

Community Sports Coach Scheme Case Study

Case study profile

A case study examining the establishment of a structured continuous professional development programme for Community Sports Coaches (CSCs) based on work-based learning and a targeted training course for coach managers.

Area

Hampshire and Isle of Wight

Project description

Fourteen full-time Community Sports Coaches (CSCs) are currently working across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight (as at April 2005), for a range of employing agencies, from local authorities to School Sport Partnerships to sports clubs.

“Through the partnership and through the personal development that I’ve had, I think I’ve become far more professional.”

The Hampshire & Isle of Wight Sports Partnership (the CSP) is the lead co-ordinator for the Community Sports Coach Scheme (CSCS) and has put systems in place for the recruitment, employment, management and development of coaches. The CSP is working closely with external employing agencies to assist them in meeting required standards and providing support that will ensure that the coaches they employ are high quality professionals working in an environment in which Continuous Professional Development (CPD) is a recognised priority.

CSC

The CSP was mindful from the outset that the diverse range of employing agencies would involve different employment structures and that this would potentially present challenges. In view of this, systems have been set up which provide sufficient flexibility to suit a sports club with limited existing internal systems as well as a local authority with more established human resources policies, practices and wider CPD opportunities.

“We didn’t want to hijack and overtake what some of our employing partners would do, but likewise we wanted to try and maintain some consistency with regard to what coaches were offered.”

**Coaching Development Officer
Hampshire & Isle of Wight Sports Partnership**

A clear rationale and partnership approach

Although all employing agencies involved in the CSCS are required to make a formal commitment to providing CPD for their coaches, the Partnership acknowledged that fulfilment of this commitment would be a key challenge for some organisations. The CSP therefore assumed responsibility for driving forward a structured CPD programme, readily accessible by all CSCs.

This type of approach has enabled the employing agencies to commit to the CPD of their coaches by ensuring that they are signed up to a central programme. As coach managers they have direct responsibility for the management of their coaches, yet some felt that they did not have the required knowledge or expertise in a particular sport to best improve and develop that coach. The central programme therefore aims to provide a base level of support for the coaches that the managers can build upon, and specific 'coach manager training' is also in place to 'up-skill' the managers to ensure that they better understand and take responsibility for coach development.

From an early stage it was clear to the CSP that there would be significant benefits from working closely in conjunction with the sports coach UK Coach Development Officer (CDO), Paul Bickerton. The CDO has played a lead role alongside Sophie Barratt, Partnership Services Officer (now County Sports Partnership Coaching Development Officer (CSP CDO), in designing the training and development programme for CSCs. The CDO's specialist and complementary expertise has proven invaluable and has ensured development of a good practice framework in line with the sports coach UK Developing Coaches Process.

Course structure and content

"The key part of it is actually not what they do within those training days but how they pull what they get from that training day into their coaching."

**sports coach
UK CDO**

Although the CPD programme comprises a set number of training days, the approach seeks to reinforce the idea of work-based learning and to move away from a culture in which coaches attend training sessions but do not maximise potential links and benefits to their day-to-day coaching activity.

The programme is structured around quarterly meetings that impart information to the coaches but the key message relates to the importance of self-reflection following every coaching session to support and drive continual improvement. Only by analysing the delivery of each session can a coach build on, change and improve and really add value to their coaching.

"I always use the example of passing your driving test and driving a car with coaches. You may have that slip of paper that says that you can go out and drive but where do you really learn to drive? It's actually when you're out on the road doing it. Coaching is exactly the same. Where do you really learn to coach? Well, you get the knowledge and information on the course and in training but it's when you put it into practice that you really develop and learn as a coach."

sports coach UK CDO

CSCs have recently completed the full annual CPD programme, which is made up of quarterly training sessions, each three hours in duration, delivered in year one as follows:

Session 1: Introduction to the Developing Coaches Process

The first training session involves a step-by-step introduction to the Developing Coaches Process and focuses on carrying out a Training Needs Analysis (TNA) and setting a Personal Development Plan (PDP) to

ensure that each coach has a detailed understanding of the tools, the process and the benefits.

Session 2: Defining high quality coaching

The second session examines how best to define high quality coaching. Different areas of coaching delivery are evaluated in detail to identify those aspects that constitute high quality coaching and to isolate specific elements that coaches can focus and improve upon.

