

Sport Unlimited Case Study

Children with disabilities bouncing into sport



CSP
SUSSEX COUNTY SPORTS PARTNERSHIP
TRUST

ACTIVITY
TRAMPOLINING

LOCATION
HORSHAM

CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS
PARTNERSHIP WORKING

DATE
MARCH 2009

An inclusive trampolining project, to enable children with additional needs to participate in sport, has been set up in partnership with 'You Can Do It!' (YCDI!), Horsham District Council and Broadbridge Heath Leisure Centre.

Barriers to participation

The course was started due to a lack of sports courses for children with additional needs. Children in the area wanted to be able to access sports sessions alongside their siblings and friends regardless of their ability or disability. Many children are usually able to attend after school clubs/activities at their special school. However many young people with additional needs also attend mainstream schools. At these schools many young people with additional needs are unable to attend such clubs and activities due to a lack of provision of adequately trained support. The siblings of these children can also be prevented from accessing sports due to difficulties in entertaining the disabled child during sessions. Transportation to activity venues when children are at different locations can also be an issue.

Consultation

Diverse consultation took place in order to ensure that every aspect of the programme was organised and structured to meet the young peoples' needs. Prior to the partnership being set up, research was undertaken into current activities available to children with additional needs, in the local area. Local pediatricians, physiotherapists, inclusion support teachers at the Local Education Authority and staff at the Springboard Project (which provides inclusive play facilities, but no sports activities) were all consulted. The partnership also sought advice from the British Gymnastic Association about including children with Down's Syndrome in the sessions. An Atlanto-Axial (articulation of the atlas with the axis) information pack was given to parents of children with Down's Syndrome who may suffer from such instability relating to this. The children were also assessed by a physiotherapist or pediatrician prior to the commencement of the sessions. Coaches were also made aware of the implications of this condition. Local families were invited to become members of the group (through newspaper articles, health visitors, Portage workers, schools, word of mouth) to establish a database of children who were keen to take part in certain sports and arts activities. Individual sports and arts sessions were also arranged, in order to gauge interest and introduce the group and its inclusive nature to parents and participants.

"It has changed our lives."

"He would never have progressed like this if the coach had not had the experience and training to communicate so efficiently...in one week he is putting four moves together and in a whole term he never managed more than two!"

Parents comments from the sessions.

How are the sessions delivered?

The YCDI! trampolining project consisted of two thirty-minute sessions per week organised over a 10 week period (4 children in each session). The sessions were structured into small group numbers and shorter class times (i.e. 4 kids/30min session vs. 8 kids / 60 min session in many mainstream classes). This allowed participants as much time on the trampoline as they would during an hourly session. Parents were encouraged to have a drink in the centre's cafe for most of the session to reduce the numbers of smaller siblings in the area. This allowed those children who perform better without a parent present to excel. This also meant that parents could take a break and created an environment where the children responded better to the coaches with fewer distractions. The sessions also have a support coach and second trampoline to allow participants to practice the skills learned with the head coach. This is especially important as many children with additional needs, require



longer to assimilate and process information or perform the activity. This method reinforces the teaching while ensuring that participants do not become reliant on one person. Each child is also more active during the sessions limiting the avoidance of less desirable behaviours which can result more quickly, than with non-disabled children. Small toys and drawing activities are used to help limit this and keep the participants occupied.

Support during the sessions

The communication skills of the coach were essential in enabling the children to receive, understand and interpret instructions. The coach was experienced in communicating to children with additional needs and signing was used in certain cases. All coaches have since attended a signing course arranged by the YCDI! coordinator.

A 'hot seat' was also created (decorated chair made by other children at an after-school provision at the leisure centre) and used for children to sit and watch their friends, while waiting to take part in the activity. This encouraged good patience and is a precursor to 'spotting' (a term used for watching/guarding around the edge of the trampoline). This role is often performed by parents or other participants as they increase in age

and gain more experience. In these sessions, the coach was always on the trampoline with the child but the sitting, watching and waiting in the 'hot seat' encouraged good behaviour and best practice for future sessions. Other methods to help participants included the use of parachutes and a teddy bear for young people to focus on during the activity. Participant reactions to each aid were identified and noted, to see which worked best for each child.

Siblings participation

One of the major strengths of the project was that siblings of the children with additional needs were coached simultaneously. This allows families to access sport for more than one of their children, regardless of age and ability. This proved enormously beneficial to families with disabled children who are usually unable to access physical activity sessions. The siblings benefit from seeing their brother/sister enjoying sport in the same environment. Other children (i.e. at the sports centre) and members of the community also learn that disabled people can actively participate in sport regardless of their disabilities.

