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Building a Legacy for Youth and Coaching- Champion Coaching on Merseyside

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Introduction

This chapter outlines and analyses the impacts and outcomes of Champion Coaching (CC) in St Helens and Knowsley, which ran from 1996-1999. One purpose is to demonstrate the complexity of Sports Development interventions and the problems of evaluating their impacts over time. It also reinforces the need, indicated in the Cabinet Office research review (Collins et al, 1999) for clear and measurable objectives and indicators for programmes, so that their successes or failures can be clearly attributed and tracked.

As a programme intended to develop both opportunities for youth sport and coaching development, Champion Coaching also demonstrated potential conflicts between those responsible for designing and implementing programmes. Diverse objectives and the involvement of different stakeholders can result in outcomes differing from the original 'blueprint', or impacts unintended or unforeseen. Consensus is often assumed, and yet implementation can vary widely across different sites, as a result of varied interpretations of programme intentions.

This evaluation required examining the aims, objectives and theory behind the CC Scheme, using a 'theory based' or 'program logic' approach (Weiss, 1998). A brief summary of the research and its findings is preceded by a brief examination of Champion Coaching's aims and objectives and a short description of its key features. More details can be found in NCF publications (1992; 1993; 1997). The chapter goes on to outline the lessons learned from the Merseyside cases and to examine CC's legacy to its successors, the Active Sport programmes and the county partnerships, examined by Enoch, Charlton and Lindeman and Conway in chapters **X, Y and Z**.

The National Champion Coaching Scheme

Champion Coaching operated from 1991 to 1999 in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, Scotland having its own youth-oriented coaching programme. This made it

one of the largest and longest running sports development programmes in the UK. The Scheme had a national template, though it was delivered locally by partnerships usually led by local authorities. The then Chief Executive of the NCF, Geoff Cooke, described Champion Coaching as ‘the success story of the decade’ (NCF, 1997:1). Initially a pilot of just 24 schemes, the Scheme grew to involve more than 145 Local Authorities, and over 8,500 coaches. In 1997/8, 14,000 children were taking part in sports courses offered across England and Wales (Table B.1).

The mission of CC was to:

Promote quality assured youth sport coaching for performance motivated children, within a coordinated community structure (NCF, 1996:3).

Its purposes were to:

- Recruit and develop coaches to work with junior performers
- Create quality coaching opportunities which enable keen and interested 11-16 year olds to become more confident and competent in sport
- Support the development of junior clubs and their coaches
- Raise the national and local profile of coaching and youth sport development (NCF, 1996:3).

The concept behind Champion Coaching was encapsulated by the slogan in the NCF’s (1996) *Guide to Champion Coaching*: ‘Better Coaching... Better Sport for Young People’. By providing structured and good quality coaching for young people after school, the Scheme aimed to close the gap to club-based sport through ‘exit routes’ or pathways into local clubs or county development squads. Crucially, being managed by the NCF, it was clearly seen as an important tool in meeting the development needs of coaches as well as of performers. NCF funding enabled coaches to be paid an agreed rate and to access training according to their needs, as indicated by ‘profiling’ meetings with the responsible SDO.

[Insert Table B.1 near here]

While CC was a major scheme, supported by the Sports Council through an annual grant to the NCF, its final costs are almost impossible to estimate. The NCF estimated that by 1995/6 various national agencies, including the Foundation for Sport and the

Arts and the local authorities, had invested over £1.5 million since 1992 (NCF, 1996); clearly, by the end of the Scheme the final figure was much greater.

A particular convergence of work in different policy streams, in Physical Education, coaching and youth sport, CC's programme design was clearly influenced by the work of the *Coaching Matters* review (Sports Council, 1991). Also, as indicated by Collins (1995), CC's growth was mirrored by the increase in employment of Youth Sport Managers and Development Officers, many of whom had a coaching background. Despite its growth, the Scheme was not adopted by all local authorities, which had to bid for funding to the NCF, against specific 'readiness criteria'. Not all were successful in their applications: for example, despite being one of the original 24 pilots in 1991, Cheshire County Council failed to achieve funding for subsequent programmes.

In 1996 Champion Coaching became absorbed into the new National Junior Sport Programme (NJSP), together with the BT TOPS programmes of the Youth Sport Trust. Re-launched and redesigned, the Scheme gained impetus, support and funding, though it remained under the auspices of the NCF.

One of CC's important features was that local authorities selected the sports they wished to target for development from a list of 17. Selection was based on local audits and evaluations of development needs and resources (such as existing junior clubs). As a result of this local decision-making and interpretation, local schemes varied in sports, size and scope, a diversity recognised in *Recipes for Action* (NCF, 1992). This diversity contributed to challenges in evaluating Scheme impacts.

Though the original report (NCF, 1992:6), said CC should be *available to all young people*, there was little in the guidance for local schemes to meet specific equity targets. Those from deprived socio-economic groups were not mentioned in guidance on evaluation (NCF, 1996): local schemes were required to report only on the number and gender of participants and young people with a disability.

No national report was completed when CC was terminated in 1999, so evidence of success or lessons learned were never widely disseminated. In the review of coaching

in 1999, culminating in *The UK Vision for Coaching* (UK Sport, 2001), a dearth of research into the impacts of ‘quality coaching’ was reported (UK Sport, 1999). Later, despite the size and significance of CC, it was not mentioned in the Coaching Task Force’s report (CTF, 2002), nor in the review completed by Mori for Sportscoach UK (Mori, 2004).

Outcomes and impacts – the problems of evaluating a moving target

While evaluation of CC nationally was problematical, as a result of lack of resources and agreed outcome measures, these issues were compounded locally by the diversity of implementation models and the speed of new policy initiatives. The aims, objectives, scope and outcomes of each local CC scheme depended on the priorities, concerns and inputs of the authorities and individuals responsible. This made any evaluation of outcomes much more complex and multi-faceted, since without consistent baseline data on the selected measures, any improvements or benefits claimed are very difficult to trace. For this reason, selecting a small number of cases for evaluation appeared to be the only viable solution.

After some problems in identifying suitable cases and obtaining the necessary co-operation, St Helens and Knowsley were chosen (along with Flintshire, though these results are discussed elsewhere (Bell, 2004). This enabled the author to do an in-depth analysis of the contexts, mechanisms and outcomes achieved, and it is hoped, a better understanding of ‘what worked’, for whom and in what circumstances. This is advocated in the ‘realist’ approach to evaluation of Pawson and Tilley (1997). Evaluation problems were further compounded by the lack of resources available for extensive before and after studies or cohort comparisons. Research was completed single-handedly, and there were significant personnel or management changes in the local authority departments concerned, which contributed to a loss of relevant data. Thus though only modest cohort studies were achieved, they were deemed worthwhile, given the significance of the sports development intervention they represented.

