

INQUIRY REPORT

Evidence from Lewisham Thunder

Lewisham Thunder

1. Introduction to Lewisham Thunder

Lewisham Thunder is a community based basketball club in the London Borough of Lewisham. It was formed in 2006 and is led by Steve Bucknall, the first Englishman to play in the NBA for the LA Lakers, ably assisted by an army of volunteers.

Developed in just six years from a community session with 12 youngsters, Lewisham Thunder now engages with more than 1,000 young people every year and has more than 200 registered club members.

Lewisham Thunder delivers technical training in addition to teaching the values of teamwork, responsibility and self-discipline. The club has been awarded 'Club Mark' Level 3 status. All Lewisham's coaching staff are qualified Level 3 coaches. The club has 5 national league teams, including wheelchair and girls' teams.

In 2011, the under-13s team were silver medalists in the national finals in only their second season; in 2012, the under-18s team became National Champions in their first season in the Premier League; in 2013, the under-14s team won the silver medal at the National Championships losing the final game by just 2 points in the final minute and this was the only game they lost in the entire season; and also in 2013, the Wheelchair team reached the National Championships, finishing with a bronze medal in only their second season. Lewisham has also provided Youth Games and Mini-Game basketball teams annually on behalf of the local authority and have won these games on several occasions.

2. Introduction to Basketball in Lewisham

Basketball in England has huge potential. This is particularly true of the London area which is culturally and ethnically diverse and has a concentrated population of young people.

Taking Lewisham as an example, as the second largest inner London borough in 2011 it is home to approximately 274,900 people (according to Greater London Authority ["GLA"] population estimates). It has a slightly younger age profile than the rest of the UK. Children and young people aged up to 19 years old make up 24.5% of its residents, compared to 22.4% for inner London and 23.8% nationally. There are 37,812 pupils within its 89 schools. Whilst 40% of its residents are from black and minority ethnic backgrounds, this rises to 75.5% within its school population.

Lewisham Thunder has done a large amount of work with disaffected young people. An example of this is Rowell Graham who Lewisham Thunder's President and Head Coach, Steve Bucknall, met whilst doing some in-school sessions. Rowell was about to be excluded from school. To avoid this, Steve negotiated a move for Rowell to another school and Rowell began training with the Lewisham club. This was followed by Rowell continuing his studies in the 6th form at the basketball academy that Steve Bucknall runs in partnership with Harris Academy in Beckenham. Rowell went on to win the under-18s national basketball championship with Lewisham and to represent England and now Great Britain at international level. Rowell is currently at Leeds Metropolitan University and has been offered scholarships to the USA which he hopes to take up in 2014.

Lewisham Thunder's aims and objectives are closely aligned with those of Lewisham Council's Children and Young People's Plan, which are to:

- provide children and young people with access culture, sport, leisure and play activities;
- reduce childhood obesity;
- reduce substance misuse, including alcohol and tobacco;
- promote mental and emotional well-being;
- strengthen further youth participation and involvement;
- reduce anti-social behaviour, youth crime and support young people who are the victims of crime;
- provide integrated youth support for all young people to ensure that they are able to make informed choices about their lives;
- reduce the number of young people (aged 16 to 24) who are not in education, employment, or training ["NEET 16-24"];
- raise participation and achievement at age 19; and
- secure a diverse 14 to 19 offer, which meets the needs and aspirations of learners.

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The London Crime Reduction Board's anti-gang strategy has identified early intervention for those at risk of gang involvement, through community engagement, work in schools and creation of diversionary activity as key to reducing gang related offending. Lewisham Thunder's work with young people has produced many individual stories of young people for whom basketball has provided a diversion from gangs and an exit to education and employment opportunities. Through basketball Lewisham is able to provide school children with positive role models to learn from and aspire to be.

3. Basketball conveys positive health and education messages to young people

Lewisham Thunder works in partnership with the local authority public health team to deliver the Hoops4Health programme which was originally developed in Newcastle. This programme focuses on healthy eating and lifestyles as well as providing very practical opportunities for young people to 'have a go' at basketball.

The element that makes the real difference in terms of impact with this is the fact that Lewisham has an existing club programme that allows young people to progress from 'having a go' to being able to join in established 'pay and play' sessions held across the local area. This then leads to being able to join the club and compete or continue to play for fun as well as educational opportunities in coaching, officiating, and healthy lifestyle support.

