

# Case study: Managing a mentoring programme - The Disability Coach Mentor Project



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## Introduction

Delivering a successful mentoring project is about more than just introducing a mentor to a mentee. This case study shows how Sport Across Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent (SASSOT) managed a mentoring project and what lessons they learnt from the process.

## Identifying need

As part of the SASSOT Workforce Consultation interviews with partners identified the need for an increase in the quantity and quality of coaching for disabled athletes. In particular partners suggested that there was a need for one-to-one support from a suitable experienced professional in order to increase confidence, planning, delivery and assessment skills in coaches.

Through a successful Aiming High<sup>1</sup> funding application via Staffordshire County Council, SASSOT received an award to deliver a disability training programme with the aim of developing both the skills and confidence of coaches that deliver activity to disabled people. This was a priority within the SASSOT 2011-12 Coaching Delivery Plan.

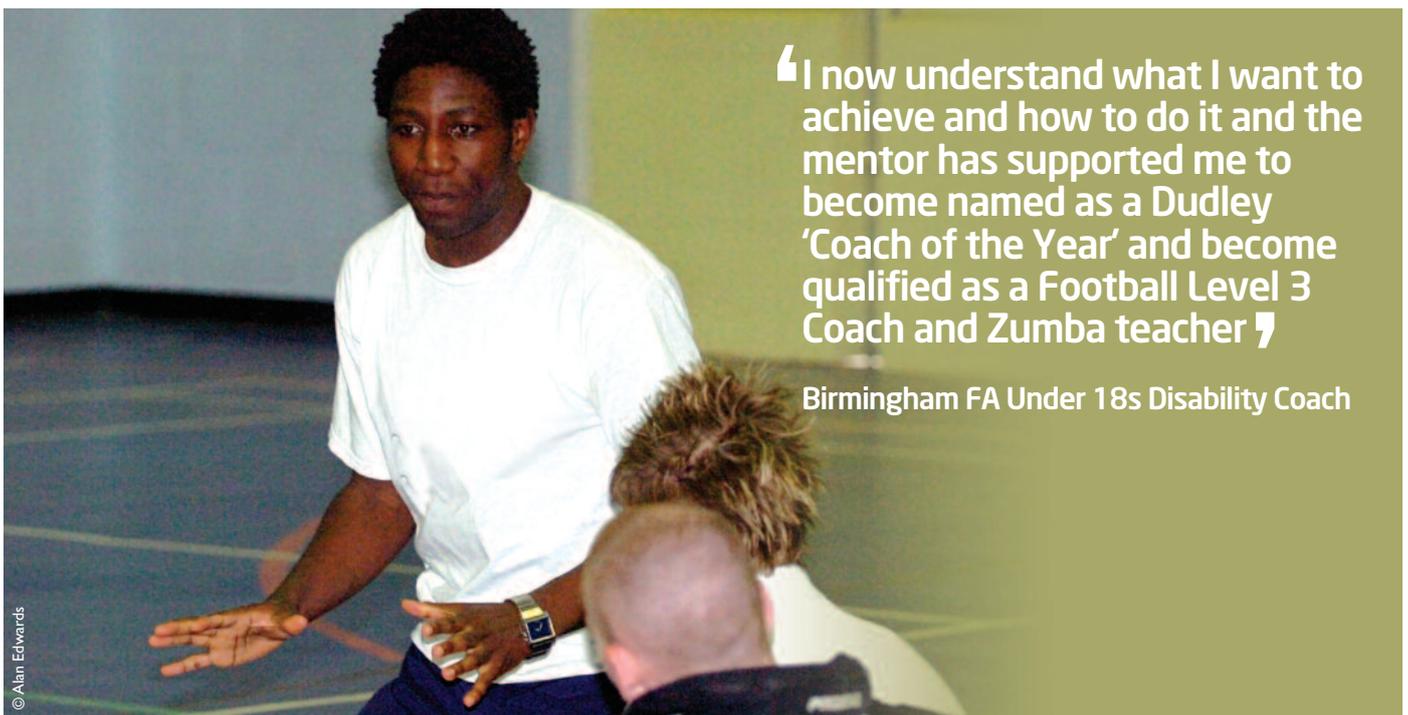
## Recruiting a mentor and mentee

The Aiming High funding was identified to recruit one mentor to work with three mentees. Under this plan a mentor would be paid £500 for providing support to the mentees. This represented a significant investment for the CSP but it was based on the identified importance of the project. Requirements were also put in place to ensure a good return on the investment.

