

Women-only sports Coaching programme (Mini-BICs)

Overview

1: Background:

Pertemps People Development Group's sports and recreation division – Coachright, has been delivering a Sports Coaching Programme for unemployed adults for a number of years. This was known as Mini-BICCS (Birmingham Inner-City Coaching Scheme). The idea initially came from a partnership between Coachright, Sports Action Zone and Sports Pathways(AWM) who were all keen to widen access into careers in sport and target particular areas of Birmingham were, historically, there had been less opportunities to receive such training despite there being significant interest and involvement in sport as a recreational activity.

Joint funding from these 3 partners enabled Coachright to facilitate 5 Mini-Biccs programmes – each with approx 10 participants. It was interesting to note that the majority of participants were male, even though the programme was open to everyone. A couple of women did apply for places and completed the programme, but they were the minority.

In 2005, PPDG became key partners in the Equal funded ESF programme – Agender. Agender aimed to promote non-traditional gender roles within the workplace. Funding was available through Agender aimed at piloting a range of activities and initiatives to see how non-traditional gender roles could be promoted and enabled and to learn from this delivery in order to shape future approaches and programmes.

PPDG recognised the excellent opportunity that this presented for us to gain funding support to deliver a Women-Only Sports Coaching Programme. Following discussions with other partners, PPDG secured funding from Sports Pathways, Sporting Equals (promoting opportunities for BME individuals in sport), and internally from PPDG, towards this programme and approached Agender for additional funding. The Agender Training Group were keen to support this programme and allocated funding to support this activity. Agender funding required a 60% match funding in order to secure 40% ESF funding, and this joint funding package enabled us to achieve that.

We began recruitment in October / November 2006 and 15 unemployed women started the 6 month programme on 13th November 2006. The programme also provided the opportunity for an additional 25 women to be trained up for 1 week in Improving Own Learning and Performance – NOCN accredited. 15 women completed the 6 month programme, and 21 women completed the one week accredited training. In total, 36 women benefited from this programme activity.

2. Key points about the 6 month programme:

The participants:

- Over 40 women applied for places on the programme
- 15 unemployed women were allocated places
- All 15 women completed the programme
- Age range of participants: 19 – 44 years, average age was 29yrs
- 9 of the women are lone parents
- The participants are from a culturally diverse background – approx half are of BME origin, half are of white European origin.
- The 15 women were employed by PPDG for the 6 month period and received a salary during that time
- Childcare support was available to all participants who needed it, 6 participants received support with childcare costs. All travel costs were reimbursed

The training programme:

Participants all received accredited training in:

- Personal Development (1 week course);
- Emergency First Aid for Sport;
- NOCN Support for the Sporting Child;
- Child Protection training;
- NOCN Key Skills – improving own learning and performance through sport (cricket);
- NOCN Basic Skills (Football);
- Working with and Coaching Disabled Children in Sport;
- Sports Coach UK – Equity in Sport;
- Sports Coach UK – Coaching Children and Young People.
- YMCA Studio Instructor Course (14 day programme)

Participants then selected up to **3 National Governing Body qualifications** from a wide range of options including: Basketball, Cricket, Athletics, Volley Ball, Tag Rugby, Badminton, Lifeguard, Hockey, Netball.

These choices enabled them to **tailor their training** to the sports that particularly appealed to them and to gain a NGB Level 1 qualification in that sport which would **enable them to start Coaching others in that sport**, and then could be built on with additional training as they developed in their coaching. As they were NGB courses, if we did not have enough participants selecting a course, we had to wait for the NGB to have a course running in which our participants could participate. This meant that we were dependant on NGB's timescales and could not control this element of the training.

Work placements:

Formed a key part of the programme with the aim of providing participants with an insight into working in a sporting setting. Placement settings ranged from local gyms and schools to the FA and Edgbaston Cricket ground.

Job Search training and support:

Throughout the programme, participants were reminded that this was just for 6 months and that they needed to focus on what they wanted to do after the course – be that ongoing paid work or additional training. Jackie Lawlor (Training Team – PLEA / PPDG) facilitated training focussed on next steps and effective job search at regular stages throughout the course, with a particular concentration on the last 2 months. A session on Self-Employment as a career option was facilitated by our self employment specialist so that participants could look at this as an option they could pursue – with additional support from John if they wished. Jackie facilitated a week long focussed job search activity and training a few weeks before the programme ended to support the participants in taking their next steps, particularly focussing on finding paid employment.