The sessions have been delivered by coaches working directly with Lewisham Thunder basketball club, some of whom have been with the programme since its inception in 2007. For example: Jack Green started with Lewisham as a 14 year old. He is now studying at University, still playing basketball and is involved in delivering the programme. This has enabled Lewisham to consistently ensure the high quality of delivery and information provided.

The heart and ethos of the club replicates a family unit that takes care of each other. This means that it uses coaches who are able to act as role models and who understand how to inspire youngsters who are not currently involved in sport. We feel this is a fundamental aspect of engaging young people and of encouraging them to remain in sport either on a competitive or recreational basis. This model also encouraged teachers supporting the programme to develop their own confidence and become involved at a much deeper level than they might otherwise do, thereby supporting the sustainability of basketball as an ongoing sport within the school.

We have in addition developed partnerships with local health forums that have provided funding towards setting up additional community basketball sessions that will include a focus on healthy eating, smoking cessation, promoting positive mental health and drug awareness.

Verification of the success of these partnerships can be obtained from Danny Ruta, Director of Public Health, London Borough of Lewisham, Laurence House, London SE6 4RU or by email to danny.ruta@lewisham.gov.uk

There are a number of inner London authorities that have amongst the highest obesity and lowest physical activity levels in the country. Couple this with high deprivation levels and it results in areas in desperate need of cost effective health interventions for their primary schools. The experience of Lewisham's Hoops4Health project has shown the potential to increase participation rates substantially amongst primary school children.

London Sport has completed an extensive consultation with interested local authorities in London. This took place throughout November and December 2013 and consisted of focus groups, telephone conversations and completed questionnaires. Results of this consultation show that the participating local authorities have identified that there is the need to provide additional opportunities for young people to engage in regular physical activity. Local authorities gathered this evidence from various sources, including:

- National child measurement programme statistics;
- Local Authority Joint Strategic Needs Assessments;
- Children's service needs assessment;
- Youth Councils;
- Health and wellbeing strategies;
- Consultation with school sport networks; and
- Partners and local communities

In addition, several local authorities are undertaking further consultation with schools and families early in 2014.

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4. Lewisham Thunder's Basketball Programmes

Lewisham Thunder understands that the only way to create a truly successful and sustainable programme that operates at the highest and most professional level is to develop a range of opportunities and provision for every stage of development, but most fundamentally at grassroots level. The Hoops4Health programme is an excellent way to do this as it provides opportunities to visit primary schools and allows children to experience basketball without them having to struggle to find somewhere to play.

There are many more opportunities to try football for example than there are to participate in basketball. This is because there has been sustained input into building this in partnership with the FA and many other institutions, over many years. Culturally, the community embraces football because it holds such a high profile. However, Lewisham believes that this can be achieved with basketball, albeit from a very different starting point.

Lewisham Thunder offers a programme that includes the following:

- Community 'Pay and Play' sessions;
- National League training programme;
- Excel pathway for players, including the Regional Performance Centre;
- Hoops4Health programme in primary schools;
- Holiday basketball camps;
- Wheelchair programme - Junior and Senior;
- Training and qualifications programme;
- Family to Family events; and
- Supported study sessions for identified players.

The partnership that Lewisham Thunder has with the Harris Academy in Beckenham:

- Offers the Basketball Academy;
- Enables Lewisham to work closely with staff;
- Encourages players to continue with a commitment to education; and
- Operates a 'no study, no play' policy.

5. Lewisham Thunder's Hoops4Health Statistics

Statistics relating to Lewisham Thunder's Hoops4Health programme are as follows:

- 36 schools have been involved in the Hoops4Health programme to date;
- 2,053 children in years 5 and 6 are participating in the Hoops4Health programme;
- 196 children have attended community basketball sessions or a basketball camp;
- 68 children have joined the club and are still participating in the Hoops4Health programme; and
- There is a strong and flourishing junior wheelchair programme that is well supported by the opportunities provided by the Hoops4Health sessions.

6. The Stockholm Road Project

Over the past year, Lewisham Thunder has had the fantastic opportunity of being able to create a central hub and base for the club. It also operates across multiple venues which are maintained as satellite sites, because they are established and serve the south of the borough of Lewisham.

