

INQUIRY REPORT

Evidence from Cheshire Phoenix

Cheshire Phoenix

1. Introduction

Cheshire Phoenix Basketball Club operates the highly successful Hoops4Health programme as well as having numerous satellite and/junior clubs - very similar to the offerings of other BBL clubs - Newcastle Eagles, Leicester Riders, etc.



Cheshire Phoenix at recent Hoops4Health sessions

The Cheshire franchise area contains areas that are known to present social challenges e.g. Blacon, Lache and areas in Warrington. However, it is not traditionally recognised - particularly when comparing the region with other inner cities. Rather than duplicate information already submitted on similar programmes, Cheshire Phoenix would like to inform the APPG of (what it believes to be) a unique opportunity for ambitious young basketball players in the UK.



2. Background

For the past 27 years Cheshire Phoenix has run a Summer Basketball Camp. With an average of 200 campers attending over the past 5 years (and early indications suggesting in the region of 250 in the 28th year of the camp) it is one of the biggest and best camps in Europe. This year, the camp will move to "state-of-the-art" facilities at West Cheshire College, Ellesmere Port.

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The club also runs a Referee Course (2014 will be the fifth year) which is designed to provide in depth knowledge of officiating for those wanting to progress to Senior National League Basketball).

3. Objectives

The objectives of the summer basketball camp are for all participants to:

- enhance their skills in a fun and safe environment; and
- treat all campers equally to bring about an understanding of:
 - team work;
 - mutual respect for oneself and teammates;
 - being empowered to make informed choices;
 - building confidence and courage to act accordingly; and
 - being the best you can

4. Structure

The summer basketball camp is split into 4 levels:

- Regular camp - for those over 11 years of age;
- Big man camp - usually the minimum age is 14 and with a minimum height of 6'4";
- Junior+ Camp - for those aged between 7-10 with some basketball experience at school/club level;
- Junior Camp - for those aged between 7-10 who are beginners with little or no basketball experience; and
- Referees Course - for Levels 2 and 3.

5. Sponsorship

Places on the summer basketball camp are available to those showing the will and determination to participate (attitude and determination is everything), not necessarily the skill or ability, and these are sponsored by both international and local businesses, including:

- Duetsche Bank (Chief Financial Officer, Mark Whitehead, who is the Camp Director);
- BiG Storage (Chairman, Andrew Donaldson);
- Westgrove Group;
- Your Housing Group; and
- Cheshire Phoenix Basketball Club CIC.

The camp is self-financing with sponsorships usually of approximately 30% being provided by international or local businesses.

6. Activities

Like the Hoops4Health programme, the summer basketball camp uses basketball as an activity not only to improve skills, but also to convey a range of positive messages to encourage:

- keeping physically active and eating healthily;
- making lifestyle choices that positively affect health in the long and short term;
- an understanding of issues relating to nutrition, smoking, alcohol and drugs;
- using basketball as a fun, healthy sporting activity;
- education and the search for knowledge;
- everyone to understand that they have a choice in shaping their own future.

7. Organisation

The summer basketball camp is:

- run by Cheshire Phoenix Basketball Club CIC;
- managed by the Board;
- supported by experienced personnel (i.e. coaches, professional athletes, physiotherapists, mentors, first aiders, catering staff);
- led by experienced camp directors, Mark Whitehead and Mike Burton; and

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- held at West Cheshire College, Ellesmere Port.

8. Making a difference

For the past 5-6 years we have found that some of the players in Junior Clubs were unable to attend Summer Camp. On further investigation, we discovered that young aspiring players who wanted to attend the camp were also not able to participate largely due to parents/guardians being unable to fund attendance.

With this in mind, we developed a sponsorship scheme whereby a number of places (typically 30%) were offered to enable these “stars of the future” the opportunity to learn, play and compete on the same level playing field with those from more affluent backgrounds; presenting them with an unique opportunity to have access to some of the best coaches, mentors and professional players the UK has to offer.