Celebration events:

3 celebration and awareness raising events were held during the programme. The first two events were held at Newtown PPDG Centre and included: a review of what the participants had achieved so far; acknowledgement of key achievements; a motivational speaker (the ex-Gladiator JET spoke at the 1st event re her career in sport and motivational / personal development advice and support for the participants); and time for food, drinks and socialising. Participants were encouraged to bring family and friends along with them to see what they were doing and achieving. We also invited along others who were interested in finding out more about opportunities for training and employment in sport – this is one of the key ways we recruited women onto the week-long NOCN course.

Final celebration event: held at the Community Integration Partnership in Edgbaston, participants were encouraged to bring guests with them to share their achievements and celebrate with them. An extensive buffet was provided, with drinks and music to give the women a real send-off. Delivery Partners were also attended. After everyone had eaten, Neil, Claire and Vernice outlined the key elements of the programme and what the participants had achieved. Leon Edman, Agender Contracts Manager / LSC, thanked the participants for their commitment and congratulated them on their achievements. Julie Crane, the Commonwealth Silver medal winner, then spoke about her experiences in Sport and working life and how she had overcome barriers, kept focussed and motivated and achieved her goals, and continues to strive to achieve more. The participants found her input very

motivating and inspirational. Julie then presented all of the programme participants with their certificates / record of achievement folder and a photograph was taken of Julie with each participant for them to keep.

3. Staff team:

- An experienced **female Mentor and Employment Coach** (Vernice Jeffers) was allocated to this programme to support the women, deal with any issues arising, organise the day-to-day activities and programme, and help keep the women focussed and motivated. This role proved to be an invaluable support for the participants.
- The Coachright **Co-ordinator** (Neil Parker) line managed Vernice and organised the detailed programme delivery.
- The Area **Operations Director** (Claire Hardwick) is the PPDG rep on Agender and liaise with Agender throughout, line managed Neil on this women-only programme, and oversaw the delivery of the Women Only Programme.
- Brad Russell – **Technical Director of Coachright:** delivered FA and other key training, plus oversaw technical aspects of the delivery and programme as a whole.
- Other members of the **Coachright team** delivered accredited training in key topics and sports for the participants, and provided ongoing support for participants including supervising those on work placement with Coachright.
- **Additional trainers** were also brought in to deliver training – such as YMCA, some NGB qualifications.

4. Outcomes: (see additional information attached for details)

The 15 women who started all completed the 6 month programme

- All participants achieved a wide range of training and secured accredited qualifications in a range of areas and sports
- Feedback clearly shows that all participants felt that their **confidence** had grown through doing the programme and many said it had helped to give them a **renewed focus** and to **believe in themselves**.
- **Approx half of the women secured paid employment** following the programme, with one participant **going self-employed** as a Sports Coach in September 07. Participants mainly secured work in non-sports related areas, but many of them have expressed an interest in continuing with sports coaching either on **a voluntary or paid sessional basis** alongside other work. One of the participants has been volunteering with one of the main basketball coaches in Birmingham over the past 5 months building up her coaching experience in this sport with the aim of securing paid work in basketball coaching longer-term.

- **21 additional women** completed the one week course **Improving Own Learning and Performance – NOCN** accredited. 7 of these women secured paid employment within weeks of completing the course.

5. Key learning points re the delivery of the programme:

We sought feedback from the participants at regular intervals throughout the programme, and encouraged them to raise any issues or suggestions with Vernice or Neil as they arose so we could address them. The Agender evaluation by UCE also took place throughout the programme. This feedback and our discussions as those managing and facilitating the programme has enabled us to draw out a number of lessons from the delivery that we would use in structuring and delivering any future programmes. The key learning was:

Advertising and promoting the course: Participants noted that the course being advertised as 'Women-Only' encouraged them to think that it was relevant for them and something they could do, rather than overlooking it. If a course was mixed, it would be important to reiterate in advertising that applications are encouraged from women and men.