A growing demand for more robust evidence of long term outcomes for sports development interventions, was highlighted by Collins (2003) and Coalter (2000;

2001). The lack of local baseline data for this study remained, with no possibility of a selecting a 'control' cohort to compare results with a comparable cohort of those in Knowsley and St Helens. Consequently, results from the National Survey of Young People (Sport England MORI/, 2000, 2002) were used for key indicators like club membership, regular sports participation and the number of sports played in and outside school by participants.

Another comparison with young peoples' participation in performance-oriented courses was with a large-scale study of a county CC scheme in Nottinghamshire (Collins and Buller, 2000, 2003). Though this study found good exit routes after participation in CC, it had limited scope to explain some of its results or to trace longer-term outcomes. However, it found participation across that county was related to the level of deprivation of an area, indicating barriers to participation that were "more structural than circumstantial" (Collins, 2003:93). The coaching development aspects of the Nottingham scheme were not addressed, and there were few comparative studies of coach development, though Lyle *et al* (1997) had considered recruitment and motivation of coaches and a Team Sport Scotland evaluation had considered some aspects of coach development (Allison and Taylor, 1997).

The mechanisms of CC are the essential aspects of the process as outlined by the NCF and subsequently adapted by the authorities. These comprised:

- An audit of local sports opportunities and resources for young people
- A Youth Sport Manager responsible for CC
- Local sports specific co-ordinating groups
- Based on the audit, the selection of sports for development
- Junior Club Development – helping clubs to establish a suitable exit route
- Coach Development – the enhancement of individual coaches' knowledge and skills
- Coach Profiling, through one to one meetings and support for training (scholarships)
- Delivery of sport programmes, at relatively low cost to participants
- Development of a coaching community (leading to creation of a local coaching development plan)
- Monitoring and evaluation, albeit on a limited range of factors, reported to NCF

- Governing body templates for each sport identifying CC's role in player development.

The impacts of these mechanisms were investigated through a variety of methods, outlined below, but since the research was retrospective, they were partly determined by the data available, rather than what was ideal. A lack of clear, unambiguous and agreed outcome measures meant that each local authority had different systems for recording participant data and monitoring its scheme. As the NCF emphasised, output-oriented management information - the number of courses, coaches and participants - was what the authorities recorded and reported. According to Rossi et al (1999) 'distal' outcomes are longer term behavioural changes arising from an intervention, as opposed to such immediate outputs. 'Intermediate' outcomes of CC included the enjoyment level of children or improvements in coaches' knowledge or experience. Based on extensive experience, Collins et al (1999) suggested that up to seven years ideally should be allowed before policy outcomes can be said to be sustained.

This is not a problem unique to sport, as Sanderson (1998), Alcock et al (1998) and Davies et al (2000) noted the difficulties of many public programmes in obtaining evidence of "what works". Of course, outcomes can also be influenced by factors other than the Scheme. In this case, membership of clubs and regular sport participation (at least once a month) from two to five years after the sports course were used as outcome measures for participants. Outcome measures for the coaches were the self-reported extent of youth and performance coaching since CC, involvement with CPD activities, as well as the retention of coaches by local authorities. The visible outcome of an increased profile and status for coaching was represented by the development and implementation of a local coaching strategy. Club membership also served as a measure of the effectiveness of local pathways in converting interest into performance-oriented engagement with sport, once CC ended.

Research methods and approaches

The research started late in 1999 and ran until 2003, utilising a social rather than a 'scientific' realist approach (Obare and Nichols, 2001) that recognised the complex

nature of the social aspects of the programmes was best understood by using both qualitative and quantitative methods. In this way, differences in the local contexts, the mechanisms employed and the results achieved in each Borough were analysed to achieve as complete as possible an appraisal of the impacts.

The qualitative method of in-depth interviewing was useful in arriving at a better understanding of “how” programmes worked, particularly in dynamic and changing situations over the elapsed period considering the range of factors recognised as influencing the sport participation of young people (Kremer et al, 1997; de Knop et al, 1996).

The summary of the local outputs are shown in Table B.2, from reports submitted by the local authorities to the NCF.

[Insert table B. 2 near here]

The methods used were:

- a) questionnaires completed by pupils and their parents
- b) questionnaires completed by coaches
- c) interviews with coaches and SDOs, and
- d) visits to schools for interviews with teachers and group discussions with pupils.

Different approaches to registrations meant sample groups differed in their composition, limiting direct comparisons; it was possible to survey participants in St Helens for 1996-99 but only for 1999 in Knowsley. A gap of two years between surveys in St Helens (late 2000) and Knowsley (2002), covered a similar time lapse, but may have contributed to a lower response from the latter. Surveys of coaches were completed in 2002 in both case study areas and of a sample from the national register of coaches. Follow-up interviews with coaches and SDOs and visits to schools took place in 2003.

a) Survey of pupils and parents

A questionnaire to participants and their parents was mailed to addresses supplied by the relevant authorities. Largely based on that used by Collins and Buller (2000), it

was designed to allow comparisons on selected variables with their larger sample. Participants were asked about their enjoyment and benefits they perceived from their coaching, their participation in sport in and out of school, their exit route from CC, and their experience of club membership. Parents were asked to rate aspects of CC about which they might be expected to have concerns, namely the organisation and accessibility of the courses, the information they received about progression opportunities for their children, and their contact with the coaches. Given the lapse of time and problems of missing, duplicate or incomplete registrations, response rates of 40% and 26% were considered acceptable for St Helens and Knowsley respectively.

b) Survey of coaches

A questionnaire was posted to all Case study coaches for whom addresses were available, including a small group in Flintshire, and a national database sample of 105. Only 50 usable answers were received initially, a response of 34%. Additional responses were obtained by telephone with all who could be contacted, increasing the sample to 67, including a good proportion of the coaches in both Merseyside programmes (about 25%).

Coaches were asked to identify how their involvement with CC had impacted on the level and amount of their current coaching, their relationship with the local authorities, and their subsequent use of continuing professional development (CPD) services, particularly any provided by sportscoachUK (scuk).

c) Interviews with coaches

Social and personal factors appeared to be central to coaching motivations (Lyle et al, 1997; Lyle 2002), so they were explored through the interviews both in person and on the telephone. In interviews lasting from 30 minutes to an hour, five coaches from Knowsley and four from St Helens, across six sports, were interviewed face to face, in a semi-structured format based on the mail questionnaire, but allowing in-depth examination of concepts and amplification of key points. A further five Merseyside coaches were contacted in more limited telephone interviews. Interviews were taped and transcribed, or notes taken if taping was impractical or objected to.

