

# Training tomorrow

*The Amber Valley Borough Council Sports Leadership Development Programme aims to introduce healthy accessible sports activities to young people right on their doorstep, enabling them to participate in sport and be developed into sports leaders and volunteers*

BY CHRIS PIENAAR

The Amber Valley Borough Council Sports Leadership Development Programme aims to create young leaders and volunteers over a period of time through both formal and informal training.

Essentially, the scheme provides an infrastructure that empowers the local community to plug the gap between schools and sports clubs by integrating into the activities of both. By doing this, the problem of involving hard-to-reach groups and the limited capacity of sports clubs to establish and maintain their own links is obviated. The Amber Valley Community Plan objectives served by the project are to:

- Build healthier sustainable communities;
- Build safer communities; and
- Improve skills and employment prospects within communities.

Apart from increasing participation levels and volunteering opportunities in sport, the scheme also helps to build social capital and provide diversionary activity in priority areas.

The programme is made up of a series of inter-related sports activities and initiatives based around focus sports, but delivered through enjoyable multi-sport sessions including:

- School in-curriculum 'taster' coaching, club awareness and sport education (all 56 junior schools and infant schools in priority areas);
- After school clubs including club links (25 per cent of junior schools);
- Inter-school competitions, such as Sportshall Athletics, cross-country, basketball, Kwik Cricket, cricket and hockey;
- School holiday multi-sport 'outreach' sessions and centralised inter-community competitions across three age groups (11 sites);
- 'Nightreach' (six, with two more in April) multi-sport diversionary and leadership training scheme in target areas;
- Events such as the Derbyshire Youth Games

and European Mini Olympics; and

- Level 1 and 2 Sports Leadership Awards, Sportscoach UK generic courses and governing body coaching awards.

## History

The scheme has run since 1996 and began with nine young people from one local community, where parents made a request through the local Community association for 'positive activities in which to involve their children'. This led to a multi-sport outreach scheme on the recreation ground, links with the local primary school and eventually to training the young participants as leaders. After an assessment in a neighbouring village, where similar needs were identified for young people, the scheme was replicated on the local recreation ground with links to the local junior school.

The scheme has continued to improve over the past eight years and there are now approximately 1,700 young people aged between six and 22, across 11 recreation ground sites and 57 junior schools, annually involved in various capacities from grass-roots to advanced training. Approximately 200 young people per year also attend formal leadership training courses, including a number with learning or behavioural difficulties and some with physical disabilities.

## Methodology

The wide-ranging community sport programmes provide a system of inter-related sports activities over which the leadership scheme is templated. All sessions promote links to local clubs through:

- Personal selling by the community coach;
- Promotional cards providing club details/contact persons; and
- Direct involvement of the club wherever possible.

The leadership development officer, Stuart Clarke, and the community sports development



officer Alfie Smith, develop the aspiring coaches by:

- Progressing them through the wide range of learning opportunities offered by the programme; and
- Providing on-the-job training, mentoring and qualifications at one of the 24 coaching courses run by the Amber Valley team.

A core team of two full-time community sports coaches, 31 part-time coaches and 62 sports club and young Leadership Development Programme volunteers supports the Borough Council Sports Development team in delivering the scheme.

During sessions, young people are encouraged to progress through a range of leadership activities under the watchful eye of a tutor coach. From eight years old (six years old in infant schools) to 13 years of age, the young people learn leadership skills on site under tutor coaches.

At 14 they begin the formal side of their learning by attending the British Sports Trust Level One Sports Leadership Award (seven are run per annum) and then, at 16 years of age, the



Representatives from Amber Valley's twinning partners in Sweden & Poland, local secondary schools heads of PE and young volunteers who have developed as leaders on the Community Sports Leader Award course at Charles Hill leisure centre.

# w's leaders



**'More than 1,000 sport sessions will be delivered this year, generating more than 30,000 attendances'**

**A range of Amber Valley Sports Leaders at the presentation for a Community Hockey Tournament held at Belper Meadows Hockey Club.**

Level One Community Sports Leadership Award (two per annum), which are run by Amber Valley tutor coaches at the dedicated Charles Hill Sports Development Training Centre in Loscoe.