YMCA qualification: The YMCA course was much more intensive and academically demanding than we had initially understood it to be. This proved to be too much for some of the participants – who decided not to continue with the YMCA training. This dented their confidence and was difficult for participants to handle – which is the opposite of what we are trying to achieve.

The first YMCA tutor turned out to be inexperienced in working in culturally diverse settings and with individuals who have not done much formalised training before. Her reactions to some of the situations that arose and to some participant's difficulties with the course appear, in hindsight, to have made the situation more tense and difficult rather than diffusing it and moving forward positively. When we became fully aware of the situation, we took appropriate steps to manage this – including ensuring our Mentor was present during delivery, liaising with YMCA re our concerns and asking them to address them, eventually requesting a different YMCA tutor whom the participants felt more comfortable with and empowered by.

Some of the participants had no, or very limited, experience of aerobics and this meant they had a great deal to learn on the course. They were encouraged to take up classes outside the course, but this was difficult for some to manage or commit to in addition to the programme.

Some of those who managed to complete the theory had problems passing the practical, and vice versa. We have arranged and paid for for the

participants who wanted to re-take their exams in order to give them the best chance of securing the qualification they have worked so hard for.

It is an excellent qualification to have and makes individuals highly employable once they have secured it, so it is worth including this as an option.

However, in future programmes, we would:

- Clarify to participants exactly what the YMCA qualification entails – physically and academically
- Conduct an assessment of any participants who want to complete the YMCA qualification – looking at their physical and basic skills levels to ascertain whether they would be able to complete the course effectively, so they are not put in a position where they feel out of their depth and their confidence is dented
- Provide those participants who successfully complete the assessment with the reading materials for the course in the first few weeks of the course so that they have more time to absorb this information and learning, rather than trying to do it all within the 2 weeks of the YMCA qualification
- Ensure that the tutor who is allocated to the group is experienced in working with culturally-diverse groups and with individuals who have varying levels of skills and limited, and often negative, experience of formalised learning.
- Provide aerobic classes as part of the programme from the start of the course, to increase participants' fitness and experience of this type of activity – thus helping with achieving YMCA accreditation.

Fitness levels:

Participants may not agree that this was an issue, but our staff concluded that it would be advantageous to have a few weeks at the start of the programme that focus on diet, healthy lifestyles and fitness – with the aim of improving fitness levels of the group. Fitness levels and health of the participants varied at the start of the course, and this additional input would have been useful.

Tighter entrance requirements and expectations?

This may be appropriate and has been suggested, but it is also important to recognise that this course is actually aimed at individuals who: have an interest in sport but may not have ever thought of it as a career; are unemployed and may not have worked for many years; whose confidence and self-esteem is low; who are not used to having to organise their lives in such a way that they can get to work on time; manage childcare arrangements effectively etc.. If entrance requirements and expectations are too stringent it will exclude those we seek to reach. It is important to get an appropriate balance between establishing clear expectations and expecting those to be reached, and coaching participants and supporting them to do this – which

will include giving individuals the chance to improve their behaviour / approach, whilst seeking to ensure that other participants are not negatively impacted upon in doing this. A tricky one!

Qualifications:

The range and level of qualifications participants' acquire through this programme **does make them highly employable** – in sport and other areas of work. How successful participants are at finding ongoing paid work is, to a large extent, down to them and how they apply themselves. High levels of support were available throughout the programme and in the following months. As the feedback has shown, some of the participants did not actually want to move into ongoing paid work, others wanted to look at other training instead. This is reflected in the numbers who actually secured paid work – approx half of the participants on the 6 month programme, and a third of the 21 women who completed the one week programme. These are very positive results, but we believe more had the ability to secure paid work if they had actually wanted to do so.

There was some discussion re whether it would have been better to have had the chance to achieve a higher level qualification in one sport rather than a more broad range of qualifications at a lower level. In looking at this and considering the time available and varying levels of ability, we have concluded that the approach we followed was about right.