The main themes explored with coaches were:

- CC's impact on the level and volume of coaching they subsequently did
- The impact of paid employment as a coach and their subsequent careers, and
- Attitudes to and influences on their professional development.

Interviews were also conducted with SDOs in each local authority, the Acting Director of the Merseysport Partnership (who had been the St Helens SDO), the Regional Coaching Development Officer of SportscoachUK, the Advisor for PE in St Helen, and the PE Curriculum Leaders group in Knowsley.

d) Visits to schools and group interviews

Visits to schools in both areas followed up issues raised in the participants' questionnaires, and children and teachers were interviewed. Group interviews focused on what young people in the same age groups (school years 10 and 11) felt about local sporting opportunities, and examined their perceptions of current pathways for people interested in sport. Teachers were asked about their perceptions and recollections of CC, and their current relationships with SD units.

'Low' and 'high' referring schools were identified by analysing the registrations provided by the local authorities, though there were some problems in schools agreeing to take part. The size and composition of the groups varied, but they included 74 children and two staff in two schools in Knowsley and 57 children and four staff in three schools in St Helens.

Bridging gaps? The impacts on participants and pathways

The characteristics of the samples from each Borough were slightly different, as shown in Tables B.3 and B4. However, when compared to all registrations, these groups were considered representative by gender and sport. Children had all completed their CC courses between one and four years earlier.

[insert Tables B3 and B.4 here]

As in Nottinghamshire, there was clear evidence that CC was successful in providing enjoyable and worthwhile courses for young people. Children said they enjoyed their course – ninety four percent in Knowsley and ninety percent in St Helens, with

similar proportions shares stating they had benefited from their courses. Children were likely to identify that improving performance and learning more skills was the thing they most enjoyed. This confirmed CC courses were perceived as appropriate and of good quality for performance-oriented children. Encouraging rates of club membership and regular sports participation in the respondents was also found, as shown in Table B.5.

[Insert Table B.5 and B.6 about here]

The pattern of club membership showed no clear relationship to the time elapsed, or the particular course, though girls were less likely to be club members than boys in Knowsley. As shown in Table B.6, rates of club membership were still higher than the England average for both groups of girls and boys. It must be recognized, however, that children were selected to take part or referred to the courses because they were interested (mostly by teachers), and in the case of Knowsley over 70 per cent were already in some form of club at school. So, higher rates of club membership might be expected than for 'typical' 15- 16 year olds. Participants enjoyed a range of exit routes as can be seen in Figure B.1.

[insert Figure B.1 here]

A key exit route for these schemes was the well-established Merseyside Youth Games (MYG). This was part of a deliberate and planned approach of integrating CC into existing youth sport opportunities through district-based training and county-based competition. This engagement allowed young people to extend their sport involvement beyond the CC courses, and may have contributed to the extent of sustained participation and club-based sport later. As confirmed in later discussions, whether young people joined a club was clearly not due solely to their CC experiences. Essentially children relied on clubs being accessible and this was clearly not always the case, particularly in Knowsley.

But, the clubs young people joined often met 'youth-friendly' criteria identified (de Knop et al, 1994). As shown in Table B.7, these were: a welcome from the club, an active junior section, organised matches and competitions, friendly coaches and leaders and low fees and charges. However, only a minority of participants indicated they had found out about their club from the CC course, as displayed in Table B.8.

[insert Tables B.7 and B.8 about here]

This reproduced the findings of Collins and Buller (2000), who discovered the level of information to children about opportunities to follow CC was generally poor, and how children understood and acted on it varied.

Parents' views and impacts on pathways

Parents rated characteristics of the courses on a scale from one (poor) to five (excellent). The highest mean score was for the enjoyment of the children and the lowest was for the coaches' contact with parents. This is also consistent with Collins and Buller's (2000) findings and appears to show that CC tended to neglect communication with parents by coaches. The few children who had found out about their club from their parents, as shown in Table B.9, could indicate that these children were from families where sports club membership was not traditional.

[insert Table B.9 here]

High parental ratings were not apparently influential on whether children went on to join a club. Due to the small samples there was little pattern to the ratings of parents of the sports concerned.

Geography and participation

The distribution of children showed clusters in certain parts of the both Boroughs, reflecting the venues, schools and population characteristics. Postcodes from home addresses were converted to wards, to see if there was any relationship to the degree of social deprivation, as measured by ward scores for the Index of Multiple Deprivation (DETR, 2000). The higher this score, the more deprived the ward. Figures B.2 and B.3 show that in Knowsley some of the most deprived wards achieved higher participation rates than wards in St Helens. This participation was proportional to the 2001 population aged under 16 in the most deprived wards, as shown in Table B.10. Most significantly, in Knowsley these wards are amongst the most deprived in England. Analysis of participant postcodes also showed some overlap of registrations between the Boroughs, with some courses clearly accessible

to children from the neighbouring authorities, including some from deprived wards in Liverpool. This was a positive impact of cross-boundary working and planning.

[insert Figures B.2 and B.3 about here, on same page]

[insert Table B.10 here]

As highlighted by the schools visits, transport and mobility remains an issue for young people, still too young to travel extensively alone. Without adequate public transport, young people rely heavily on parents' willingness and ability to chauffeur them to sport opportunities. In Knowsley, courses were provided at both ends of the Borough, to enable easier access, or transport was provided from schools to alleviate the pressure on parents. This may account for a more even spread of enrolments across Knowsley wards. The St Helens distribution was clearly skewed to its more affluent wards, despite many venues being centrally located.

The views of teachers and children on pathways and opportunities

Since more than three years had elapsed since the end of CC, it was difficult to find school staff who had been directly involved. However, some were able to give their views on the current relationship with the SD Unit, on links established with clubs, or on opportunities available.

In 'low referral' schools in both Boroughs, year 10 and 11 children's attitudes towards sport after school ranged from very positive to very negative. Children knew of local opportunities but were often not interested in taking them up, and very few were in clubs or any organised sports, in or out of school. These were also sports not involved in CC, like boxing, dancing or boys football. Girls were often more critical than boys of local opportunities. Many children from both high and low referral schools cited transport and distance as being big factors in whether or not they took part, even if they were interested in the sport on offer. Children, whether active or not, blamed lack of involvement in sport on a lack of interest or motivation, though they also criticised the standard of the facilities available to them.

The main role fulfilled by 'low referral' schools was to communicate the sports opportunities through distributing information on noticeboards or in assemblies, but

they provided little else by way of direct links to clubs. Some low referral schools were trying to do more, but were hampered by poor facilities or lack of time. Teachers also pointed to problems, not confined to low referral schools, of getting children to after school clubs or competitions outside school hours where both parents were working, or unable to provide transport.