Tailored sessions

To allow the sessions to be specifically tailored to each child, a detailed registration form was designed to collect information relating to each child's needs. This was then made available to the coach prior to the start of the course, and kept at the leisure centre for reference when required. It was important that parent/carers were confident that their child's needs could be met and that the coaches were aware of the needs of the children before the start of the course. A three-way communication process was maintained continually between parents, coaches and the YCDI! Coordinator. This ensured that all children were in a safe and enjoyable environment tailored to each child's needs.



Attendance

During the Autumn term eight children were invited to attend the Trampoline Course (four in each session) over the ten week period. Seven of the children attended all ten sessions, and three children attended nine sessions. There were also eight other young people who were on a waiting list to attend the course. During the spring term a total of 12 children are now attending the course (Jan – Apr '09). The session times have now been extended slightly to allow six children to participate in 40 minutes of activity to cater for increased demand.

Retention

The retention rate was excellent due to the very high levels of enjoyment and significant progress made by the children and their siblings throughout the sessions. The coaches communicated frequent positive feedback and encouragement to the children. This ensured a continued feeling of success for all the families involved. The timings of the sessions (two

"I believe this project should be something to promote nationally to allow more disabled children the same opportunities as others to access sports of their choice...But, the benefits of such a project, I also believe will come to society as a whole, not just the 'disabled child', who after all is enabled by courses like this".

Caroline Johnston
Chairperson, YCDI!

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"YCDI! has shown there is a need for these courses and has proved it can work, so more local bodies are now interested in partnering us. However, as a volunteer group lead by a committee of parents of children with additional needs ourselves, we need more support to sustain the growth and provide more children with more opportunities in sport".

Caroline Johnston
Chairperson, YCDI!

sessions between 4pm and 5pm) is also important. The session times are not too late for younger children, (five years old being the youngest) but late enough for others brought home on school transport to attend.

Sporting achievement

All children attained a certificate and badge relating to the British Gymnastics Association Trampoline Gymnastics Proficiency Award – Trampoline Award Scheme. Overall, all the children involved have increased their ability to do more moves on the trampoline including longer sequences. Children were also offered a YCDI! logo T-shirt (donated by the Horsham Rotary

Club) this gave the children a sense of belonging to something outside of their school.

Future Plans and Other Activities

YCDI! aim to expand further in 2009 with the aim of utilising further partners, providing a greater choice of sport in new locations, while extending the age range to secondary school children. More specialised trampolining sessions are planned for children with restricted mobility. YCDI! are also in the process of developing opportunities for young volunteers to provide additional support during sessions which require high levels of staff. To do this they need more funding, resources, training and administrative support. YCDI! also runs two swimming groups a week for children over five years who require one to one support or coaching in the pool and other one off activities during the summer holidays including Tennis, Multisports, Cricket, Football, Dance and Drumming. Horsham District Council are paying support workers to enable children to be supported at the sessions for up to two hours with their siblings and friends. YCDI! have also completed their first Gymnastics course where 15 children signed up including two wheel chair users and their siblings. The Taster session for next term's course was fully booked and both courses are now running waiting lists with parents from out of the area, requesting such courses at their local leisure centre's.

Success Factors

One of the key factors of the success of this project is that YCDI! does not focus on 'disability' but more on the ability of children. This provides the parents and children with a positive sense of belonging and therefore encourages further involvement in this project. The sessions not only gives young people with additional needs a fantastic opportunity to take part in sport, but the major achievement has been to allow them to develop numeracy, communication and social skills, plus increased confidence above and beyond the sport itself. Siblings of disabled children have also been given the opportunity to do an activity with their brother or sister in an inclusive setting. This has led to reduced feelings of isolation which occur so often for families with disabled children.

The vast amount of planning and consideration by the YCDI! coordinator in partnership with key bodies, parents and children has meant that the sessions have been planned and delivered effectively. Frequent communication from the coaches to the parents on how the individual children were progressing was paramount in ensuring that the confidence of the parents was maintained throughout the course. Friendships have been built between children, siblings and parents which has led to a form of support for the families.

Top Ten Tips

1. Identify key partners to be involved including a co-ordinator or lead (who could be an employee of sport centre/arts centre/council services/young peoples services)

2. Find a group of interested children and parents and identify contacts within those groups.

3. Identify the gaps in sporting or arts provision in your area for young disabled people and their families by enquiring through above groups – find out what sports the children would like to do.

4. Identify an experienced coach and support staff/coaches – train as required (appropriate language to use with children and parents/methods in handling if required).

5. Keep sessions to small groups of children.

6. Understand the needs of the children prior to starting – address any concerns prior to start with parents if necessary. **Use signing.**

7. Advertise in local children sports/arts magazine, newspaper articles and schools.

8. Maintain continuous support to coaches and ensure open liaison between coaches and parents.

9. Address any issues immediately to ensure maximum enjoyment and progression for the children.

10. Follow up at end of course with '**Celebration/Awards**' to praise achievements and encourage continued participation.

For more information please email, Dr Caroline Johnston Chairperson and parent of YCDI!
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