It was frustrating for some participants who wanted to secure a qualification with an NGB who kept on cancelling their courses – Lifeguard, in particular. We have no control on when an NGB course is run, unless we are filling a course and they are providing it solely for us. It may be that we should ensure a participant immediately chooses and pursues another sport qualification if an NGB course is cancelled – rather than rely on them running another course even if they assure us it will happen. This would mean that all participants had the same amount of training qualifications and did not lose out by waiting around.

Work Placements:

Experiencing a 'real-life' sports working environment is invaluable experience for participants. However, it's very difficult to get sports settings to agree to host placements and, for those that do, time is limited. What participants can actually do whilst on placement can also be limited. For those participants who had positive placements in which they could be very hands-on, the experience was a great one.

We have agreed that, in future courses we'd seek to have work placements, but limit them to a few days rather than weeks. This will allow the insight / experience whilst avoiding it becoming boring and will also 'free-up' additional

time to focus on some of the other activities we've identified and would like to include.

Future Sports Coaching Programmes:

We are keen to run more sports coaching programmes in the future, incorporating this additional learning and building on the successes of this and previous courses. We would particularly like to run a course with a **Self-employment focus** as we see this as one of the most practical routes to employment within sports coaching. Such a course would be advertised in a way that clearly stated this as an outcome and would focus on this end result throughout the programme with specialist business planning and self-employment support and possible grants to help meet set-up costs.

Women-only courses do encourage women to apply and the support that the participants provide to each other has proven to be very empowering for the women. Some of the women have said that they would not have taken part in a mixed-sex programme – this is for cultural and / or personal reasons. We would run future women-only courses, but would also encourage more women to apply by specifically stating that mixed courses are open to men and women.

Regular **celebration events and the ongoing support of a dedicated mentor / coach** were crucial factors in maintaining motivation levels and the focus of participants. The dedicated Coach / Mentor's input played a crucial part in helping them address any issues that arose – both on the course and in their personal lives which had an impact on their ability to effectively take part in the course. Ensuring that participants were supported to access additional specialist support where appropriate was also very important, including: debt / money advice; counselling; domestic violence support services.

The **mixed funding approach** we used to deliver this women-only course was very positive. Sports Pathways (AWM) have already allocated us £30k they are keen to invest into another sports coaching programme before end March 08 – based on what they see as the success of this and previous programmes. We are hoping that Sporting Equals may be able to also allocate funding for future programmes. PPDG can and will allocate funding if a participant is a PPDG client for whom we have some funding.

We are keen to **'mainstream' this delivery** and secure a commitment to the ongoing funding of this programme. Such a commitment, even if it is just for a few more programmes over the next couple of years, would allow us to **plan ahead**, secure additional funding and recruit effectively onto the programmes.

This programme has enabled 15 women to receive accredited training in a wide range of sports and related areas, and an additional 21 women to receive a week's accredited sports-related training.

Approx **half of the 15 women are now in paid employment** – in range of areas including: tele-sales; call-centres; street cleaning, with one successfully establishing herself as a self-employed sports coach this month. A **third of the additional 21 women are also now in paid work** as a result of the course and ongoing coaching of PPDG Employment Coach staff. **These women were previously unemployed, the majority are lone parents, and most had not worked for many years.**

This programme gave unemployed women the opportunity to train and work in a non-traditional area of work – sports coaching. All participants positively gained from this programme, with significant numbers going on to secure additional paid work, one has even established herself as a self-employed sports coach – a small business owner AND a sports coach, very non-traditional!

**Claire Hardwick.
September 07.**

For more information please contact Brad Russell or Robert Houlston of Pertemps Coachright on 0121 554 5936 or brad.russell@ppdg.co.uk or rob.houlston@ppdg.co.uk

Additional information attached:

- Programme summary / outline
- Summary of qualifications achieved by each participant
- Evidence of qualifications (sent previously)
- Work Placements summary and participant feedback
- Report on Personal Development and Intensive Job Search training – by trainer Jacqueline Lawlor
- Mini-BICs highlights summary by Vernice & Neil
- Participants programme evaluation summary
- Photographs of participants throughout the course (please check before using these for publicity purposes)
- Press coverage – sent previously
- Copy of Poster / flyer advertising the programme (sent previously)