The club was offered, and accepted, a rent free tenancy of a warehouse by a charity, the Surrey Canal Sports Foundation. This is the body overseeing the sports and leisure aspect of the Surrey Canal Regeneration. This offer equates to approximately £150,000 annually. Stockholm Road is adjacent to the Millwall football ground, and this opportunity is on the premise that the new Surrey Canal development (which will include a 3,000 seater arena with show court) will become the eventual permanent home of the Lewisham Thunder basketball club. The facility provides: 2 basketball courts; offices; and classrooms. It is envisaged that seating will be brought from the 2012 Olympics Aquatic Centre and furniture will come from Lewisham Town Hall.



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The new venue enables the club to tap into a new area of the borough which research has identified as having a population aged between 15 and 25 that constitutes 27.4% of all people living in the surrounding area, compared to a London Average of 11.5%. This gives us the opportunity to replicate and build on our present basketball programme.

7. Lewisham Thunder's Plans

Lewisham Thunder has a plan that includes the following:

- A Hoops4Health programme 'after school' club with supported study;
- Developing the schools' project across a new range of schools of which there are at least 70 within a two mile radius;
- Developing the community and local league programmes;
- Extended training programme for national league teams;
- Offering additional wheelchair basketball sessions;
- Developing 'Ball Again' and 'I AM' basketball programmes;
- Basketball Camps during school holidays;
- A coaching and officiating course programme;
- A mentoring programme;
- Nutrition and health support programmes;
- A sports psychology programme;
- Alternative provision for 14 to 19 year olds;
- Summer Central Venue League for local and school teams;
- Bounce back to fitness programme;
- A 'baby baskets' programme for children of 5 to 7 years old;
- Silver Shooters programme;
- Corporate 'pay and play' and team building sessions and basketball leagues and tournaments;
- Universal study support for those who want it; and
- Additional needs basketball provision for participants who cannot attend established sessions.

Based on what Lewisham has already achieved and established in community and national league basketball, the club believes that it will, as a minimum, be able to triple its registered participants. The club will be able to offer additional 'pay and play' sessions in response to the demand from a range of groups, covering all ages, genders and abilities, which will serve to increase numbers of informal participation. Lewisham has already successfully run women's basketball sessions for experienced players and those new to basketball. Further, Lewisham is looking to provide informal basketball league sessions and tournaments.

The club knows that there is a demand for additional sessions based on research carried out by school sports co-ordinators in Lewisham which have indicated that students in years 9 to 13 (i.e. ages 14 to 18) would like to play more basketball. This is particularly true of those young people not currently involved in sport. Lewisham regularly has players in the over 19 age group who contact the club who want to return to or start playing basketball and increasingly these players are women. In the past, the over 19 players have had to join in with the under-18 training sessions because of restrictions on court time. The new venue will enable them to have a designated session for the team which will lead to increased numbers and allow the development of a 'pay and play' session for over 19 players wanting to start basketball. Basketball has been identified as a priority sport in Lewisham and forms a significant part of the borough's sports development plan.

Going forward, in addition to the services the club is already providing, it intends to provide vocational courses for members that lead to qualifications in refereeing; table officiating; coaching; Health and Safety; nutrition and sports psychology. As well as providing the members with life skills, this will also allow the club to develop by providing in-house referees and officials. In addition, the club aims to further broaden its offerings, for example by offering corporate opportunities for team building through basketball, corporate basketball leagues and tournaments and bespoke activity days, thus meeting the needs of both the community and the commercial sectors in the surrounding areas.

Lewisham currently provides community basketball sessions twice weekly, for the 5 to 13 and over 14 age groups separately, in order to encourage people to take part without the commitment of playing for a team. These sessions have become increasingly busy with, on many occasions, more than 120 young people

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attending. Lewisham believes that it will be able to significantly extend participation by having access to increased court space and time.

Those who wish to compete can join the under-12, under-14, under-16 and under-18 boys and girls local league teams and compete in a Central Venue League. The club will establish regular weekly team training sessions for these groups, separate from the community sessions.

After these opportunities when players are ready, they can become a part of the National League programmes. To facilitate this, the club provides training sessions three times a week across two venues. Teams have in the past had to train together due to limitations on court time. The new venue enables teams to train as individual groups and allows the entry of further teams in each age group into the league.