Many Amber Valley secondary schools now also offer these Sports Leadership Awards. These are linked to the council programme for volunteering opportunities and further development.

On attaining their awards, young people are then able to begin or continue volunteering and be mentored on various outreach sites, community events and competitions. From 16 years of age, all participants have to be cleared by the Criminal Records Bureau and some junior leaders progress to become youth representatives on the various sports development groups running in the Amber Valley area.

The fact that the young people are tutored on Amber Valley Borough Council courses by the same coaches they work with in their local area, means that many young people on the fringe or outside formal education, or with lower levels of confidence, can be encouraged to attend.

## Rewards

Apart from the substantial personal development enjoyed by participants, young leaders are rewarded with progress certificates listing their accumulated volunteer hours and are issued with different coloured T-shirts (part of a wider, multi-level sports development uniform) as they progress towards eventual promotion to paid and part-time work, and the ultimate accolade of nominations for the Derbyshire Young Achievers Awards and Mini-Olympics teams.

## International links

The Mini Olympics is an annual event involving 15-year-old young people, which rotates among

Amber Valley Borough Council and its twinning partners in Europe. The Amber Valley team is unique in that it is selected from among the Leadership Development Scheme participants based on their commitment and hours of service to communities.

A team of eight members (four male, four female) mainly from priority areas or groups, are involved for a full week, supervised by two senior sports development staff and two young leaders selected from past events.

The team members experience substantial personal development during this week. They also receive a Mini Olympics uniform, which they can wear after the event when working on initiatives or activities, thereby giving them further recognition.

Moreover, twinning partners in Laholm (Sweden) and Glogow (Poland) have been so impressed by the scheme that they are actively working with Amber Valley staff to introduce the Sports Leadership Development Programme in the districts in their own countries. This has

**'Partners in Sweden and Poland have been so impressed with the scheme that they are working with Amber Valley to introduce the programme in their own countries'**

involved council staff, teachers and students visiting Amber Valley for tutor training as a pre-requisite for launching the Leadership Scheme in their own countries.

## Membership

The Leadership Scheme draws its members from:

- Existing activities and courses, many in priority areas;

- Young players from sports clubs who officiate in competitions and help to lead in their sport as part of their training on the scheme;
- Agency referrals;
- Promotional materials in schools and on the sports development website;
- Advertisements in leisure centres; and
- Parental enquiries.

## Impact

Sixteen young people from the scheme have received Derbyshire Young Achievers Awards and 30 have attended Mini-Olympics events in Poland, Sweden and Amber Valley. A number of young people, who began on the scheme eight years ago at age 10 or 11, have now progressed to assistant or head coach status.

Two young people have progressed to appointments as full time tutor sports coaches, tutoring Connexions e2e students, and one young person has progressed to head the whole scheme as community sports development officer. More than 60 per cent of young people in Amber Valley recognise the organisation's logo and claim to have been involved in some aspect of the Leadership Development Programme

More than 1,000 sport sessions will be delivered this year, generating more than 30,000 attendances (including repeat attendances), a substantial figure when you consider that these activities didn't exist eight years ago.

The focus on targeted sports throughout the programme has also had a knock-on effect with:

- The Kwik Cricket league team entries up from eight teams eight years ago to 34 teams this coming season;
- A fully developed and highly successful athletics club running for the past five years; and
- An overflow of young players at the hockey club.

The scheme has received the following

recognition over the years:

- Labour Party Best Practice Award;
- Learning Communities In Partnership Good Practice Acknowledgement, Derbyshire Education Authority;
- Charter Mark Best Practice;
- Sheffield University/Sport England Developing Volunteers Research – Good Practice Acknowledgement;



Teams participating in the 2004 AmberValley Mini Olympics held at Lea Green.

- IdeA example of Good Practice; and
- British Sports Trust Good Practice Example.

