

Community Sports Coach Scheme Case Study

Case study profile

This case study highlights the impact of coaching delivery by a Community Sports Coach in the London Borough of Waltham Forest, highlighting the career development pathway of a volunteer coach moving into paid, full-time employment. It also demonstrates effective partnership working between a local authority, specialist sports college and School Sports Federation.

Area

London

Project description and background

The Community Sports Coach Scheme (CSCS) presented the London Borough of Waltham Forest with the opportunity to obtain funding for a full-time coaching post to assist in the achievement of the Borough's sports development objectives and to benefit the wider community through increased delivery of quality coaching.

Three organisations contributed partner matched funding for the three-year Community Sports Coach (CSC) post - London Borough of Waltham Forest Sports Development Unit, the School Sports Federation and Rush Croft School, a secondary school in Chingford with Specialist Sports College status. The CSC, Chris Hodge, was appointed in April 2004, having previously been a voluntary coach working in the Borough. The Director of Sport at Rush Croft School has responsibility for the line management of the CSC, as this was considered the most effective option.

The selection process

The CSC post was advertised locally and through regional sports development networks on the basis that local knowledge was a key requirement for the role. Applicants were assessed on their coaching qualifications and experience as well as their performance at a practical coaching assessment involving primary school children. A panel with representatives from all three partners interviewed the two short-listed candidates and the CSC was selected, with his enthusiasm for the role and 12 years voluntary coaching experience within the Borough, key factors in the decision.

Coaching delivery and target objectives

Each of the three partner organisations provided input to the development of the CSC delivery programme to ensure that their individual aims and objectives were addressed and that the programme met local strategic need. Many of these were shared priorities, strengthening the partnership and providing a clear, focused direction to the CSC role. Key objectives of the programme are to:

- offer primary school children in the Borough the opportunity to benefit from specialist coaching through a qualified individual

- increase the participation of girls and disabled athletes in the Borough, through the delivery of the target sports of athletics, hockey, netball and dance
- help establish exit routes and school-club links to encourage sustained participation particularly within the target sports of athletics, netball, dance, hockey, basketball, cricket and football
- engage and work with the Borough's London Youth Games squad
- make a significant impact by reaching out to as many teachers and participants as possible through qualified coaching, thereby increasing the levels of ability and skills in relation to PE and sport in schools.

Approximately one third of the CSC's time is dedicated to coaching for each partner organisation. During term time this equates to approximately two days per week with Rush Croft School and its feeder schools, one day per week on Borough sports development activities and two days per week at local primary schools. During weekends and holidays, the CSC works primarily on behalf of the Borough's Sports Development Team. However, there is flexibility within the working arrangement and this is seen as one of the key success factors of the CSCS project.

Examples of the type of work that the CSC undertakes for each organisation include:

- coaching at holiday schemes and club sessions eg athletics sessions at Orion Harriers Athletics Club on behalf of the Borough's Sports Development Unit
- coaching sessions in line with National Curriculum requirements, after school coaching, lunchtime sessions, disability sessions, Junior Sports Leaders Award (JSLA), pupil mentoring and INSET training on behalf of the School Sports Federation and SSP based at Rush Croft School.

A career in coaching

The CSC has seen a significant difference in moving from being a voluntary coach to a full-time paid coach. Previously the CSC had to juggle coaching with a full-time job, including fitting early morning coaching sessions around employment in retail management. Becoming a full time CSC has meant that he now has dedicated time and is paid a salary to do exactly what he wants to do. However, the CSC emphasised that his background in voluntary coaching had led him to a job in coaching and expressed his continuing commitment to this area and to supporting other volunteer coaches.

Having previously coached within schools on a voluntary and ad-hoc basis, operating as a full-time CSC has enabled the CSC to formalise this arrangement and thereby work with a greater number of schools. The Scheme has also provided him with the opportunity *"to increase the number of tools in his toolbox"*, by gaining additional formal qualifications and attending training courses, which have also enabled him to share ideas with and learn from coaches across a range of other sports.

"...I have always helped out in a voluntary capacity and will continue to do so. Volunteering has helped me to help others and help me to find a career I enjoy."

CSC

"...its a dream job... who wouldn't want to be working with kids. I love it".

Key achievements

A wide range of programmes have been delivered across the Borough through CSCS and although at an early stage, the work of the CSC has already started to make a real impact. Headline statistics and specific examples of this include:

CSC

- 920 young people coached to date:
 - 410 through curriculum delivery
 - 180 through sports camps
 - 30 through Junior Sports Leader Award (JSLA)
 - 120 through Out of Hours Learning programme
 - 21 through disability sports programmes
 - 90 through the play scheme
 - 68 through Rush Croft School Sports College.