For over 19 players Lewisham has a men's team that plays in the London Metropolitan local league. Family to Family sessions have been run to engage the parents and carers of members by involving them in the fun of basketball. In addition, the club has run the Hoops4Health program in local primary schools promoting healthy lifestyles through basketball and this has resulted in additional players joining the community sessions.

Alongside this the club has started a project called Leap to Learn in secondary schools which encourages participation in all aspects of basketball and offers a range of courses to promote a long term commitment to the sport.

Through these programmes Lewisham has developed positive, reliable and cohesive relationships with a variety of directorates within the local authority and has consistently demonstrated its ability to deliver high quality programmes.

8. Lewisham Thunder's Vision and Commitment

In order to achieve greater recognition of the good work within basketball related programmes and thereby elevate the profile of the sport and the benefits it brings, it is fundamental that providers are committed to a set of core values and principles and embrace a consistent shared vision.

Lewisham Thunder's vision is to provide a safe and encouraging environment where young people can come together to enjoy structured basketball sessions. To create basketball and personal development programmes throughout the Borough of Lewisham and beyond that will increase sport participation, inspire young people to fulfil their potential and have a positive impact on the community.

As a club, Lewisham Thunder is committed to being:

Collaborative - Collaborative working across Lewisham, with stakeholders and other partners is already well embedded. The club has a history of successful working in Lewisham and of delivering funded projects.

Evidence based - The work of the club is supported by a strong evidence base. Each of the outcomes and actions outlined in this plan are underpinned by detailed analysis of the need, which is reviewed annually to ensure it is still relevant and informs the steps that are being taken to improve the quality of service that the club provides.

Outcome focused - The club must be able to demonstrate that it does have an impact.

Efficient - The club's commitment to the delivery of high quality basketball includes a commitment to use all its resources efficiently and effectively, providing value for money for all of its members and partners. The club has always been committed to making effective use of its resources and ensuring its services demonstrate value for money. Although resources are limited, Lewisham is committed to the challenge of maintaining and building on the high quality services provided by the club.

Inclusive - The Club is committed to ensuring that every one who wants to play basketball will have an opportunity to do so in a supportive and considered environment.

Communicative - The views of club members and partners as well as the surrounding community are vital to the success of the club.

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Innovative - Lewisham Thunder has an established track record of developing innovative solutions to address complex and entrenched issues.

9. Lewisham Thunder's Management Team

Lewisham Thunder is a very well managed basketball club.

i) Steven Bucknall - Lewisham Thunder President and Head Coach

Steven Bucknall is one of the finest basketball players that this country has ever produced and he was the first Englishman to play in the NBA with the Los Angeles Lakers. Over a 17-year professional basketball career, he has represented teams in the USA, England, France, Germany, Greece and Italy; was a former England School Boys Basketball Captain; GB Men's Basketball Captain; England Captain; and a Commonwealth Bronze medallist in 2006.

In addition to being President and Head Coach of Lewisham Thunder, Steve is the former England under-18s Men's Head Coach and current Chairman of the London Coaches association.

Steve grew up in South London and is passionate about growing basketball amongst young people in the area.

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ii) Philip Lewis - Lewisham Thunder Club Chair

Philip Lewis has a wealth of experience in the corporate world in the USA with Fortune 500 companies working in the field of communications and information technology. He has developed confidential IT and Internet based solutions, working with groups such as the United Nations, and The Bechtel Corporation. He is also a professional photographer.

iii) Keith D'wan - Lewisham Thunder Club Vice Chair

Keith D'wan is a qualified teacher and a senior youth worker who has run multiple youth clubs for Lewisham local authority. He has been a school governor for 24 years and is an international referee, for both able bodied and wheelchair basketball. Keith is also a doping control officer for UK Sport.

iv) Nikki Sealy - Lewisham Thunder Club Secretary

Nikki Sealy is a former British Ice Dance Champion who has since spent 15 years as a professional coach and has successfully run a number of businesses. Nikki retrained as a teacher at Goldsmiths University and gained a Masters degree in Early-Years Education. She is an advisory teacher for the Lewisham School Improvement Team and she was the volunteer administrator when the club won the England Basketball Administrator of the Year Award.

