

Community Sport Hubs

sportscotland
the national agency for sport

Learning Note

October 2014

Introduction

This short Learning Note sets out the lessons learned from experiences of Community Sport Hubs (CSHs) across Scotland. It focuses on examples of what works, so that learning about successful approaches can be shared between CSHs, deliverers and partners across Scotland.

This Learning Note is based on an evaluation of CSHs in 2014, which involved consultation with Hub Officers, clubs and wider stakeholders such as teachers and other partners. The full evaluation report can be accessed [here](#).

Key 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. Being based in or adjacent to school facilities has 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.

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 the club activities.

More than half of stakeholders (57%) 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 CSH 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 creating 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 sports forums, public meetings, surveys with the community and schools and consultation with clubs were all methods employed by the CSHs.

Schools have been a key target group for engagement activities – particularly where CSHs are linked to, 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 should be the focus of future 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 for CSHs.

Examples

Albury Outdoor Sport Centre, Aberdeen – Offering a range of community events

The CSH has held a number of events to encourage community engagement including Christmas carol concerts, an annual fun day (to allow the local community to try bowling, tennis and putting), and a croquet come and try day.

Colinton Corridor, Edinburgh – Reaching people not involved in a club

The CSH delivered 19,000 fliers to homes in the Colinton CSH area. The fliers were designed to promote the CSH's website and an online survey which asked local people about their priorities for sporting provision in the area. Importantly, over 100 responses were received from people not affiliated with a sport club.

Growth in participation

The evidence suggests that awareness of CSHs varies among different parts of the community in many areas. Stakeholder views suggested 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 created 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 being 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 had particularly supported the development of young sports 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 were some of the volunteering opportunities available. 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 having too few active clubs to develop a committee, or tensions in getting clubs to work together.

Example

Uddingston CSH, South Lanarkshire – Training for volunteers

Uddingston CSH has offered a range of training to support volunteers develop the skills they need. This included a basic accounting course for the treasurer and coach education course for two young hub leaders.

Example

South West Edinburgh CSH – Hub Sport Youth Panel

South West Edinburgh CSH has established a Hub Youth Sport Panel which aims to raise the profile of sport and offer opportunities to influence decision making. This was partly inspired by Young Scot and **sportscotland's** national Young People's Sport Panel.

The South West Edinburgh CSH has partners in Edinburgh Napier University, Edinburgh College, and Herriot-Watt University. The CSH has recruited two young leaders from each of these partners and from three neighbouring high schools in order to create strong links with the CSH. This has also had the positive impact of bringing together schools, colleges and universities. All partners helped with recruiting the young people involved. The Hub Youth Sport Panel now represents the voice of young people in the CSH. It acts as a small committee within the CSH alongside the Club Forum, and Working Group and is overseen by the Steering Group.

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 also indicated that their CSHs had improved how public sector agencies support sport and clubs in their local area (70% said either 'a great deal' or 'to some extent' when asked about this).

There were also strong links between clubs and schools and this was often attributed to positive working relationships with Active Schools Coordinators. Better links were also 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 pathways with schools where these are not already in place.

Example

Lornshill CSH – Building strong school links

Lornshill CSH is a school-based hub, located in Lornshill Academy. The CSH is a strategic commitment within the local authority - one of the three priority targets for the local education strategy is to embed the CSH in secondary schools. Links between the CSH have been created in a number of ways:

- The school attends CSH meetings and hosts awareness raising events, inviting clubs to visit and run taster sessions.
- The CSH has been the subject of an inter-disciplinary project in the school in which pupils studied a club and carried out related marketing, advertising, budgeting and other exercises.
- Money has been made available to allow teachers to embed hub-based activities into certain subject areas.
- The PE curriculum has been designed around the strengths of local clubs, so that there is a progression pathway for young people for every PE activity the school offers.

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.

Further information

For further information about this research, please contact Patricia Horton at **sportscotland** or Tara McGregor at ODS Consulting.

✉ Patricia.Horton@sportscotland.org.uk

☎ 0141 534 6558

✉ tara.mcgregor@odsconsulting.co.uk

☎ 0141 424 3765