
Community Sport Hub Evaluation Executive Summary

By ODS Consulting
October 2014

Putting sport first

sportscotland
the national agency for sport

Introduction

sportscotland is the national agency for sport - the lead agency for the development of sport in Scotland. They invest their expertise, time and public money in developing a world class sporting system at all levels. They also work with partners to develop this sporting system, investing in and joining up the people, places, partnerships and planning that make sport happen. Ultimately, their vision is a Scotland where sport is a way of life.

Community Sport Hubs (CSHs) are a very important part of their plans, and their development is one of **sportscotland's** flagship programmes with an annual budget of £1.5 million. **sportscotland** has been leading the establishment and development of CSHs across Scotland, working with partners to ensure approaches are community led. The aim is to develop welcoming, safe and fun places for sport and active recreation.

There were two core components to this research – an overview evaluation and ten detailed evaluation profiles (of individual CSHs). Quantitative and qualitative research took place with Hub Officers and wider stakeholders from around the country using online surveys. Two-hundred and sixty-seven completed surveys were returned. In addition, a range of existing monitoring and reporting information was reviewed and analysed. The ten profiles explored in detail how different CSHs had been developed and were operating. These involved in-depth interviews with Hub Officers, clubs and wider stakeholders involved in the CSHs. In total, 55 participants were interviewed for the profiles.

Main findings

- The role of the Hub Officer has been critical to the success of the programme, complementing that of volunteers. Training provided to Hub Officers by **sportscotland** was well attended and positively received.
- The research suggests that awareness of CSHs is highest among sport clubs. Much of the early development work and engagement activities focused on explaining the hub concept to clubs. Some CSHs have had success with raising awareness through schools – a key target group for many CSHs.

CSHs based in school facilities have helped significantly with this. In general, CSHs were seen as a positive addition to communities.

- The nature and level of activity to engage the wider community varied between CSHs. Although there had been significant promotion by some CSHs, there was much less evidence that the views of local people (beyond existing sport clubs) had been gathered in developing CSHs. There was very little evidence of work to specifically target equalities groups or those considered “hard to reach”.
- There have been opportunities for local people to take up a range of leadership and voluntary roles, and even work to take ownership of local assets. Volunteers were positive about their experiences as they have developed skills, knowledge and qualifications.
- New partnerships and joint working between clubs has been a major success of the programme. There is also evidence of stronger links between clubs and schools, those responsible for facilities management and other strategic stakeholders.

About this study

- In 2014, **sportscotland** commissioned us (ODS Consulting) to evaluate the CSH programme. Fieldwork took place between May and June 2014.
- The evaluation gathered evidence around the extent to which the CSHs have contributed to the key principles of the programme identified by **sportscotland**. The overall aim of the research was to collect learning on how the CSHs are working and connecting with local sport clubs, and the community.

Methodology

- We reviewed a range of existing monitoring and reporting information submitted by CSHs to **sportscotland**.
- The research was a mix of both quantitative and qualitative research. We issued a survey to Hub Officers and received 37 responses, and 230 responses to our online survey to wider stakeholders involved in the CSHs.
- In addition, ten detailed evaluation profiles involved qualitative interviews with the Hub Officers, clubs and wider stakeholders involved in each CSH.

Offering a range of sport

- Data available in March 2014 indicates that over 900 clubs, groups or classes were involved in CSHs in Scotland. The most common sport within CSHs is football representing just over a quarter of recognised sport activities.
- Stakeholders indicated as part of the survey that their CSH offered the right amount of activities, and a significant proportion (43%) said their CSH should offer more activities.
- About half of Hub Officers and wider stakeholders felt that CSHs had significantly improved the range of sport on offer in their community.

- Some CSHs identified challenges in developing and growing their hub within current resources. This included a reliance on a small pool of volunteers, progressing resource intensive tasks, competing demands on Hub Officer time and securing adequate and sustainable income streams to support CSH delivery and development.
- In order to offer a range of sport, CSHs had to have appropriate facilities available – and this had been a major challenge for a number of CSHs. In some areas there was a lack of good quality, appropriate facilities, or these facilities were under great demand from others, or there were cost implications, which created barriers for use.

Understanding community needs

- One of the key principles of the CSH programme is about understanding the needs of the community. CSHs have used a wide range of methods to promote themselves and engage with clubs.
- Local sport forums, public meetings, surveys with the community and schools and consultation with clubs were all methods employed by some CSHs to engage with the community.
- Schools have been a key target group for engagement activities – particularly where CSHs are linked, or based in schools. In some CSHs there have been significant achievements in building strong relationships with schools.
- Hub Officers recognised that community engagement could be challenging – particularly reaching those not already involved in sport. Our research highlighted that initial engagement had focused heavily on clubs and specific target groups (school pupils, for example) with some stakeholders suggesting that the wider community would be the next step in their engagement strategies.
- Where they have taken place, engagement activities have led to a better understanding of local interests, of involvement in sport and physical activity, and the priorities for development of CSHs.

Growth in participation

- The evidence suggests that awareness of the CSHs varies among different parts of the community in many areas. Stakeholder views suggest that within the programme, awareness is highest among clubs, and in some cases schools.
- The number of clubs (and therefore members) involved in CSHs has increased as the programme has developed, as have the number of CSHs. Data available suggests that the programme has led to an overall increase in participation levels in clubs, with some clubs experiencing significant increases.
- CSHs and clubs have undertaken a number of activities such as social events, taster sessions, summer programmes and creating links between clubs to increase participation. It is difficult to establish whether these approaches have led to changes in participation levels as yet, but could in time, develop greater participation in sport.
- Most stakeholders felt that the CSH was seen as a positive addition to their local community.

Supporting community leadership

- As well as strengthening the way in which existing clubs work together, those involved felt the programme has particularly supported the development of young sport leaders and expanded the skills of existing club leaders.
- Roles on the management committee or steering group, running the facility, or being an Executive Board member, or coach, were some of the volunteering opportunities on offer. These opportunities had allowed those involved in clubs to develop new skills and confidence.
- Individual volunteers felt that their involvement had allowed them to work with other like-minded people; influence local developments; contribute to their local sport; learn new skills or achieve new qualifications.
- The role of Hub Officers appears to have been particularly important in supporting leadership development within the programme. Although there were some challenges, with some CSHs reporting that they have struggled to support clubs to work together, either due to too few active clubs to develop a committee, or tensions in getting clubs to work together.

Partnership working

- Hub Officers identified that because of the CSH, there were stronger relationships between clubs, who were now working better to plan, develop and manage their activities.
- Hub Officers indicated that their CSH had improved how public sector agencies support sport and clubs in their local area (70% said either 'a great deal' or 'to some extent' in response to this question).
- There were also strong links between clubs and schools and this was attributed to positive relationships with the Active Schools Coordinator. And better links were reported between CSHs and those responsible for facilities management.
- In a number of cases those involved in CSHs emphasised the importance of developing buy-in at senior level in public sector organisations in order to support CSHs make relevant links, and develop links and pathways with schools where these are not already in place.

Impact and future development

- In terms of the impact of the CSHs, Hub Officers and wider stakeholders agreed that there had been an improvement in terms of sport clubs working together locally, an increased awareness of sport clubs in the community, increased participation in sport and that the value of sport clubs in the community had been recognised.
- Stakeholders identified a range of future priorities for development, building on the relationship between CSHs and communities. This included improving communication between clubs, partners and the community, raising awareness, improving links with schools, developing volunteers and coaches and maintaining or improving existing facilities to encourage greater participation in the CSHs.