnastics and provide youngsters with a grounding in fundamental movement skills.”

**Regional
Development Officer,
British Gymnastics**

British Gymnastics has identified five models in line with the Long Term Athlete Development (LTAD) framework for the sport, which reflect how CSCs can impact on development and achieve best fit with the WSP:

- FUNdamentals coach
- Key Skills coach
- Capacity Building coach
- Talent Link coach
- Gymnastics Support Specialist.

It is possible for the role of a CSC to encompass delivery across these models, with the different models constituting a career pathway. For example, a Talent Link coach may mentor a Capacity Building coach, a Key Skills coach may mentor a FUNdamentals coach. In addition to developing a career pathway for coaches, the main emphasis is for CSCs to increase participation levels and enjoyment of the sport at a grass roots level, as well as to encourage continuing participation within a club environment by:

- supporting gymnasts in their progression along the player pathway from grassroots to elite performance by creating new opportunities for children to participate in gymnastics and increasing the numbers participating in the sport
- providing a sound basis of athlete development for all sports and giving opportunities for talented gymnasts to continue up the gymnastics pathway but also retain the opportunity to take part in other sports and activities, in line with the LTAD model for the sport
- facilitating school-club links through developing partnerships between local schools and clubs and by providing a mentoring role to volunteer coaches and teachers
- supporting schools in delivering gymnastics within the curriculum, specifically working alongside teachers at Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2
- supporting talent identification
- supporting coaches' personal development. CSCs mentor new coaches to support the club structure. For their own personal development, the CSCs may in turn be mentored by a senior coach at the club on sports specific or technical development.

Continuous Professional Development (CPD)

British Gymnastics organised a two-day CSC Conference at Lilleshall on 12 May 2005, attended by 45 out of a total of 68 gymnastics CSCs. Day 1 focused on generic update sessions covering areas such as UK Coaching Certificate, Teachers and Helpers Award and Volunteer Strategy. Day 2 focused more specifically on CPD with CSCs able to attend either two 3-hour courses or one 6-hour course:

3 hour training modules

Helpers Award Tutor Training

A Guide to Mentoring Sports Coaches

Analysing Your Coaching

Child Protection Awareness

Talent Identification workshop

6 hour training modules

Working in Schools

Involving young disabled people

Tutor training for new British Gymnastics teachers awards

It is anticipated that this event will be run once or twice a year. The key aim of the conference is to provide the CSCs with additional professional development and information to help them in their roles to further raise the quality of coaching delivery. A secondary aim is to give CSCs from all parts of the country the opportunity to meet, share ideas and good practice. Individual coaches will help to deliver the sessions, which, in turn, will help with their own professional development.

CSC feedback on the conference has been extremely positive. It also highlighted that CSCS and the sports coach UK Coach Development Officer (CDO) initiatives are perceived to have significantly enhanced the support received by coaches at a local level, which will in turn have a greater impact in participation levels in the sport. CSCs commented that they feel part of a team and that increased commitment to their CPD is improving the overall quality of their coaching. Support was previously only available from voluntary committees as well as British Gymnastics Regional Development Officers (RDOs) who were only able to offer limited support directly to the coaches.

The role of the CSC at a local level and the impact of the CSCS are demonstrated by an example from Hampshire.

Hamble Community Sports College/Dynamo School of Gymnastics

Debbie Hampton, a CSC within the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Sports Partnership area, was the first full-time gymnastics coach in the country to be employed under the scheme. The CSC post is part-funded by Hamble Community Sports College and Dynamo School of Gymnastics and is linked to the establishment of a high performance centre at the school. The Dynamo School of Gymnastics is a high performance club based in the South Region working with local schools and developing community links, using the CSCS, CSP and SSP structures.

"(Before) I'd always be thinking of money and where it was going to come from which was difficult. (Now as a CSC) I feel more professional I'm no longer juggling too many balls at once (previously) something was always sacrificed."

CSC

The CSC is involved at all stages of the player development pathway from FUNDamentals through taster sessions in local primary schools, to talent identification and high performance coaching of an Olympic athlete. She is also involved in coach and teacher development together with mentoring young leaders/helpers.

Key achievements

The impact of the full-time professional CSC in Hamble in Year 1 can be summarised by the following examples:

- over 700 young people have benefited from high quality coaching through the scheme since April 2004
- there have been 18 new qualified coaches aged between 15 years and 40 years, increasing the local resource pool of quality coaches
- four pre-school centres have been established
- five new after school clubs are in operation with clear pathways to the Dynamo School of Gymnastics - around 200 children participate at these after school clubs
- a Gifted and Talented programme is in operation ensuring that elite gymnasts are able to balance training with school work
- Helpers' Award courses for 12-16 year old students have been delivered by the CSC as part of Step Into Sport
- there are close links between Dynamo School of Gymnastics and Hamble SSP to mutual benefit
- qualitative feedback highlights that there is increased confidence and ability among primary teachers to deliver gymnastics
- there have been positive effects on a group of under-achieving young people by raising their skill levels, improving behaviour, confidence and motivation. This was highlighted through monitoring pupil progress within the Hamble SSP, supported within the Test Valley School Gymnastics Development Report 2004/05
- talent identification has taken place with Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 pupils
- data recording systems created – RDO commented that professional coaches are better able to prepare and provide necessary information on participation than volunteer coaches who do not have dedicated time to do so.

