



Ipswich Borough Council – Club Development

Ipswich Borough Council is offering significant discounts to clubs with the Sport England Clubmark accreditation, and also provides a programme of support to help more clubs achieve it.

The Sport England Clubmark is used by national governing bodies of sport as part of their club accreditation programmes for sports clubs with junior sections in recognition of a quality club. By creating a single, national standard, Clubmark helps give all kinds of sports clubs a structure and direction that will benefit them in many ways.

The Clubmark status is normally only awarded through national governing bodies (NGBs) of sport, but a pilot project in Suffolk to help clubs whose NGBs are not yet taking part in the scheme is proving a success.

In Ipswich, clubs who achieve the accreditation also get a 50 per cent discount on facilities and hire charges from Ipswich Borough Council in a scheme which benefits both the clubs and the council.

Adam Keer is Club Development Officer at Ipswich Borough Council and is working with a number of clubs towards achieving Clubmark status. “The financial benefits to clubs in Ipswich are significant, but the other benefits the Clubmark brings are also very valuable,” he explains.

“Going through the Clubmark accreditation leads to well rounded clubs with formalised management processes, codes of conduct and better qualified and informed coaches and volunteers, which is what clubs need to bring in more resources and members. It makes clubs look at everything they do rather than just concentrating on what they’re good at. There is a lot of support on offer to help clubs work towards it.”

Clubs are also encouraged to improve their relationships with local schools and there is help available to develop links which in turn help to generate members. Being able to provide qualified coaches helps with schools liaison, which is another reason why training is such an important part of the Clubmark process. “Just because someone is good at a sport doesn’t mean that they make a good coach,” Adam explains. “Everyone has been eager to take up the training – there’s been no resistance at all.”

Although the list of criteria to be met to achieve Clubmark status can seem daunting, Adam’s experience of working on the process with clubs in a range of different sports has shown him that in many cases the clubs are well on the way to meeting required standards, but need to provide the paperwork to prove it, which is where his support can make a real difference.

“It can seem bureaucratic at first glance, but when I’m working with a club you often find it’s just a case of teasing out the right information and putting it on



the right form. It can be really useful to look at good examples from other clubs who have already been through the process.”

A total of 25 clubs are going through the Clubmark process in Ipswich at the moment, 11 of them through the pilot project. “We’re working with all the clubs to help them achieve the accreditation,” says Adam. “Better quality clubs are good for Ipswich as they mean improved community health provision, get lots of volunteers involved in local activities and provide a safe and healthy environment for young people. We’ve got major sporting facilities here which need good clubs to use them and it’s great to have nationally recognised clubs in the town.”