v) Ann Pittman - Lewisham Thunder Club Treasurer

Ann Pittman is a qualified teacher, who has taught in the borough of Lewisham for more than 25 years. Ann has extensive experience of teaching in an inclusive main stream environment that is resource-based for children with complex medical needs. She has thirty years experience in basketball administration at club, league and regional level and is also an EB table official tutor. Ann is a lifelong Lewisham resident and she graduated with a B.Ed from Goldsmiths University.

vi) Heidi Nietzold - Lewisham Thunder Welfare Officer

Heidi Nietzold holds a degree in law and she currently provides academic support to degree students with disabilities. As Lewisham's Welfare Office, Heidi is responsible for implementing health and safety and child protection policies and for processing CRB checks.

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vii) Lewisham Thunder Coaches

Amongst the Lewisham Thunder coaches are the following: Dejan Paunovic; Natasha Green; Eric Sommers; Clive Sinclair; and Andrew McKella. The under-16s coach is Josh Davis, a Yale graduate; the under-13s coach is Peter Lang, a qualified social worker; the girls' coach is Peter Bishai, a research scientist at Kings College, London; and the wheelchair coach is Steve Sadler, a paralympian.

The club's well organised and extremely committed management team is made up of people that have an extensive and broad range of experience in delivering basketball programmes; business; youth and social work; education; sport and leisure facility management and law. The club has coaches who come from a wide range of backgrounds and educational experiences. These include those who have played and coached in the USA and Europe; those who have attended top-class universities; and those educated locally and who continue to live and work in the local area.

The club combines both educational and reflective approaches and is continuously looking forward and building upon what has already been achieved. It relies and draws upon a wide range of skills and abilities within its team to ensure that it has an understanding of each situation, be it in respect of an individual, a business proposition or the development of the programme as a whole. The club is in a situation now where it is making a transition from an entirely voluntary organisation into one that incorporates a business model. The club recognises that it needs to do this as a part of a long-term journey, to maintain sustainability as well as developing the quality of its provision. However, in doing this, the club is careful not to lose sight of its main purpose and set of values.

Lewisham Thunder aims to provide a safe and encouraging environment where young people can come together to enjoy structured basketball sessions. To create basketball and personal development programmes across London that will increase sport participation, inspire young people to fulfil their potential and have a positive impact on the community. In addition, Lewisham Thunder's vision is to become one of the major forces in basketball in this country

10. Lewisham Thunder's Finances

Lewisham Thunder's finances comprise the following:

- Capital and set-up costs (e.g. paid by grants and partners);
- Running costs (e.g. outgoings to run the building against court hire);
- Funding (e.g. from grants, subscriptions and membership); and
- Sustainability (e.g. through partners and session development).

11. Funding for Effective Basketball-related Programmes

Recognising the potential for basketball to make a significant impact on the health and wellbeing of young people in London, Lewisham Council in partnership with seven other London boroughs; London Sport; Lewisham Thunder and London Lions, has recently applied to the Big Lottery Reaching Communities Fund to pilot a Hoops4Health programme in 80 London primary schools.

As a club, Lewisham Thunder has developed partnerships, amongst many others, with the following

- The L&Q Foundation;
- Surrey Canal Sports Foundation;
- The Renewal Trust;
- London Borough of Lewisham;
- NHS;
- Sportivate;
- Sport England;
- England Basketball;
- Metropolitan Police; and
- Think Farm.

The club has developed its focus for raising funds to incorporate a variety of aspects that run alongside its provision of basketball. This includes supporting the development of participants through education, mentoring programmes, vocational training, healthy lifestyles, etc.

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Sir Steve Bullock, Mayor of Lewisham, has said, "*Lewisham Thunder is a good example of the important way that partnership between Lewisham Council and voluntary and community organisations works for the benefit of local communities. Basketball has proved to be an excellent way of reaching young people in our borough, not only encouraging them to get fit and healthy, but also supporting them to develop important life skills and raise their aspirations. Through the "Hoops4Health" programme, Thunder is providing an invaluable service by introducing children in our primary schools to good role models who can communicate key health messages in a way that they can understand.*"

12. Improving the Profile of Basketball

Improving the profile of basketball requires the development of a professional approach that calls on a variety of skills and experience. Over recent years, there have been a large number of good, committed people who have left the game of basketball. Their skills and experience have not been utilised, celebrated or valued sufficiently and this has had a negative impact on the quality of basketball players coming through. The pervading atmosphere does not currently celebrate success or promote high expectations.