The CDO highlighted that there is a tendency for people to assume that a good coaching session is one where they can see a group of participants clearly enjoying themselves.

“There’s an awful lot more to coaching than just ensuring that the kids have fun because you’re actually leading on their development. I think there is a slight danger that people see coaching as setting sessions up, getting the kids going and that’s it; when actually what we’re talking about is coaching where you put the right format and structure in place but you’re really looking at progression.”

sports coach UK CDO

One of the identified strengths of CSCS in Hampshire is believed to be the number of experienced, high level coaches now employed through the programme. This provides great confidence that there is high quality coaching delivered by a team of coaches at grass roots level, a key stage for young people.

Feedback from gymnasts from the Dynamo School of Gymnastics highlighted that the coaching they received gave them great confidence by breaking down complex skills into stages or ‘building blocks’. The gymnasts clearly enjoy the coaching environment and spoke positively about the way in which the coaches actively encourage them to raise any points they want to talk through at any time.

“Particularly in gymnastics I felt that we could be quite useful in preparing other athletes for other sports. They don’t have to be gymnasts if they come to a gymnastic club but it is a good starting point to develop these athletes into anything that they want to be.”

Session 3: Long Term Athlete Development

The third session covers the principles of the Long Term Athlete Development (LTAD) model. It emphasises the importance of acknowledging that all coaching experiences contribute to a player’s overall development in sport and encourages coaches to take a long-term view of the children they are coaching.

CSC Debbie Hampton coaches high performance gymnasts as well as at a grass roots level but emphasised the importance of covering fundamental skills, such as ball skills, to give young people the opportunity to experience other activities and to choose what they wish to specialise in.

CSC

“Unless you provide them with opportunities to widen their sporting experience at a young age, then I think you are doing them an injustice. It has to be realistic to recognise that there’s only one British Champion, there’s only one Olympic Champion, so children should be given the opportunity to excel in as many areas as they can. If they choose to

specialise in one of those then you actually have a very happy, self-motivated gymnast or athlete.”

CSC

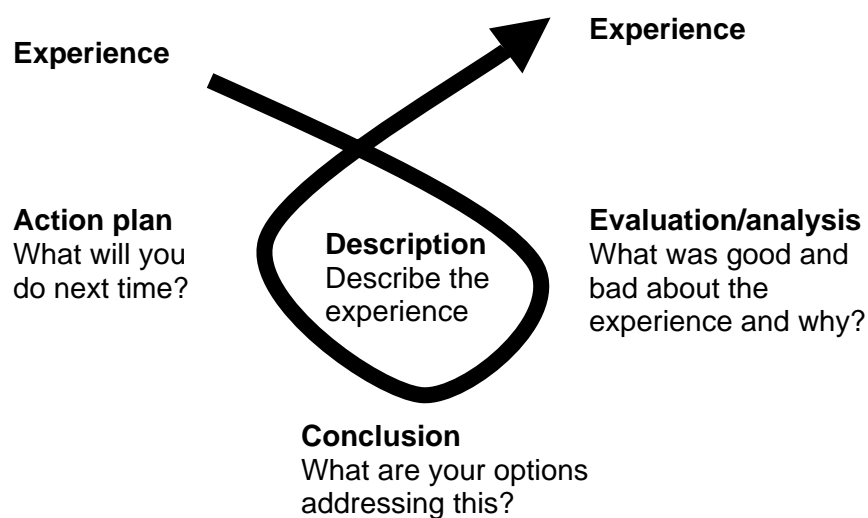
Session 4: Practical session

“A coach may go into a session and try something that doesn’t work too well but if they self reflect on it carefully and think about how they are going to change it and improve it, then for me that is high quality coaching.”

**sports coach
UK CDO**

The final part of the course aims to pull together much of the theory covered in the preceding three workshops. It is a practical session with a strong emphasis on self-reflection.

Coaches are divided up into groups and asked to deliver part of a coaching session (20 minutes), which is observed by the other coaches. Each coach is then taken through the **self-reflection cycle**:



“Certainly the feedback I’ve had is that (the coaches) have gone away with an awful lot of ideas. I don’t think they have ever been challenged to this degree about looking at themselves as a coach and how they can improve.”