The following outcomes have been achieved which will aid long-term sustainability of the scheme:

- the number of coaches has increased, ensuring that clubs are able to operate

- there has been mentoring of coaches by the most experienced coaches
- there is a close working relationship between club and schools
- primary teachers' skill levels in delivery of gymnastics has increased.

Key success factors

Experienced, high quality coach appointed

It is imperative to recruit the right person into the role and it is widely acknowledged that the CSC has been an excellent appointment, reinforced by her receiving the Sport England Community Sports Coach of the Year Award 2005.

The CSC has been coaching for 28 years and has the experience to deliver from grass roots to high performance level as well as to support and mentor other coaches.

The CSC's increased profile due to the local publicity following her recent award has led to an increase in participant numbers, which reflects the impact of delivering quality coaching.

Good channels of communication

There is regular communication between all partners, with details of British Gymnastics national development initiatives cascading to the club and CSC via the RDO. There is a good day-to-day dialogue between the CSC, club and sports college. The Director of Coaching at Hamble Community Sports College acts as the CSC's line manager. The Director of Coaching plays a key role in ensuring that the CSC's work programme is realistic and deliverable and that the priority objectives of each partner organisation are being met.

On starting in post, the emphasis was on the CSC to raise awareness of her role among schools within the SSP area. A marketing mail-shot was sent to representatives at all schools introducing the CSC, explaining her role and highlighting the areas in which she could support schools at both primary and secondary level. In addition, the CSC was supported by the PDM for the Hamble SSP, setting up meetings with School Sport Co-ordinators (SSCOs) and Primary Link Teachers (PLTs) to further aid promotion.

Effective support infrastructure

British Gymnastics provides support for gymnastics specific development to CSCs through its RDO network and the CSC meets with the RDO on an informal needs basis, as well as through recent organisation of a national conference. There is no formal annual budget allocation but funding is made available by the RDO, as required.

There is a strong existing infrastructure at Dynamo School of Gymnastics, which has helped with wider coach development. Many of the volunteer coaches are ex-competitors who have progressed through the club structure and competed at high level, which means they are able to empathise with the young gymnasts they are working with. Volunteer coaching has also provided

"Support from British Gymnastics has been invaluable, particularly in relation to the role and support from the RDO."

CSC

".. the financial contribution (through CSCS) has been invaluable, there is less emphasis on fundraising and (the club) can concentrate more on coaching."

the opportunity for ex-gymnasts to stay involved in the sport once they have stopped actively competing.

Club base at a school site

Strong links have been facilitated between the SSP and Dynamo School of Gymnastics due to its location at the high performance centre on the Hamble Community Sports College campus.

The co-location arrangement has benefited youngsters in their progression from participation in a school to a club environment. Children gain assurance and confidence through familiarity with the coaches and the facility. This has also afforded teachers the opportunity to observe coaching taking place and to improve their own ability to deliver curriculum gymnastics classes.

In addition, there is a wide range of facilities available at Hamble Community Sports College, including a swimming pool, sports hall, tennis courts and playing fields. This provides young gymnasts with the opportunity to play and experience other sports, which aligns with the LTAD model for the sport, and ensures that children focusing on gymnastics retain the choice to transfer to other sports as they grow older.

Strategic approach

The aims and objectives for the CSC delivery plan were developed very much in line with local, regional and national strategic priorities, ensuring a targeted and structured approach to development from all partners. Clear targets were also established against which performance can be effectively measured and assessed.

For example, under-achievers and those with low self-esteem had been identified as key target groups within Hamble SSP. The CSC has focused specific areas of coaching to address these issues at Test Valley School.

Lessons learnt

A number of lessons have been learned in the first year of delivery. These are summarised below:

Initial lack of awareness

Despite letters being sent and meetings with SSCos/PLTs, there was initially a slow uptake of coaching by primary schools. It is thought that promotion via the Headteachers Forum may have been a more effective way of raising general awareness. However, direct methods, such as telephoning schools, have also proven successful in raising awareness, with increased demand from schools that have since seen and/or heard of the impact and benefits of the CSCs work.

Sustainability

British Gymnastics recognises the importance of ensuring long-term sustainability and the funding of each CSC position is reviewed on a case-by-case basis. Dynamo School of Gymnastics is also addressing sustainability and securing additional income through after-school sessions. These are charged at £2.50 per individual per session, although the pricing policy is

sensitive to the needs of those from disadvantaged backgrounds and the club may reduce fees accordingly.

Rural issues

Some difficulties, mainly in relation to time and transport outreach issues, have been experienced due to the fact that Hamble SSP operates across a rural area. These issues have, in turn, reduced coaching delivery time due to the significant amount of travel required. Identifying gymnastics clubs situated in the more rural areas and providing support to club coaches at FUNdamentals level has helped to overcome these barriers.

Continuous Professional Development

The CSC emphasised the importance of gaining experience as a volunteer prior to becoming a professional coach. She believes that this is a key phase in coach development, which enables people to gain necessary experience as well as to fully appreciate the demands of the role in terms of long unsociable hours and the high levels of commitment required.

British Gymnastics and the PDM believe that CSCs have a key role to play in the development of voluntary community coaches and teachers. For example, it would be considered beneficial for Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs) to work in partnership with coaches to support their development, increase their confidence and interest in the sport.

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