There is a need to develop positive working relationships that promote and encourage good communication at all levels. Success needs to be found, acknowledged, learned from and built upon. Those involved need to be able to understand and incorporate the working practices of both the private and third sectors. Cultural literacy needs to be developed to function successfully across the sectors and be able to interpret and apply this at grass roots level. Lewisham believes that the make up of its management team puts the club in a good position to do this. All of the management team live in the local area and so hold a vast amount of local knowledge and information, whilst also having the range of skills to be able to connect and communicate with a variety of stakeholders and interested parties.

The club's programme works closely with local volunteer organisations and the club's success so far has been based on the continued and sustained commitment of volunteers. The venue the club now has will enable the further development of this aspect and more opportunities for volunteers are anticipated. The atmosphere of inclusion that the venue provides supports this and allows the club to formalise its volunteer arrangements in a way that has not been possible in previous years.

The club has been extensively involved in running Regional Performance Centres on behalf of England Basketball and of hosting regional team training, which supports player development onto the national pathway. The new facility allows this to be extended to provide a more meaningful and comprehensive experience by providing a totally basketball-focused environment in which to develop young talent and foster attitudes in line with the philosophy of long term development. Lewisham Thunder's President and Head Coach, Steve Bucknall has a wealth of experience in player development, taking an inexperienced club team through their first season in the premier national league, to become National Champions and taking the England under-18s squad to their best ever result at the European Championships, which resulted in them gaining promotion to Division A.

Lewisham has an established wheelchair programme with a senior team in the national league and a coach in Steve Sadler, who heads up the junior regional squad. However, there is potential to further develop this programme to provide a central point for wheelchair basketball in London. Steve, an ex paralympian in Sydney in 2000, is an inspirational figure at the club and he is able to motivate and support all participants. By sharing his vast experience and knowledge, he is able to create an atmosphere of collaboration and inclusion that brings people together.

13. Interview with Rowell Graham

Rowell Graham is a 6'5" swingman playing for Leeds Carnegie in EBL Division One. The 19 year old played for Great Britain Under-20s in Romania over the summer of 2013, helping the team to a silver medal at the European Division B Championships.

Iain Roberts of the Basketball Mag caught up with Rowell to find out about his basketball background and his aims for what promises to be a very bright future:



How did you get into basketball? "*I started playing basketball when I was 15 years old. I always wanted to be a basketball player even when I had never played the game in my life. So when I saw the opportunity after Steve*

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Bucknall had come to my school, I just had to take it. He asked me to come down to his club and ever since then I've wanted to do something big in basketball."

What have you achieved so far in your career? *"I was the Most Improved Player of BUS camp. I also won the under-18s Premier League while playing for Lewisham Thunder in my last year and was named MVP and Player of the Year. That same year I went with my England under-18s team to Bosnia. We finished third, giving us a place in Division A for the first time ever. The next year with my GB under-20s team we went to the finals and finished second. It was not the ending we were setting out for, but we did achieve promotion to Division A. There are more achievements, but these are the ones that mean the most to me."*

What are your strengths and weaknesses as a basketball player? *"The strength in my basketball game would have to be my athleticism to block, rebound, finish the ball, bring energy to the team and defence - I am able to guard all positions of the court. My weakness I would say is my jump shot, which is what I am trying to build right at this moment, and dribbling skills. I feel the work I am putting in for these will make me successful in the end."*

What are your goals for this season? *"My personal aims are for me to have a jump shot with consistent range from 15 to 17 feet and I'm improving my dribbling skills. My team goals are for me and my team, Leeds Carnegie, to win the EBL Division 1 championship and everything else."*

Who is your biggest basketball role model? *"My top role model in basketball would have to be Steve Bucknall for his mindset and because he came from the same background as me. He did something so many people set out to do and can't. He's also a big reason why I started basketball."*

Does anyone stand out as the toughest opponent you've faced? *"To be truthful, my toughest opponent has been in training and I have had possibly three players who are all about the same in competitive drive:*