Schools' relationship with the SD Unit also varied: 'high referral' schools had regular meetings with SD staff, discussing plans and joint initiatives. But success appeared to vary, depending on the priority afforded to links with community sport by the school and the enthusiasm of individual teachers. The notion that only affluent areas got involved with CC could be refuted by looking at the referrals from Knowsley schools, several of which were in very deprived wards.

In Knowsley communications were enhanced by regular meetings of the PE Curriculum Leaders group, attended by SD unit staff, which gave both interests a chance to highlight any issues or concerns, either with the schools present or through minutes of meetings. Though there was no equivalent group in St Helens, the SD Unit was very proactive in planning and working with the Education Department on Borough-wide approaches or specific projects (Sports Development, Leisure and Education were in one Department after a re-organisation in 1999). The St Helens schools with highest referral rates in CC continued to be heavily involved in council-led initiatives, but others were also clearly doing more joint schemes than in 1999. One school with only moderate referrals to CC had become a Specialist Sports College, and with new impetus to after-school sport, involvement with the SDU was now clearly very important to staff and much more fruitful in offering opportunities to pupils.

A positive aspect of CC noted by many teachers was the opportunity it gave to children who had been unused to such a level of attention from coaches, or in a sport the school could not offer to the same level. There was no indication from any teachers of any philosophical objections to CC or its selection process, as suggested by earlier research (Edwards, 1993). Concerns about elitism were raised by the PE advisor, but based on the teacher interviews, CC was not seen as elitist; on the contrary, teachers indicated it was good experience for the children who had taken part.

The relatively poor state of school sports facilities was particularly striking, except for Sport Colleges, where there had been recent refurbishment. Low referral schools, despite being designated as “community sports facilities” were particularly poor in both Boroughs. This cannot help attract children seeking to take part in after-school activity, an issue raised by children in all schools. Sport and PE in low referral schools were perceived to have lower priority than other subjects, despite the efforts of staff. In contrast, high referral schools even if they had problems with their facilities, gave PE a high priority and encouraged a range of after-school participation opportunities.

The lack of referrals from some schools was attributed to various factors:

- A combination of poor communication and lack of consultation from the SD Unit to school in CC’s planning phase
- Lack of interest by children in the sports offered
- Selection of venues and timing of courses making access more difficult, and
- Lack of enthusiasm by some staff to actively promote external courses perceived to compete with existing after-school programmes or commitments

The legacy and impacts on coaching and coaches

The survey of coaches provided some background against which to examine the experiences and impacts of the coaches in the case studies. Most (59%) of the respondents were Head Coaches, who had been involved with CC from one to five years. The majority, therefore, were well qualified and experienced. Only 23% were assistant coaches, who may have been gaining their first experience of coaching young people. As shown in Figure B.4, ninety three percent were already coaching young people. Fifty seven percent had taken the opportunity to gain an additional coaching award as a result of being involved with CC. Only nineteen per cent of respondents were teachers, though slightly more indicated they had delivered coaching in schools since their CC involvement.

[insert Figure B.4 here]

Only forty three percent reported receiving scholarship support, suggesting that this mechanism was not as widely used by local authorities as the NCF recommended. In fact, none of the Knowsley or St Helens respondents recalled having the scholarship support they had in fact received, according to the SDOs' reports to the NCF. This suggested responses were affected by lack of recall or awareness that their training had been subsidised.

The impacts of CC on their subsequent work varied, as Table B.11 shows. Though the amount of paid work seemed to have reduced, few coaches were doing less coaching, and many coaches were doing more, particularly work with young people.

[insert Table B.11 about here]

Impacts on subsequent professional development were mixed, with only one in three coaches having experienced updates or training from their governing bodies after CC (Figure B.5).

[insert Figure B.5 about here]

One aspect of good practice that had clearly not continued was the annual profile meeting, as only fourteen percent had met with their SDO since CC ended. As shown in Figure B.6, just over half of the coaches felt they were more effective as a result of CC. Twenty six percent of the respondents were involved in an Active Sport programme, and fifty three percent were members of scuk. Despite the emphasis on coach development by the local authorities and the NCF, the aspect of the Scheme coaches thought most valuable was the development of youth sport opportunities, and the provision of coaching for young people.

[insert Figure 6 here]

Coaches and their experiences - key findings from coach interviews

The coaches' interviews revealed interesting contrasts and issues that reinforced the difficulties of demonstrating sustainable outcomes from sports development initiatives. Although CC sought to embody 'good practice' in coach management and development, there was some evidence in the survey, reinforced in interviews, of

what Rossi et al (1999) termed ‘process failure’ – i.e., not all the coaches experienced the CC process in the same way, or how it was intended to operate. On the other hand, there were coaches who had a very positive experience, very much according to NCF guidelines, but were no longer involved in coaching for reasons nothing to do with CC.

Coaches also varied in how they saw coaching in relation to their lives and careers – for some, usually the head coaches, it was absolutely central and very important, even if not their career. For others, often the assistant coaches, it was simply a phase, a brief interlude, something to do to help out at their club or school, or part of their own education (degree). They didn’t see themselves as a ‘coach’, more of a ‘helper’, so in the long term, training and development was of less importance:

getting access to awards and all that, wasn’t really relevant to me at the time..... I was busy enough (Girls football coach, St Helens).

At the other extreme, several coaches were very committed and heavily involved, and had found the CC experience to be an important phase in their development. One of the St Helens coaches had become a full time, self-employed coach since CC ended. Although this was not directly attributed to his experience, working in CC was undoubtedly an important catalyst to a career change, due to the help with training and encouragement from the SDO:

what helped with putting me on courses,different things, ...got me pushed onto the next level....don’t remember getting any funding for it as such, but I did sort of get pushed in the right direction. It was all done through [St Helens SDO] and [Knowsley SDO] and the [Cricket] CDO got involved, to make sure I got on the right course (Cricket coach, St Helens and Knowsley).

One of the less encouraging things to emerge from the interviews was the lack of support coaches received once CC finished. Though the situation varied between sports, governing bodies were heavily criticised by many coaches, for offering little or no support, encouragement or guidance. The most criticised, particularly by female coaches, were hockey, netball and football. Indeed, most coaches, except some in voluntary positions with their governing body, had had no personal contact at all since, or even during the Scheme. More positively, most coaches pointed out the

satisfaction experienced through working with the young people – particularly those who had done only limited or *ad hoc* work previously. Working to well-defined and structured NGB development schemes (even if they didn't always follow them) had helped develop experience and confidence.

