

## Developing a sustainable home for a sports club on a school site. Derby Trailblazers based at the Noel-Baker School, Alvaston, Derby

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Formed in 2000, Derby Trailblazers runs teams for

- Under 16 boys
- Under 18s
- Senior women in the national basketball league.

The Trailblazers club was created when another local club, Derby Storm, folded its junior programme. Trailblazers Chairman Charlie Wright rallied members to seize the opportunity to grow the club and it is now one of the biggest clubs in the country – providing opportunities for girls, boys, women and men to play, coach and officiate in basketball.

When the club decided it needed a regular ‘base’ to become a sustainable club and cater for their growing membership the Noel-Baker school site presented the best option. The school was able to guarantee the facility’s long-term use, at regular times, and a highly affordable rate of £10 and £13 per hour. No other facility was able to meet the club’s requirements in this way.

### Key project information

Derby Trailblazers is a Clubmark club with over 40 active volunteers, 19 Level 2 or above coaches, and a growing membership of approximately 170 playing members.

It has access to:

- Nineteen hours use of the hall in the evening
- Four hours of Saturday use for training plus
- A further eight hours weekend use for games.

The club expects to increase its time at the school in 2011 to approximately 30 hours per week for training and games assuming that the Community Use Agreement continues with the school.

The school sports facilities provide an ideal accessible base. They have sole use of a five court refurbished sports hall, one senior size play court and three cross width mini basketball courts. There is retractable seating for the club to turn the sports hall into a show court for games, along with adequate storage to keep club equipment on site.

“A significant degree of trust and understanding has developed between the club and the school, which has led to many mutual benefits. Working together we introduced a basketball academy in September 2009 and this year the academy secured AASE funding for eight elite athletes.

However, the strength of the relationship can be best measured by the school’s willingness to consult with the club on the school’s plan for the new build of the indoor sports facilities as part of the BSF programme which is going ahead. This fantastic development will give the club access to two training courts and one show court with seating for 500 spectators providing long term home for the club.”

Charlie Wright, chair, Derby Trailblazers

The club is very well linked with the immediate local community, the surrounding areas and schools.

The club’s community coaches are focused on delivering a high quality outreach

community programme, offering taster sessions at local schools and youth organisations which are aimed to then develop into satellite clubs, feeding players into the 'hub club' and the Trailblazers' training sessions at the Noel-Baker School.

The Trailblazers club is fortunate to have an arrangement with the school that gives it sole occupancy of the sports hall facility in evenings and weekends. It is accepted by staff at the Noel-Baker school that the club uses the sports hall as its hub club during these times. The demand for other sports is met by their outdoor facilities, or the use of nearby sports facilities at other schools and leisure centres.

Unlike the majority of school sports hall community bookings, where slots are worked around the needs of the school, the school works proactively with the club to meet their requirements as a priority. The arrangement allows the club to develop and accommodate more members without the challenge of competing for access with other users.

#### [How the club has made the sole model user work?](#)

The initial school-club link came through the club head coach, Clarence Wiggins, who was also a teacher at the Noel-Baker school.

Having a teacher of the school linked with the club has provided a trusted contact on which to base a relationship between club and school. The club decided for the chairperson, Charlie Wright, to be the one key contact at the club to regularly liaise with the business manager at the school. Charlie believes that "This strong and open relationship is the reason why we have achieved so much."

The strength of this relationship helped to win the trust of the school's head and for the school to be recognised as a quality base for basketball training and competition. It also enabled an agreement to be reached between the two parties for sole occupancy of the sports hall during evenings and weekends. This agreement was later

formalised through the signing of a Community Use Agreement which signalled commitment from both parties. With long-term use agreed, the club was able to work closely with the school to attract external funds to develop a fit-for-purpose facility.

It made a successful application to the Community Club Development Programme for a total refurbishment of the sports hall.

The costs for using the facility have been kept to a minimum, around £10,000 per year, with no need for built in caretaking costs or staff fees. The main school funds an onsite security team regardless of who is using the facilities. The school also allows the club to open and close the facilities should it need to.

#### [How does the school benefit?](#)

The school would have struggled to obtain funding for a complete refurbishment of the sports hall without the community club-school link and the needs and evidence base the partnership had developed.

The club helps maintain the sports hall facility and sets up its own equipment in the sports hall meaning facility staff do not need to be present. Elite senior players are attracted to the club by payment through community coaching, rather than as paid players.

This arrangement also benefits the pupils directly. The community coaches are responsible for increasing basketball participation in all city schools, establishing satellite clubs and identifying elite talent to bring into the club's national league programme.

The Basketball Academy now running from the school is attracting more Key Stage 5 students, helping to increase the school's pupil numbers.

The sports hall is not frequently vandalised – this is attributed to responsible out of hours usage by the club, involving students at the school and the wider community.

## The main challenges and risks of a sole use club model

This model works as long as there is real commitment to both sides of the relationship.

There will always be issues, but what is important is an understanding and willingness to compromise from both parties.

Whilst the club is confident that this can currently be achieved, a change in leadership and direction at the school may jeopardise this balance.

It is vital the club does not take this special relationship for granted and must continue to support the school wherever and whenever it can, maintaining good lines of communication.

## What comes next?

The club is continuing to develop new programmes to grow its membership, training squad, and competition teams.

To support this it may be necessary to introduce a more permanent and possibly paid administration role.

The club is seeking sponsorship to support the additional costs of providing opportunities for more club members and the expenses of competing at higher league levels.

A programme will also be developed for disadvantaged groups, extending the reach of the club whilst continuing to grow the successful community programme.

## Top tips

- Identify a key contact at the club; who is responsible for the main relationship with the key contact of the school or facility.
- Take time to understand how the school works, this will help build two-way trust and will help work through issues and tensions on occasions when they do arise.
- Demonstrate the benefits the school can expect from a longer term link with a quality community sports club based on their site.
- Make particular efforts to get the head teacher excited.

## Further information

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