**Coaching
Development
Officer,
Hampshire & Isle
of Wight Sports
Partnership**

A key objective of the session is to get coaches into the habit of analysing their coaching and looking critically at areas they could improve. The use of self-reflection techniques underpins continuous coach development, which ultimately benefits participants through raising the standards of the coaching they receive.

“At the end of that session, we had coaches walking around the room with their Performance Development Plan in place, saying right I’m going to come and watch you, could you come and watch me, and writing it down in that plan. Suddenly I was thinking to myself, yep, this is a concrete example that they are taking what they have learnt in those quarterly meetings and that they are starting to pull them out as a team and work together in sessions out there.”

sports coach UK CDO

Focus on horizontal development

The overall CPD programme focuses specifically on ‘horizontal’ coach development and covers generic coaching concepts and soft skills such as communication techniques, questioning skills and the giving of praise. Technical ‘vertical’ development for CSCs is very much seen as an area of responsibility for each respective National Governing Body.

Funding and sustainability

Although the Partnership set aside budget provision to fund the CPD delivery for Year 1, the programme will need to become self-funding going forward. Since there is an allocated amount within each CSCS application for coach training and development, it is envisaged that employing agencies will buy in to this service in the future.

The CSP CDO believes that there is a need to move away from a culture in which courses are often free of charge and for coaches and coach managers to assess how to most effectively spend the training budget in support of PDP objectives.

It is envisaged that introducing a cost may encourage employing agencies to make a formal commitment to ensuring their CSC attends all CPD sessions.

Key achievements

The CSCS has made a significant impact by enabling a shift towards the employment of professional coaches at a grass roots level and thereby improving the overall standard of coaching delivery in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. Although it is recognised that there is a high degree of quality coaching at a voluntary level, it was emphasised that the deployment of professional coaches ensures greater consistency and allows more robust monitoring of activity.

“The CSCS is being able to say that we’ve got a base set of standards that means we can ensure that we have a high quality team of coaches deployed throughout the Partnership...”

sports coach UK Coach Development Officer

Implementing the Developing Coaches Process

One of the CDO’s key objectives was for all 14 CSCs to have gone through a TNA and put a PDP in place and this has been achieved.

Coach Managers are encouraged to hold monthly one-to-one meetings with their CSC as well as to meet more formally on a six monthly basis to monitor progress against stated objectives within their PDP, highlight potential barriers to achievement and identify areas in which the coach may need additional support.

The CSC at Hamble Community Sports College indicated that one of the things she has found most useful was the quality time she has spent with the CDO. She appreciated the effort that the CDO had made to observe her coaching in her own environment and to work with her in using self-reflection to identify key areas that she could improve on.

The structure of the training programme has also enabled coaches from different sports and disciplines to work alongside one another. The CSC commented that she had found the teamwork with other sports coaches particularly useful:

“(Paul) actually helped me to look at my own strengths and weaknesses and provide some sort of framework for me to start to improve in my own personal qualities.”

CSC

“When you get to work with people from other sports, ... it opens you up to different ways of doing things and maybe stops you from being so insular. I always think it allows you to further develop as an individual.”

CSC

Coach Manager Training

The organisation of training for Coach Managers was seen as a high priority by the CSP.

In order to effectively fulfil line management responsibilities, it was considered essential that CSC Coach Managers clearly understood the underlying principles and practical implementation of the Developing Coaches Process and how they could input valuably into the TNA and PDP process.

The Partnership has seen a significant variation in the level of support required by Coach Managers at different employing agencies. Individuals new to this type of position have engaged fully in the process and readily accepted all training the CSP has been able to offer whilst others have been more confident of the requirements of the role and have ‘sat outside the loop’.

Progression to coach mentoring in Year 2

During the second year of the Scheme, the focus of the CPD programme will be to train CSCs as coach mentors. It is considered imperative that CSCs have completed the first year training module and had the opportunity to focus on their own personal development before supporting the development of others.

The network of CSCs is seen to have a key role in assisting the CDO in the wider implementation of the Developing Coaches Process and enhancing CPD opportunities for a greater number of local coaches.

Key success factors

The delivery of the CSCS in Hampshire and Isle of Wight has identified a number of factors that have contributed to the success of the Scheme to date.