The SDOs were often praised by the coaches for their personal support during and immediately after the Scheme, as they offered positive reinforcement and in some instances, encouraged them to go further in coaching. Indicative of the problems of maintaining a coaching workforce once funding and priorities changed, was that about one in five coaches was uncontactable, due to out-of-date or incomplete records. An example of positive support was from another cricket coach in Knowsley:

I've got a really good relationship with Sports Development and they've helped me a lot, and we did talk about it a bit [his development] and I do a bit of work with them these days....I'm on the development group for Knowsley...so I see them quite a bit....I mean they've advised me and I've only got good words to say about Knowsley

(Cricket coach, Knowsley).

He was the only coach interviewed currently employed directly as a coach by the Borough SD Unit concerned. Several others were still coaching in their sport, but in a voluntary capacity, or were doing other coaching not paid for by the Borough. For some this was because their sport was not selected for Active Sport; for others it appeared that they were simply no longer required by the SDOs, though they had not been informed why. The SDOs indicated that other coaches from CC were still being used where possible, but they were either unavailable, uncontactable or declined an interview.

The legacy of Champion Coaching

More recent youth sport initiatives, such as Active Sport, the work of the Coaching Task Force and the emergence of Youth Sport Trust-led PE, School Sport and Club links strategies have significantly changed the environment for coaching and development work with young people of school age. New funding streams, new organisational structures and partnerships, and a renewed impetus for after-school coaching and club links have emerged in the new strategy for PE and after School Sport (DfES, 2003). Meanwhile, the implementation of the Coaching Task Force

recommendations (CTF, 2002) have also seen significant changes in the approach to developing coaches and their employment in the youth sector. So, what is the answer to the central question posed by this analysis – did CC develop a legacy for both youth and coaches? The response to this can be summarized in three key areas; people, processes and practice.

Firstly in *people* or the impacts on individuals, the above results suggest successful impacts for young participants – through increased rates of club membership and regular sports participation. Young people were clearly enabled through CC mechanisms to remain engaged in organised and regular sport participation, which was more likely to be sustained.

The increase in confidence and expertise reported by coaches was very important, though what this represented as a legacy in more active and effective coaches is less clear. Various other factors influenced whether or not coaches have continued to coach and at what level, over which CC had no influence. Similarly, though some coaches were developed, the ensuing gap before Active Sport systems were fully developed meant that some coaches lost momentum in their development, so were no longer as engaged as previously.

In terms of the *process* of Sports development, an extensive network of opportunities and exit routes, linked to the Youth Games in particular, may have emerged at the time of CC, but in many of these selected sports it is difficult to see that any were sustained. Gains made in opportunities for youth in clubs were not always sustained as there was insufficient time to become established, before funding was withdrawn as attention shifted to other priorities. School–club links and after school work in general has been heavily influenced by subsequent schemes and funding streams, but CC nevertheless contributed to highlighting where gaps and deficiencies remained. Gains were more clearly sustained in areas with existing sporting capital and established infrastructure, and where NGBs had sufficient resources to continue their development work, even if Active Sport was no longer supporting their sport directly.

Processes for coach and club development had benefited from the use of county wide approaches through Merseysport partnership working. The coaching development strategy on Merseyside was directly linked to the growth of coaching experience, not

only in these Boroughs, but across the county. This is likely to have been replicated across the areas involved in CC, due to the links with NCF, later scuk planning and support.

And finally in *practice*, perhaps one of the most important legacies of CC is the development of expertise by the Borough's SD officers, in managing these processes and implementing complex schemes. This can clearly be seen in Merseyside, where SD officers with experience of working on CC, continued to contribute to the implementation of Active Sport and other school sport initiatives, thus they continue to build on good practice which emerged through CC implementation.

Many of the current systems and procedures for coach development and management *are* legacies of CC – though with experience, changes have been made. Though Active Sport was a more complex and all-encompassing scheme than CC, they shared many similarities:

- referral of young people by schools and a selection process for entering coaching programmes at different levels
- sports specific development groups to advise on local implementation
- promotion of a coach development strategy
- phased selection of specific sports for development, and
- assistance to clubs to develop junior sport opportunities.

Lessons from Champion Coaching

As indicated at the outset, though the youth and coaching objectives of CC may have appeared compatible, they contained potential for conflict and this affected the results achieved. In St Helens a more explicit emphasis on coach development resulted in more repeat registrations and a focus on a narrower range of sports and courses. Effective pathways were established by integration with existing development programmes, like the MYG. In coach development, despite successes at the time, CC did not always achieve the long term development of individual coaching careers, as

personal factors also influenced whether coaches continued to coach and develop and both individual and sporting priorities inevitably changed over time.

Knowsley's approach of targeting schools, 'pay as you go' pricing and offering courses district-wide was successful in recruiting children from deprived areas. But there were similar problems in maintaining the development of coaches and pathways once CC funding ended. Knowsley's lack of local clubs limited its ability to maintain pathways for young people, though now this is gradually being improved. Knowsley was also successful in achieving significant funding in improving school sport facilities through the New Opportunities lottery programme.

For developing coaches, the important factors appear to be long term and individual contact with SDOs and local authorities, together with the support of the sport governing body, which was often missing. An emphasis on often expensive and time-consuming qualifications or courses does not necessarily lead to more effective or active coaches, as reinforced by recent research on coaches for scuk (Mori, 2004). Often, changes or improvements to coaching practice or knowledge are assumed, rather than monitored or measured once coaches return to their coaching positions. More direct proactive approaches, which take into account individual needs, differences and personal circumstances of coaches, may be more appropriate, though they can be costly in staff resources and difficult to sustain without NGB co-operation. There has clearly been some confusion over where the responsibility lies for such support. Recent developments in the North West of an online coaching registration and deployment service may yet demonstrate a more coach-friendly approach.

Therefore, while announcements of increased funding to support a coach development role (DCMS, 2003) seem geared to closing this gap, only time will tell whether this funding was sufficient when spread across forty five county partnerships, eleven sports and over 3,000 'new' community coaches and existing volunteers. Subsequently, scuk have instigated a more extensive research-led approach to the implementation of the new Coaching Framework and Coaching Certificate. However, monitoring and supporting individual coaches in their long term

development, whether as full time workers or volunteers will be crucial to the success of similar schemes. Building on the baseline data provided by Mori will be a key area of future research.

Clearly, the lessons learned in practice by both the SDOs and coaches involved in CC were invaluable in developing both competence and confidence. Communication and planning with schools, targeting and management information systems have all improved, as CC highlighted specific needs. Targeting participants, for example, was recognised as even more important by the SDOs, when Best Value and other reviews of performance demanded results linked to corporate or societal objectives (Audit Commission, 2002). Perhaps most tellingly, more recent targets set related to youth sport are explicit in the need to address the groups most likely to be not participating and to work in more appropriate ways with those who are already showing some interest and aptitude for sport (Sport England, 2004).