During the week they are given the tools to, not only enhance their basketball skills, but equal emphasis is also given to developing a healthy lifestyle and making informed choices (e.g. education (including progression into higher education), nutrition, smoking, drugs, alcohol); building self-esteem and confidence, having mutual respect for oneself and others - to simply “be the best you can be”! As previous campers have also travelled from around the world (e.g. Turkey, UAE, Ireland, Spain, France, etc.) it also enables them to understand teammates with different backgrounds, beliefs and cultures. Each camper is also given an individual assessment highlighting strengths and advising on areas for improvement.

At the end of the week, awards are given out for:

- Championship team for each division - juniors, intermediate and seniors;
- 3on3 champions;
- 1on1 champions;
- Free throw competition;
- Best Defensive Player;
- All star game for each division;
- Slam Dunk competition;
- Individual awards, e.g. most improved player in each division, camper with the best attitude, etc.; and
- Camp prize is an all expenses paid trip to the 5 Star Camp in Pittsburgh, USA.

Previous participants have included professional players Josh McGinn, Ryan Gallagher, Phil Brandreth, John Simpson, Neil Gillard, Johannah and Jennifer Leedham and current Cheshire Phoenix players Jordan Smith, Daniel Miller and Sam Lavery. Coaches/Mentors have included John Lavery (current Coach of Cheshire Phoenix), Mike Burton (current Assistant Coach, Cheshire Phoenix), Mark Whitehead (CFO at Deutsche Bank), Chris Bulloch (Site Manager at Tarmac Building Products), Phil Percival (Director at Macdonald & Company: Energy & Environmental), Andrew Donaldson (Owner of BiG Storage and Chair of Cheshire Phoenix).



Cheshire Phoenix Summer Camp 2013

9. After Camp

Once the activities have finished and everyone's gone home, there is time to not only analyse the camp and highlight areas that went well, areas for improvement, etc. there is the opportunity to assess opportunities available to those who have the will (not purely ability as commitment and attitude are of equal importance) there

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“Success is 1% inspiration, 99% perspiration”) to continue. In this context, Cheshire Phoenix has the infrastructure available to further encourage these players by way of recommending and offering a place in one of the satellite/junior clubs, thereby ensuring that they have the opportunity to (not only) continue playing basketball but also the support of the Cheshire Phoenix coaching staff and infrastructure.

On the last day campers leave with:

- memories of an excellent week;
- having caught up with friends from previous camps;
- new friends;
- lessons to last a lifetime;
- information relating to clubs in their respective area;
- contact details and access routes to these clubs; and
- a continued support network of mentors.

10. It works!

Campers have returned year in, year out and the following show what previous campers have said:

‘I started going on the camp when I was 7 right through to 17. I saw it as a great opportunity to improve my skills with some of the best coaches in the country as well as playing against some of the best players in the country. The camp played a huge part in me getting where I am today.’



Jordan Smith - Cheshire Phoenix #12

‘My basketball game improved so much in the week, the coaches took time to help me develop lots of skills I hadn’t previously got, I now feel ready for the national league season ahead.’


Simon Jones age 14



‘One of the best camps I have been to. Challenging drills, physically demanding and amazing coaching staff. This is all you want to become a better basketball player.’

**Daniel Miller -
Cheshire Phoenix #33**

‘The years I was on the camp really improved me as a player. The coaches were great and helped me work on all aspects of my game. I am currently part of the Phoenix pro team and I think the camp helped me achieve this.’



Sam Lavery - Cheshire Phoenix #20

‘The camp was really hard work but great fun, I made some good friends and my basketball improved so much.’

Sam Wilson age 11

‘As always it was a really intense week with lots of great coaching and top level games, for many years the camp has helped me to play at the highest level I can.’

Josh McGinn age 17 Camp MVP 2010 Manchester Magic and England U18s. Currently playing for the Mersey Tigers.