Joint working between CSP and CDO

The CDO and CSP CDO seized the opportunity to map out and align their work programmes to maximise impact and opportunities for joint working. Both confirmed the value of a centrally coordinated CPD programme to enhance the benefits to CSCs.

Joint working between the CDO and CSP CDO has been highlighted as a key factor driving the success of the programme to date.

The CDO considered that the *“real success of the CPD programme lies in the way the CSP had a good understanding that the sports coach uk CDO could lead on pulling a programme together for the development of these coaches so that an employer would say ‘right, I’m going to commit to the CPD of my coach by ensuring that they are on that CPD programme’.”*

The CDO is considered an integral part of the CSP team and is centrally based within the Hampshire & Isle of Wight Sports Partnership office, which allows him to catch up formally and informally with colleagues and partners

The CSP CDO attends each of the quarterly CPD workshops to keep in touch with the CSCs, how they are getting on and how the CPD element of their work is progressing

Team Coach Concept

The Partnership has played a major role in fostering a ‘sense of team’. An induction day was organised for all Coach Managers and CSCs. This session provided a good opportunity to clearly establish roles and responsibilities from the outset.

A key message continually reinforced throughout the induction was the fact that the CSCs were very much a team deployed across the Partnership as opposed to coaches working in isolation and that there was a strong support network in place.

“It was good to have the managers there, the new coaches ... and everybody just did get a real flavour of what the programme was trying to achieve. It ironed out some of those roles and responsibility type issues so people knew that essentially although we were looking after the CPD, we weren’t necessarily going to be doing it all and that it was their responsibility as managers to be taking on some of that as well.”

Coaching Development Officer Hampshire & Isle of Wight Sports Partnership

The quarterly CPD meetings have provided regular opportunities to bring the coaches together as a collective group and team-building exercises have formed an integral part of each session. The CDO commented that over the course of the year the CSCs have visibly started to work together more and more.

Coaching issues

Coaching specific success factors include:

- the value of using self reflection techniques to enhance the development of coaches, linked to the TNA and PDP process
- the importance of the use of Fundamentals within coaching sessions to ensure wide opportunities to young people attending sessions

- the inclusion of generic coaching concepts for CSCs looking at delivery across a variety of different sports.

Lessons learnt

A number of lessons have been learnt over the past 12 months, the first year in post for CSCs, the CDO and the initial roll out of the CPD programme.

Full-time versus part-time coaches

A structured programme based on attendance at quarterly meetings works well with full-time coaches who have greater flexibility in dedicating non-coaching time to training commitments. However, it is recognised that since part-time coaches work variable hours throughout the week, it is more difficult to draw them together for a meaningful CPD session.

As a minimum, part-time coaches are supported in carrying out a TNA and establishing a PDP but there is a greater responsibility on the coach and Coach Manager to ensure that training needs are addressed.

Levels of attendance

Although the CPD programme has been well attended, one or two CSCs have not taken part and some coaches have not been present at all four workshops. The aim is to progress to full attendance by all coaches at all sessions. With coaches making the transition to full-time professional coaching, there is believed to be a need to reinforce the importance of prioritising CPD and setting aside dedicated non-coaching time within their work programme for training.

Similarly, not all line managers have attended the Coach Manager training course. It is believed that more experienced managers may have decided that attending introductory training would not be worthwhile but this is likely to mean that they lack awareness of new techniques such as the Developing Coaches Process. The Partnership is proposing to make attendance a mandatory requirement for all successful CSCS applicants.

Course structure and delivery

Due to a number of factors (time pressures and staggered start dates for CSCs), Coach Manager Training did not take place before CSCs attended their first quarterly CPD workshop. It is considered important for Coach Managers to be trained in the Developing Coaches Process before CSCs are introduced to TNAs and PDPs so that they are in a position to offer necessary support.

Enhancing two-way dialogue with employing agencies

Limited feedback has been received from Coach Managers to date. For example, employing organisations were given the opportunity to provide additional comments within the CSCS Annual Report submitted by the Partnership but very few completed this section. The Partnership is keen to improve the exchange of information and may look to provide structured prompts in the annual report rather than an open response style approach.

Improved communication with NGBs

Since the central CPD programme focuses on 'horizontal development', the importance of close communication with NGBs is recognised to ensure CSCs are able to access opportunities for 'vertical' development.

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Coaching recipients x 3
(Aged 6 to 11 years)