A key lesson from CC is the need to have sport-specific development groups driving the opportunities for both coaches and participants, to ensure limited resources are effectively implemented and appropriately targeted. Gaps in opportunities for young people will remain, however, where there continue to be problems affecting the sustainability of clubs – which may not be ‘youth-friendly’. Clearly SD Units are not resourced to overcome long-term and deep-rooted deficiencies in local sporting infrastructures, or make up for the limited human and financial resources in many clubs.

Therefore, though CC represented a major step forward in developing systems for both youth and coaching, it is clear that SD units cannot alone solve all the problems relating to youth sport and coaching in any given area. CC was undoubtedly a major catalyst for youth and coaching work in local authorities, but a three-year implementation programme was not long enough for its legacy to be sustained in these Merseyside boroughs.

It remains to be seen whether Active Sport, and the county partnerships, supported by Lottery funding, when evaluated, may eventually demonstrate more success. These have been under great pressure to develop new structures since the end of Active Sport funding, with some redesigning of their remit in relation to youth in particular –

as the Youth Sport Trust has clearly more influence on programmes for school age children, both in and out of school. Local Authorities also now have to contend with the extension of after-school sport in the new '5 hour Offer' announced by Gordon Brown in 2007 (DCMS, 2007). School Sport Partnerships now cover the majority of schools, with the Government claiming its objectives for participation levels have been met, with over 85% of children receiving at least 2 hours of PE and sport per week (DCSF, 2007). In relation to more performance oriented children, clubs and coaching, a new set of targets and strategies have been set for Sport England, to support the 5 hour offer and reduce drop out, as well as contribute to enhanced talent systems for young people (Sport England, 2008). Alongside this, scuk are working hard to implement a new, more professional coaching framework across the sector, with more funding being directed to employ more coaches, rather than rely on enthusiastic volunteers.

All these developments of policy point to a continued concern for improving sporting opportunity and the quality of sport experiences for young people. There remains however, an apparent lack of attention to monitoring both the quality and the 'equality' of such experiences, even though 'under-represented groups' are now more carefully targeted. (Sport England, 2004; 2008). Rather than tracking of participants along their sporting pathways, there remains an emphasis counting the numbers or proportions of young people who have taken part in sport 'at a club'.

CC remains the only sport development programme which employed significant numbers of coaches, operating over a sufficiently long period to enable an evaluation of the longer term outcomes of its impacts. More research, particularly longitudinal, is needed into the impacts of club-based participation on sporting careers of young people into adulthood. For coaches and coaching we also need to track the progress of the Active Sport coaches and those employed as community coaches, since the implementation of the Coaching Task Force recommendations, to see whether these mechanisms have had the desired impacts on coach retention and effectiveness. Thus over time, practice in sports development can be better informed through better evidence and greater understanding of 'what works' in different contexts.

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Table B.1: Champion Coaching Outputs 1991-1999

<i>Outputs</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>1991/2</i>	<i>1992/3</i>	<i>1993/4</i>	<i>1995/6</i>	<i>1996/7</i>	<i>1997/8*</i>	<i>1998/9*</i>
Schemes		24	44	65	76	90	45	54
Local Authorities		27	83	103	130	145	136	n/a
Sport Programmes		110	450	553	700	850	600	464
Coaches involved		330	1,350	1,650	2,100	3,000	1,608	1,387

Sources: NCF, 1997; *NCF annual reports

Table B.2: Champion Coaching in St Helens and Knowsley (1996-1999)

	<i>St Helens</i>	<i>Knowsley</i>
Sports	Girls Football, Hockey, Netball, Cricket, Basketball, Girls Rugby	Girls Football, Netball, Hockey, Cricket, Water Polo, Badminton, Basketball
Sport Programmes	17	21
Registrations*	336	752
Coaches	20	20

*Figures based on reports from Sports Development Units (*incomplete data – estimated for 1999*)

Table B.3: Characteristics of the participant samples

	<i>St Helens</i>	<i>Knowsley</i>
	<i>n=78</i>	<i>n=54</i>
<i>Mean Age (years)</i>	15.7	14.8
<i>%</i>		
Girls	70	59
Boys	30	41

Table B.4: Champion Coaching courses attended

<i>Sport</i>	<i>St Helens</i>	<i>Knowsley</i>
	<i>N=77</i>	<i>N=53*</i>
Hockey	25	1
Netball	14	17
Cricket	12	8
Basketball	8	10
Girls soccer	21	10
Badminton	N/a	10
TOTAL	80	56

*1 missing case, about 6% took part in more than one course in both schemes

Table B.5: Current club membership

<i>Currently of a club</i>	<i>Member %</i>	<i>St Helens N=74</i>	<i>Knowsley N=53</i>	<i>Sport England National Survey*</i>
Yes		70	59	46
No		30	42	54
Mean course (years)	time since	2.0	2.2	n.a.

*Sport England/MORI, 2000, club membership aged under 16

Table B.6: Club membership by gender

<i>Scheme</i>	<i>member of club girls %</i>	<i>member of club boys %</i>	<i>club overall membership %</i>	<i>N=</i>
St Helens	66	81	70	74
Knowsley**	47	76	59	53
Sport England National Survey*	36	56	46	

*National average for all (boys and girls) aged under 16 (Sport England/MORI, 2000).