- A mentor was required to deliver 10 hours of support to three mentees.
- Each mentee would be required to deliver at least 10 hours activity to disabled people.
- This represented a minimum of 60 hours of development or delivery.

A formal recruitment process was established to select the mentors; this provided detailed information about the project, the expectations of the mentor and a formal interview. At this stage a number of mentor applicants dropped out when they realised what was expected in return for the investment.

This recruitment process was identified as one of the key steps towards the success of the project. By identifying an experienced and very competent mentor the level of support that was required during the project was significantly reduced.



**“I now understand what I want to achieve and how to do it and the mentor has supported me to become named as a Dudley ‘Coach of the Year’ and become qualified as a Football Level 3 Coach and Zumba teacher”**

**Birmingham FA Under 18s Disability Coach**

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<sup>1</sup> Aiming High is a Department of Education and Department of Health programme. More information can be found at: <http://www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/send/ahdc/b0070490/aiming-high-for-disabled-children-ahdc>

## Characteristics of the successful mentor and mentees

Selecting coaches with the correct characteristics helps a mentoring programme meet objectives. Below are the characteristics SASSOT sought from their mentor and mentees.

### Mentor

Demonstrate a wealth of experience in coaching disabled athletes.

Experience as a mentor, coach educator or teacher.

Multiple sport experience.

Good personal characteristics (approachable, good communicator etc)

### Mentee

Already working with disabled athletes.

Demonstrate a desire to develop their skill in this area.

Willing to commit to required coaching hours.

## The mentoring process

Establishing the relationship between mentor and mentee at the beginning of the project was an essential first step. The Coaching Development Manager at the CSP initiated this meeting and made sure everyone was aware of what was expected.

The importance of this stage in the process was demonstrated when one mentee dropped out as they were unable to meet the expectations. Had this meeting not taken place the mentoring relationship may have been allowed to develop and the inevitable later collapse would have been a waste of time and resources for all involved.

During the project the mentor ran a comprehensive support package for each of the mentees around a variety of sports and areas of work. These included not only coaching skills in cricket, football and dance but also skills such as teaching in a school environment, delivery to children and adults, and one-to-one work.

## The results

As a result of this project three mentees have gone on to deliver over 30 hours coaching to 40 disabled athletes, including adult participation. Initial steps have also been made to set up a new disability section at a local football club.

The comments from those involved also show how well the project has been received.

**“My mentor has helped me significantly by making my coaching seem easier and more enjoyable, as well as increasing the standard of my delivery and raising the enjoyment levels for the participants”**

**Staffordshire Cricket Disability  
Community Coach**



## Lessons learned

- Develop your projects based on consultation with partners. This helps ensure you are focusing on the important issues and backs up funding decisions.
- Think about how you can get the best return for your investment.
- Make responsibilities clear from the beginning. It is better that people drop out of the process before the project begins.
- The recruitment of appropriate mentors and mentees is essential. Getting the right person allows the project co-ordinator to focus on the overall project.
- Having an overall project co-ordinator helps ensure the project remains on track and allows the coaches to focus on the mentor/mentee relationship.

## What role did SASSOT play?



Behind the mentoring relationship the CSP played an essential project management role. Typical activities required by SASSOT to deliver this mentoring programme include:

- Carrying out the consultation to identify the need for this Project and funding.
- Recruiting the roles of mentor and mentee.
- Organising meetings between the mentor and mentees to ensure everyone's expectations were confirmed at the beginning.
- Acting as project co-ordinator to ensure the project was on target, and if necessary chasing both the mentee and mentor to ensure meetings are taking place and commitments are being met.
- Ensuring all parties were happy, that it was meeting their expectations, and if necessary identifying additional resources.
- Monitoring and evaluating the project.
- SASSOT have also helped to identify suitable placements for the mentee to deliver to people with disabilities in return for the investment of the mentor.