

David O'Brien – Written evidence (NPS0032)

I am a Level 2 coach at Hockey and Cricket and have coached both sports and football for 17 years, I volunteer coached Hockey and Cricket at Oasis Academy Short Heath Birmingham for 5 years.

My working day started at 4.30 am alarm call start work at 5.45 am ,as a postman with Royal Mail finish around 1.30 pm ,go home have something to eat and a cup of tea then leave the house around 2.45pm to get to the school for 3.10pm for a 3.30pm start , finish around 4.45pm , then go onto to lead Ladies training at Sutton Coldfield Hockey Club 6pm till 8.15 pm .

We had to limit the group numbers to 32,Girls and Boys year 4 and 5, we used the school playground for both sports, nearly all of our equipment was second hand which was supplied by me from my contacts at local hockey and cricket clubs.

We entered local school tournaments throughout the year, always fielding two teams mixed boys and girls, after a while the equipment began to become a little worn out , so i emailed Investec , they were the sponsors of the England and Great Britain Mens and Womens hockey teams, asking for some help after explaining my efforts at the school.

They got back to me and posted to me a signed Adidas hockey stick, it had been signed by the gold medal Great Britain Ladies hockey team from the Rio 2016 games, i then contacted a local auction house by email who then rang me to ask for more detail of my role at the school, after this chat they sold the stick for no commission and it raised £250 , which paid for 25 pairs of shin pads and two 10 a side kits , i put £20 of my own money to the funds so that we had enough.

Also i emailed England Hockey and the regional director contacted the BBC sports personality of the year and we were filmed at the school and featured on the morning of the programme on BBC breakfast news, and we were the lead story on BBC sport and England Hockey on their social media, through this filming day the children received a new Adidas hockey bag, second hand ,a ball, their own stick and England kit .

I contacted Streetly hockey club as my club at the time had a waiting list, and they offered 6 weeks free then £1.50 a week after that , two of the girls joined Sutton Coldfield Hockey club and were Warwickshire Champions at under 12 Girls finishing 5th at the Midlands finals, two of the children have gone on to play for Warwickshire and Staffordshire at county level.

We had a high of 10 children playing club hockey.

With the cricket i again supplied the kit either from contacts at local clubs or my own supply of balls ,we had 10 children taking up the sport at Sutton Coldfield C.C with one boy going onto be player of the year at the club, i supplied him with a new helmet which i purchased and second hand cricket bag and pads gloves and bat.

To help with equipment i contacted the Lords Taverners charity , they replied that they don't help schools but after reading what i do at the school they said they felt inspired by my story and gave us a bag of kit, stumps, bats, balls, gloves and two blind cricketer type balls which i used at a disabled children tournament i ran , and after i gave them to the girl at the Oasis Academy who was blind to keep.

the main draw backs from the children taking up the sports at club level were

1.The parents were not involved in adult sport and had little enthusiasm for either the sport or start times, Hockey 9 am Sunday mornings

2.The children had little or no access to a car, at Sutton Coldfield the children had access to at least three if not more cars through either parents or grandparents.

3.Some of the children were already involved with football on both Saturday and Sunday.

4.The school PE teacher and his apprentices didn't have and passion for anything other than football, and made no attempt to contact clubs in the local area to get them to come and do taster sessions at the school or get children involved at club level regardless of ability .

Fairfax Academy Sutton Coldfield September 2017 till December 2019, the school is outstanding at getting children to try all types of sports and getting the children to take up a sport at a club, they contacted my then club Sutton Coldfield to ask if there was anyone who could come to the school and help ,the school is 2 minutes drive from where i live and it my old school, again as with Oasis i go after work.

We have a regular 28 boys and girls, before Christmas its year 7 and 8 then after Christmas its year 9 and 10, but now we have the whole school involved , we use the school netball courts and when the weather allows we use the grass hockey field .

The equipment is second hand, the sticks were provided by me from my club contacts, all of the second hand balls (80) were supplied by me, the keepers kit was given to the school by Sutton Coldfield Hockey Club.

To help with equipment i contacted several equipment manufacturers Grays replied and supplied us with a pair of new pads and kickers for the keepers, and after applying to the Hockey Youth Trust we were successful , they gave us a grant which meant we could buy three keepers kits and 40 new sticks.

We entered local school tournaments fielding two girls teams and two boys teams, training is Tuesdays 3.30pm till 4.45pm, league matches on a Thursday 4.50 pm till 6pm at a local leisure centre.

Club participation is very good as again Streetly hockey Club are involved and we have had over the three seasons that we have done hockey, 6 girls and 5 boys take up the sports at either u14, u16 or adult level.

The main driving force behind any successful participation at school level is passion and commitment from either the volunteer coach or the school to get children involved regardless of ability or disability.

I also feel that local clubs need to get more involved with schools, inner city schools especially after my time at Oasis i could see the positive impact it had on the children, and after feedback from the school how it had changed challenging behaviour.

I hope this helps as i am thrilled that someone is taking sports participation seriously at school level.

26 January 2021