** Pearson Chi-Sq .291 signif at 0.05

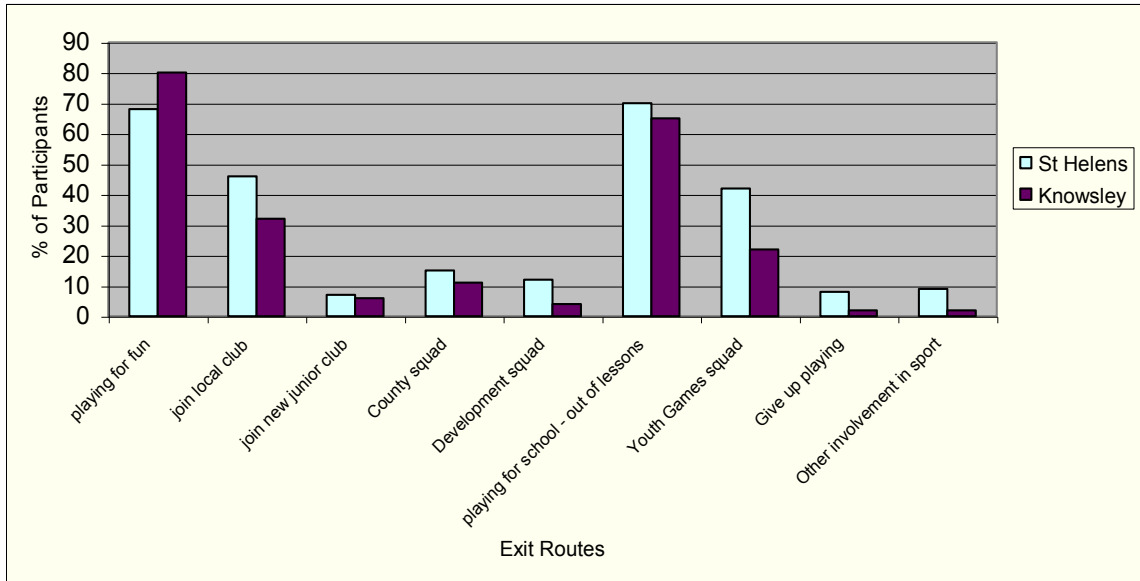


Figure B.1: Exit Routes from Champion Coaching in Knowsley and St Helens

Table B.7: Sports club characteristics

<i>What the club did</i>	<i>Knowsley</i>	<i>St Helens</i>
% indicating yes	<i>n=27</i>	<i>n=26</i>
Had organised matches/competitions	78	82
Welcomed you into the club	67	75
Had low fees	56	71
Had friendly coaches and leaders	78	71
Had a junior section	30	50

Table B.8: How children found out about the club

<i>Source</i>	<i>% St Helens</i>	<i>Knowsley</i>
	<i>n=55</i>	<i>n=34</i>
Friend	41	32
Teacher	24	44
CC Course	13	21
Parent	5	3
Already member	3	0
Advertisement	3	0
Other	3	0

Table B.9: Parents' ratings of Champion Coaching courses

<i>Score, of a maximum of 5</i>	<i>St Helens</i>		<i>Knowsley</i>	
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
	<i>n=78</i>		<i>n=53</i>	
Standard of coaching	3.89	1.04	4.18	0.89
Organisation of sessions	4.04	1.18	3.98	1.01
Parental Contact by coach	2.87	1.87	3.06	1.32
Administration by centre	3.38	1.75	3.30	1.42
Enjoyment of child	4.55	1.18	4.60	0.64
Cost of the course	4.05	4.42	3.90	1.47
Information about Progression	3.06	1.66	3.24	1.33
Accessibility of the venue	4.21	1.26	4.06	1.10

Table B.10: Participants and populations compared

<i>Participants</i>	<i>St Helens</i>	<i>Knowsley</i>
% aged 5-16 living in most deprived wards*	26.5	20.8
% CC participants in most deprived wards	13.3	21.1