- 1. Devon van Oostrum from my GB team, just because we had the same mindset - we both hated losing so we would go at each other every training season. We loved it when we weren't on the same team because it felt more challenging and because we would keep score between each other of who won the most games.*
- 2. Dwayne Camille because his game is defence and I would not be able to put the ball in front of him without him trying to take it or hack at me. He really forced me to think about where I'm going to put the ball next because he knows how I play and also because he loves to make me lose.*
- 3. Steve Bucknall, when I first joined his club, because all he did was make me pay for anything I did wrong. There was never a time when I couldn't have my hand up on defence without regretting it. I guess that's why I play so hard on defence."*

What do you do to unwind? *"To relax I play on my play station or watch a movie at night. Other than that, I don't really see the need to relax apart from when my body needs to recover."*

Where do you see yourself in five years' time? *"I don't want to think that far up the road, but I have a feeling it will be somewhere good."*

14. Presentation to the APPG on 8th April 2014

Steve Bucknall spoke to the APPG on 8th April 2014 and he said, *"I am from London and I was the first English player in the NBA in the USA. I was at the end of my playing career and I returned to London to find that there was nowhere for young people to play basketball in South London. So, I established the Lewisham club with others in 2006 and it grew in six years from a community session with twelve youngsters to engaging more than 1,000 every year and now has more than 200 registered club members. It is totally volunteer run and it focuses on technical training plus teamwork, responsibility and self discipline.*



Lewisham Thunder has five national league teams and a wheelchair team who are National champions. We have been Lewisham Sports Club of the Year for the last two years and we received the Mayor of London's Team London Award.

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Our sessions include 'pay and play'; basketball training; Hoops4Health; camps; wheelchair basketball; training for qualifications; and study support sessions. We have a key partnership with the Harris Academy in Beckenham, which operates a 'no study, no play' approach.

Lewisham has a population of 275,000 with 25% of them under 19 years of age and there are 76% black and minority ethnic origin children in schools. We seek to address health, education and crime or anti-social behaviour issues as well as excellence and participation in sport."

Rowell Graham also spoke to the APPG on 8th April 2014 saying, *"I started at 15 years old and I used to get into trouble. I had choices to make, good versus bad. I had initially chosen boxing, but I didn't think that learning how to fight was the best thing to do. Basketball provided me with a way out. Because we couldn't afford much else and because I had heard that there was an NBA Coach, Steve Bucknall, in Lewisham, I insisted that as my birthday present I wanted my Dad to take me to the Lewisham basketball club. My peers initially tried to stop me doing this, but I said "No" and eventually gangs leave you alone when you have made a choice of what you want to do and they see you are doing something good. I have been involved ever since and I am now part of the GB basketball programme."*



Khalil Baro, another participant in Lewisham Thunder's programmes, also spoke to the APPG and he said, *"I started at Lewisham Thunder at 16 years old. I had been playing football for Fulham, but there was a lot of competition for me to become the best at football and I was eventually released by Fulham in year 7. I heard about Steve Bucknall being in Lewisham and I talked to him, got to know him and followed his advice. I want to be 'unique', somebody special and basketball has provided me with that route, direction and a foundation for my education. I now understand that there are lots of steps and that I now have to go to university and get a degree to follow my dream. If I fail to become a star basketball player, I will still have my degree to fall back on."*

Nikki Sealy then finished Lewisham's presentation to the APPG by showing a very moving and inspiring video entitled, "Archie's Story". In the video, which shows how basketball can really help in such cases, we meet Archie, a 10 year old twin. Both he and his brother Charlie have cerebral palsy. The twins have much in common and do things together. Archie explains how cerebral palsy affects him. Doctors predicted that he would be unable to do certain things that he can now do. He spends much of his time in a wheelchair, but crawls when out of it to enjoy certain things such as gardening. He is unable to do things as quickly as others; it just takes time, especially when moving about. He does not need help academically; he says that his brain works. Archie says that whilst he may look different he does not feel different. He thinks he is the same, but on wheels. Archie plays wheelchair basketball which gives him the chance to socialise, play with others and to be part of a team. Archie sees his coach, Steve Sadler, as a role model who inspires him. This was first broadcast in the Learning Zone on BBC2 in March 2012 as part of the programme "Same but different". The video can be viewed at:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/learningzone/clips/cerebral-palsy-archies-story/13703.html>