Amber Valley Borough Council Sports Development has been appointed as a training provider to the Derbyshire Connexions Service and Derbyshire Learning Skills Council, on their groundbreaking e2e programme. The scheme has also been commended by representatives of the following organisations:

- Amber Valley Childrens Partnership;
- Amber Valley Community Safety Partnership;
- Amber Valley Council For Voluntary Services;
- Amber Valley Disability Sports Association;
- Amber Valley Partnership;
- Amber Valley Primary Care Trust;
- Amber Valley Social Services;
- British Sports Trust;
- Derbyshire Connexions Service;
- Derbyshire Learning and Skills Council;
- Derbyshire Education Authority;
- Quest For Sports Development;
- Sport England; and
- STEP Forward.

### Examples of coach progression

One young participant, who became a Connexions trainee and then a sports coach, has described the impact the programme has had on his life: 'I feel that I am more confident now, not only when I'm coaching but also in everything I do. People have told me that I'm more outgoing now. I really enjoy working as a coach. I didn't enjoy school, but this interests me and I like doing it.'

Another amassed more than 1,100 hours of coaching experience and over three years progressed through assistant coach to head coach, tutor coach and now heads all of our community work as community sports development officer.

One participant, who was training under a tutor coach, was highly commended to the head teacher by an Ofsted inspector who was inspecting the school while he was running a session. He has gone on to run community sessions and to act as a recreation ground sports ranger.

Another young participant with special needs, developed his sports skills to such a degree that we were able to organise mainstream opportunities through his local secondary school. He completed his Junior Sports Leader Award with us, helped coach PE to juniors in his school, was twice selected to represent Amber Valley in the Derbyshire Youth Games and won a coveted Derbyshire Young Achievers Award for his efforts.

A young participant with special needs developed her sports skills to such an extent that she also began to take part in sport at her neighbouring secondary school and has recently represented Amber Valley in the Mini Olympics winning one of seven leaders awards for the event.

Another young participant, who was expelled from school, completed both her Junior and Community Sports Leader Awards, amassed hundreds of hours volunteering on sports schemes, participated in and managed junior teams in Outreach competitions and was selected

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to travel as a team member to a Mini Olympics event. She too has won a Derbyshire Young Achievers award and is now training on the Connexions e2e project to be a sports coach. She has qualified as an assistant coach.

Another participant, who has run after school clubs and outreach sites, been a leader on two Mini Olympics and progressed to University, has – on her own initiative – run a very successful fitness research project with a Swedish College, through extending links established during the Mini Olympics event in Sweden.

The council has more than 20 recorded case studies of young people (and parents) who've made exceptional progress over many years on the scheme. The scheme is transferable and can be developed with as few as two community coaches per district as core staff, with partners covering a lot of the cost.

Through this Leadership Development Programme, young people at all stages on the sports development continuum are given the opportunity to learn a number of life skills, including the ability to plan, organise, communicate, run safe activities, work as part of a team and evaluate sessions through sporting experiences. Participants also experience a growth in confidence.

### Partners

The programme has been designed to work in synergy with a wide range of partners meeting

their objectives, while working within the national, regional, county and district strategic objectives for sport. It fits perfectly into Sport England's new *Start, Stay and Succeed* framework and the Government's *Game Plan* and physical activity objectives. The new school sports co-ordinator, due to start in Amber Valley in August, will add further value to the scheme. In all, more than 60 partners are involved in the programme.

### Performance

We believe the easiest and most effective measure of success is a measured rate of progression while on the scheme. Our assumption is based on research, which finds correlation between the difficulties young people get into and the length of time they spend in formal education. We believe that sport education is fun, highly effective and the skills gained transferable. This makes it an ideal channel to engage both performing students and those not in formal education or at risk of leaving.

Sport is an activity within which a trained tutor coach can frequently and easily facilitate individual success, and can 'catch' participants doing something right, thereby building their confidence.

The performance indicators of the programme contribute towards achieving the key strategic objectives of Amber Valley Borough Council, the Amber Valley Community Plan, plus linked objectives in the Leisure Development Performance Plan, which include:

- Developing commitment;
- Improving opportunities;
- Improving access; and
- Increasing awareness.

The key PIs being monitored, in both quantitative and qualitative terms, include:

- Amount of partnership funding secured;
- Number of activities/events;
- Number of participants;
- Average percentage participant satisfaction levels in target activities;
- Quality of sessions; and
- Number of projects with partners.

Individual coach development plans are produced for e2e learners and are planned for all participants by June. ●

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