*Population data from 2001 Census

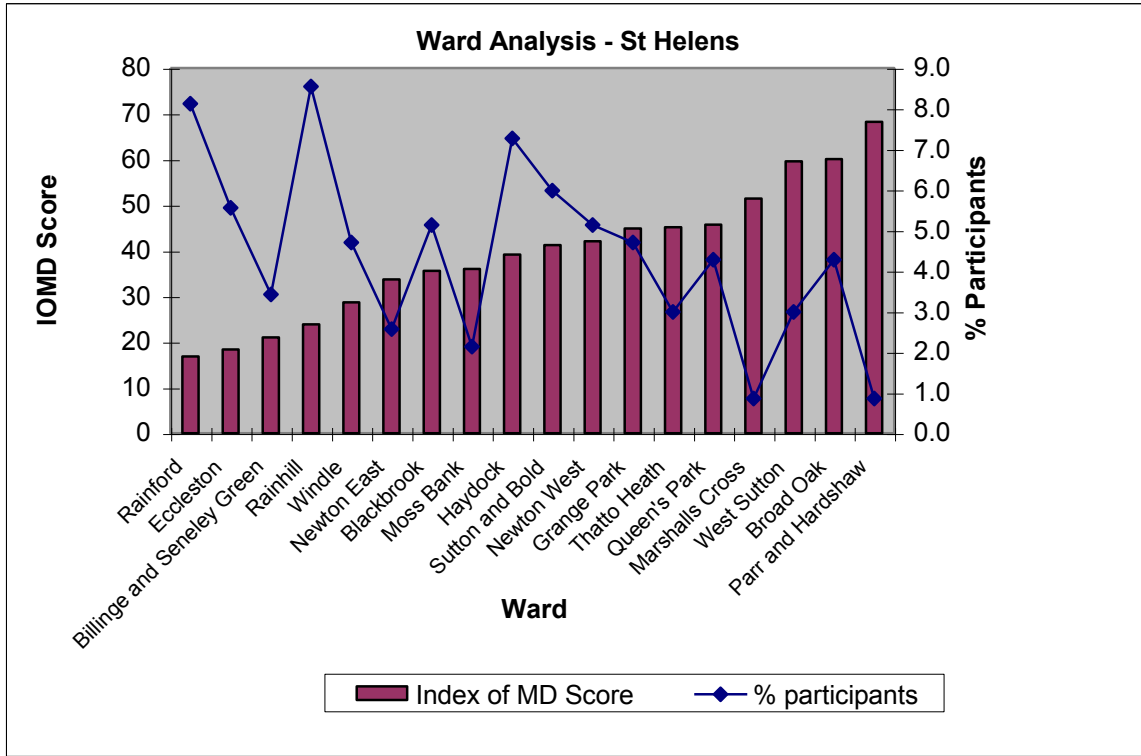


Figure B.2: Ward deprivation and Champion Coaching participants in St Helens

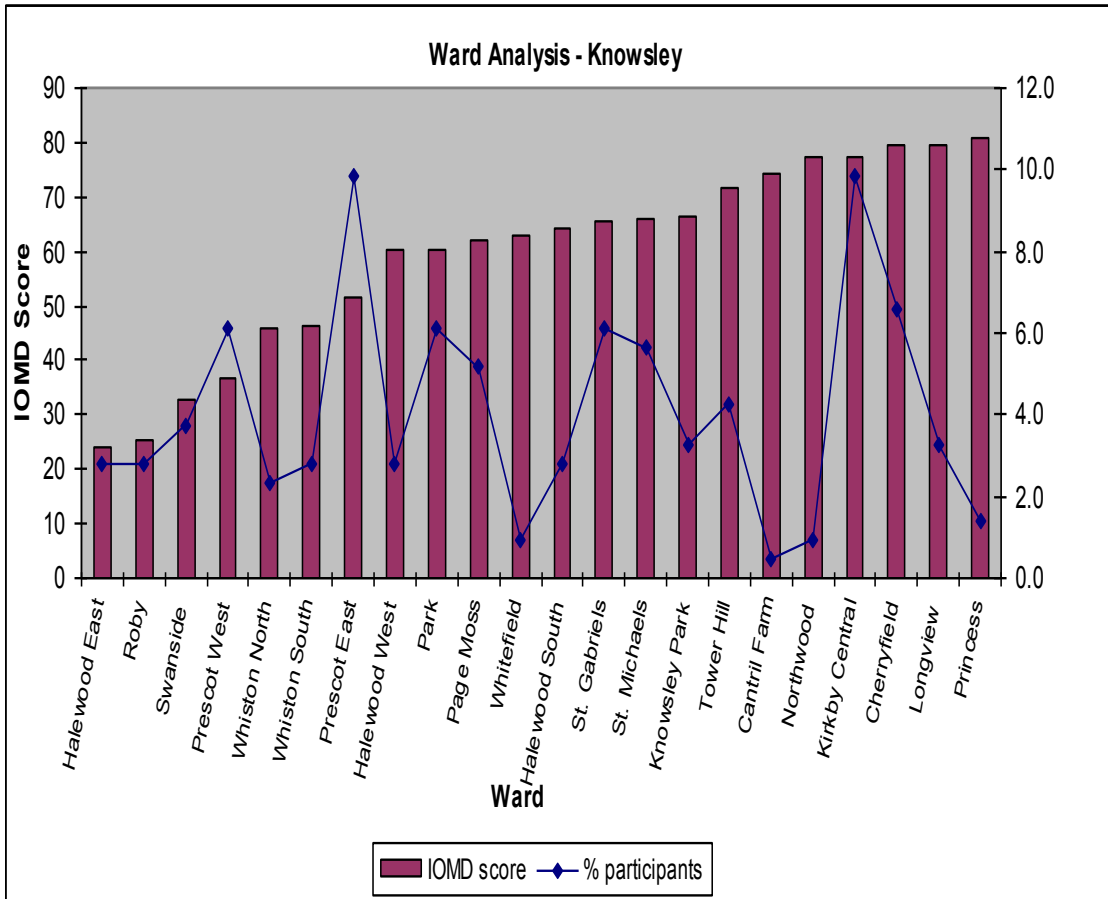


Figure B.3: Ward Deprivation and Champion Coaching participants in Knowsley

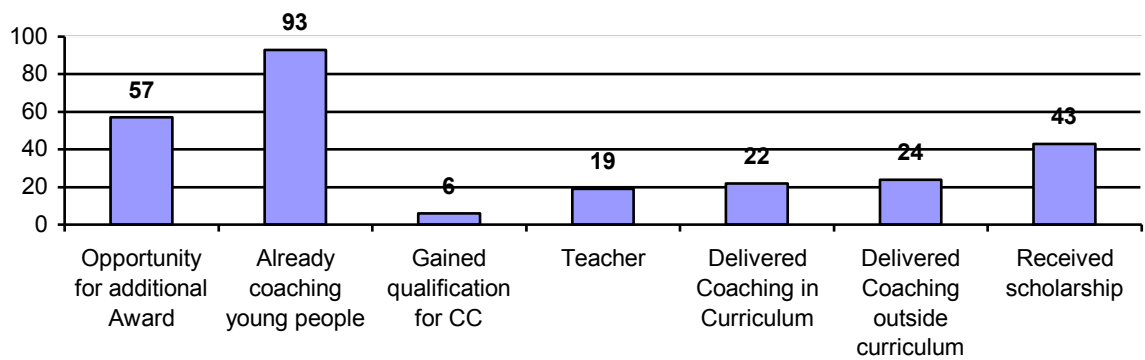


Figure B.4: Key findings from Coaches' survey

Table B.11: Impacts on coaching type and frequency

<i>Variable</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>N/a</i>	<i>Less</i>	<i>Same</i>	<i>More</i>	<i>N=</i>
Time Spent Coaching		0	11	42	47	64
Work with Young People		2	14	43	42	65
Performance-oriented coaching		13	13	36	37	53
Club Involvement		3	12	53	32	60
Paid work as a coach		11	23	29	37	62

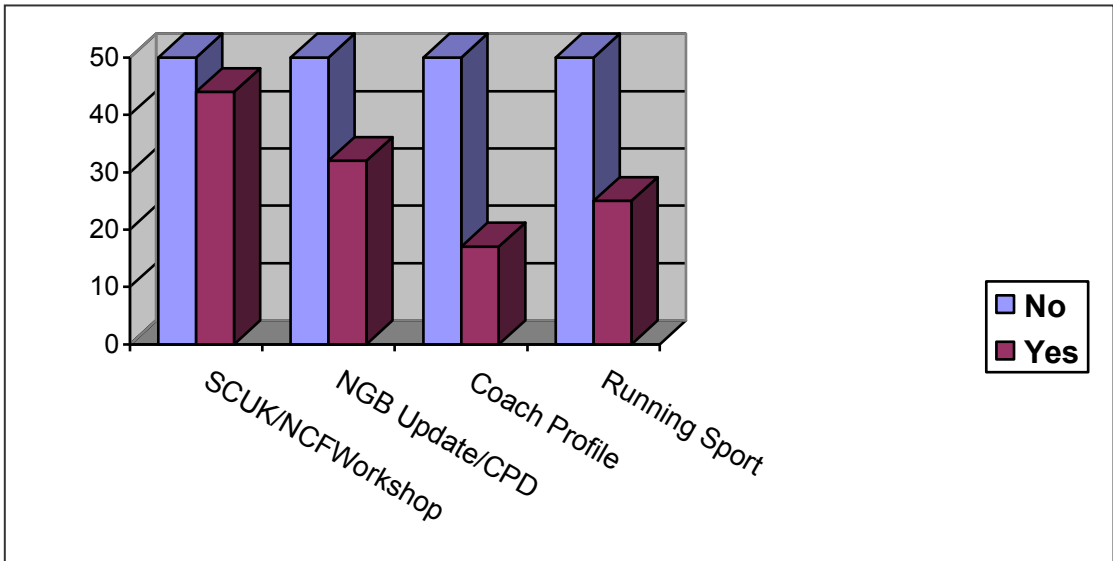


Figure B.5: Coaches' CPD since Champion Coaching

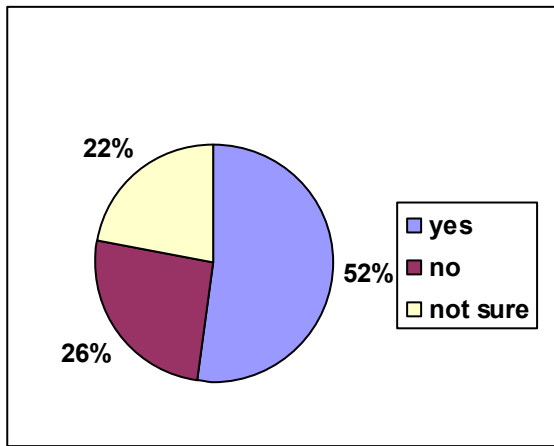


Figure B. 6: Improved Coach effectiveness as a result of Champion Coaching