Enhanced coaching delivery in schools

- coaching sessions have been delivered at 25 schools out of a total of 64 in the Borough, across each of the three SSP areas (North, Central and South) - the CSC provided the first experience of formal coaching for many of the pupils involved
- although anecdotal, there is evidence that the PE and sport sessions coordinated by the CSC within local primary schools have acted as a catalyst and increased levels of interest in sport at a number of these schools - feedback has been very positive, with the view that *"schools that are not taking advantage are missing out"* (Director of Sport, Rush Croft School).

Effective school-club links

- quality coaching delivery by the CSC in schools and local sports clubs has helped to strengthen school-club links. Out of hours clubs (athletics, netball or multi-sport) established at nine local schools within the Borough – the CSC has helped to establish school-club links involving Orion Harriers Athletics Club, Diamonds Netball Club and Leyton Netball Club and his involvement at these local sports clubs is believed to have directly increased after school participation by encouraging youngsters to turn up and get involved
- increased opportunities for young people to participate in disability athletics at a competitive level, by working with pupils from the special school, Brookfield House, to deliver athletics coaching and set up a disability athletics team. In terms of selection for the Borough's London Youth Games squad, this pathway has led to increasing competition for places.

“...it's really good, we get to play and do stuff we wouldn't normally do.”

Participant, Aged 12 years

Increased quality coaching

- the hockey team and junior hockey development has expanded within the Borough, in line with the aim to increase girls/ women's sport participation and to establish a London Youth Games representative team. The CSC has gained his Level 1 hockey coaching qualification since starting in post and has been working with the Borough's Sports Development Unit to raise awareness and increase participation in hockey by increasing coaching delivery in secondary schools and establishing links to local clubs.
- learning opportunities are being provided to primary school teachers through observing coaching delivery by the CSC. All partners emphasised the importance of teachers being given “coaching on coaching” to widen their own experience and to gain confidence in their own ability to deliver, as well as to promote future sustainability and improve PE and sport delivery across the Borough
- approximately 40 pupils at Rush Croft School were supported in gaining their JSLA, with pupils able to shadow the CSC during his after-school and club sessions as well as primary school PE and sport delivery. This represented a significant shift because previously PE teachers had not had sufficient time to assist pupils in completing their community hours. This also proved beneficial since JSLA students were able to assist in future programme delivery and in strengthening links between primary and secondary schools.

Key success factors

In terms of overall impact, feedback on the programmes and the work of the CSC were that these were “superb”. The project has been well received by both schools and the local community and the main reasons for its success are considered to be:

- the CSC's personality, organisation, self-management, attitude and enthusiasm as well as his experience of working in the Borough for over 12 years, which has enabled him to develop excellent local knowledge and contacts
- the CSCs professionalism and recognition of his responsibility as a positive influence and role model for the children:

“... many of the classes benefit from having me as a positive role model both as a male and also as a positive black male role model... I think it helps that I can understand from my own family background.”
- good channels of communication between all partners with regular informal as well as formal contact between key representatives from these organisations – the Authority views this as a particular benefit as it has enabled them to strengthen links with local schools and develop a greater understanding and awareness of curricular PE and sport

- high level of support provided by Partnership Development Managers (PDMs) and through Rush Croft School and its feeder schools ensuring successful delivery of the curricular and non-curricular coaching programmes
- effective forward planning with partners working to establish a clear programme of coaching at the start of the school year, reviewed on a term by term basis, whilst maintaining scope for flexibility
- emphasis on the delivery of tailored programmes based on discussions with local schools and sports clubs to ensure that the CSC clearly understands their exact requirements and is able to effectively support them in delivering PE and sport. This means that the CSC has to be adaptable and structure sessions in terms of content and methods of delivery to reach different target groups.

Lessons learnt

The project is still in its infancy but several lessons have already been learnt and results to date indicate the importance of the following issues:

- for partners to have shared aims and objectives to ensure that established priorities lead to mutual benefits
- for there to be targeted marketing and promotion with schools – the CSC had initial responsibility for promoting his role and raising awareness of opportunities and benefits. Although aiming to interface with all local primary schools, difficulties have been experienced due to a lack of interest and commitment from some schools. This is becoming less of an issue with the CSCs increasing profile across the Borough, through word of mouth and media coverage of the impact and success of the programmes
- for the CSC to be flexible and have the ability to adapt a session according to the situation, particularly when working with different groups and young people considered to be high risk/disadvantaged
- for the CSC to liaise directly with schools and work closely with class teachers to understand how best to run the sessions and engage with pupils
- for the CSC to have opportunities to interact with coaches from other sports to share ideas and methods of delivery
- for the CSC to be supported in managing expectation and maintaining an achievable programme of delivery – as levels of awareness and the CSCs profile grows, demands on his time increase and key partners are now ‘protective’ regarding his capacity in recognition that “he cannot do everything”
- the need for additional funding to be leveraged through the School Sports Federation and School Sports Partnership if the programme is to be sustainable in the longer-term and if it is to be expanded to ensure that there is sufficient resource to cater for demand.

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