



SWEDEN STUDYTRIP

SEPTEMBER 2013

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Sweden Study Trip – September 2013

Background

Sweden is the third-largest country in the European Union by area, with a total population of approximately 9.6 million. The country has over 9,000 lakes and residents have a unique freedom of access to Sweden's countryside and wild places which is an important part of the Swedish cultural heritage. Over 50% of the adult population are members of a sports club, one of the highest percentages in Europe. The strategic purpose for sport in Sweden is social development.

In September 2013 a team of sports development professionals from across the UK took part in an eight day study trip to Sweden. The visit was funded through the Leonardo Project that was part of the European Union's Lifelong Learning Programme. The funding application was submitted by Aston Sports Club, Birmingham in partnership with sports coach UK. The team of UK delegates were based in Gothenburg, West Sweden and hosted by SISU, an organisation that supports the development of Swedish sport.

Purpose

The purpose of the visit was to provide insight into the sporting infrastructure that supports a country with high adult participation rates in sport. There was a specific focus on a) recruiting, developing and retaining coaches b) coach education and c) supporting a diverse workforce



Key Learning

- 1. Long Term Investment:** A commitment to long term Government investment into community sport enables Sports Federations and network delivers such as SISU to sufficiently plan and deliver without over reporting during the implementation phase.
- 2. Learning Environment:** Formal and informal learning for coaches within their own environment. 'Learning circles' and 'communities of practice' enable volunteer coaches to develop in a convenient and non-threatening environment.
- 3. Empowering Volunteers:** Coaches or volunteers are encouraged to share their learning within their own club environment to other coaches or volunteers after attending training workshops through scenario cards or resource books.
- 4. Working Culture:** Encourage a relaxed, staff friendly environment with regular informal communication as a team via 'learning circles'.

Outcomes

- 1. Flexible Learning:** Formal learning delivered flexibly within the coaches own environment. This includes 'How to Deliver Engaging Sessions' for equestrian coaches within Take Back the Reins Centres.
- 2. Coach Support Scheme:** Informal learning through a mentoring programme that enables 1:1 support between a Coach Support Officer and coach in their own environment. The Coach Support Scheme was delivered as part of Sportivate in 2013/14 and is extending to Satellite Clubs from September 2014.
- 3. Communities of Practice:** Focus on developing 'communities of practice' for groups of coaches through formal and informal learning opportunities. These groups include female coaches registered with Project 500, participation coaches (Sportivate and Active Sussex Bursary coaches) and Coach Support Officer 'learning circles'.

Summary

The study trip provided a unique opportunity to learn in a different culture that has provided a reference point for workforce development within the Active Sussex Coaching Delivery Plan 2013/14 and 2014/15.

Personal Reflection

The Swedish experience has had a positive influence in the way I look at learning and to be open minded to opportunities for others and myself without pre-judgement. A significant amount of the learning I came back with was from the team that I went on the trip with, and in areas that I hadn't thought about before the experience. I came back with reading lists, techniques for being more efficient at work, ways to have clarity of thought to help creative thinking amongst many others. Not only did the opportunity allow me to extend my working network, it also enabled me to meet great people and new friends.

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