

THE LONG GAME

As part of a major strategic shake-up, Brentford Football Club Community Sports Trust has undertaken a new 'sport for development' assessment twice in just over a year. *Sports Management* spoke to CEO Lee Doyle to find out more

Brentford Football Club Community Sports Trust, the charitable arm of Brentford Football Club, is celebrating – and not only because it turns 30 this year. The 100-strong team of staff and volunteers at the West London organisation, which has been serving the communities of Ealing, Hounslow and Richmond since 1987, has good reason to feel proud. Not only have they recently reported annual social impact cost savings of £13.7m in 2015/2016 (an increase of 38 per cent in three years), they've also received an 'Excellent' rating in Quest's Sport for Development assessment, a new accreditation from Quest, the Sport England-backed quality scheme.

The growing sport for development (S4D) sector is made up of organisations that use sport to achieve



Lee Doyle, Brentford
FC Community
Sports Trust

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individual and social objectives, from improving physical and mental wellbeing and educational attainment to increasing community cohesion and civic engagement, particularly by young people.

Aimed at nascent and growing sport for development agencies in need of organisational support, as well as traditional sports organisations that don't have a track record of using sport for social objectives, Quest Sport for Development has been jointly developed with Substance, a leading social research and technology company.

Although Quest is well known for its work with sports development teams and facilities – there are more than 600 Quest-accredited leisure centres in the UK – this is its first award aimed at agencies that use sport to improve personal and social outcomes. Brentford FC Community Sports Trust was one of just three organisations to take part in a pilot of the new assessment early last year, along with the Tottenham Hotspur Foundation, a fellow FC trust; and the Positive Youth Foundation, a Coventry-based organisation.

With Millwall Community Trust becoming the fourth organisation to receive the accreditation, following



Staff and volunteers at
Brentford Football Club
Community Sports Trust



its official rollout last June, it's clear the new award has a lot to offer football club trusts in particular.

According to Brentford FC Community Sports Trust CEO Lee Doyle, the opportunity to take part in the pilot was particularly timely for Brentford. "Aside from 2017 being our anniversary year, several developments influencing our future work started to take shape in 2016, including plans for Brentford Community Stadium, a new 20,000-seat venue less than a mile from our current Griffin Park, as well as the multi-million-pound Gunnersbury Park Sports Hub development, in which the club and trust are strategic partners.

"Add to this the publication of Sport England's strategy, with its challenge to sport and leisure providers to demonstrate their social impact, and we felt the time was right to produce a new strategy of our own. To help us, we consulted social research and technology company Substance, whose team we respect for their breadth of industry knowledge, and they recommended doing Quest Sport for Development.

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**Brentford plays
Norwich at futsal
game. Brentford FC
Community Sports
Trust also offers
kids futsal sessions**

how to proceed, while also enabling us to benchmark our service against national norms along the way."

Theory of change

Quest Sport for Development requires organisations to complete eight modules: five core and three choice modules. Four of these have been adapted from the Quest assessment model for sport development teams, and cover: partnerships and collaboration; people and skills development; continuous improvement; and community outcomes. New modules – Delivering Sport for Development Projects, Generating Insight, Doorstep Sports and Engaging Young People – have been specially written with the sector in mind. ▶

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► The two-day assessment takes into account evidence supplied by management, as well as partner focus groups and extensive staff interviews. In addition to a rating of Excellent, Very Good, Good or Satisfactory, organisations receive an improvement plan, and accreditation lasts two years.

The Short Breaks programme provides sports and games sessions for kids with disabilities

Following the one-day pilot assessment, Brentford FC Community Trust received a ‘Very Good’ rating. “Our first assessment highlighted several strengths, including that the team was well-led; that we had strong links to key partners and were a ‘go-to’ organisation in our area; and that our planning and project management were sound,” says Doyle.

“But, the Quest process also acted as a critical friend, confirming some of our thoughts around areas for improvement, such as reorganising our

staff structure in readiness for the future, looking at cross-project working and the development of specialist roles for data analysis and marketing/communications. While we’re good at data capture and analysis, there’s always scope for improvement and it’s essential that we continue to develop this area in order to chart progress and report outcomes.”

Crucially, the Quest process also confirmed that a step change was needed in terms of the trust’s strategy. The organisation had been through a significant growth period since converting to a trust in 2005, and another since 2013, when its first social impact cost savings review – conducted by Substance – assisted in the planning application for the new stadium. While this ►

SPORT FOR DEVELOPMENT IN ACTION

We take a look at some of Brentford FC Community Sports Trust’s programmes:

- **Project 100**, one of several programmes delivered at the Griffin Park Learning Zone at Griffin Park football ground, provides targeted support to Key Stage 3 and 4 students with low school attendance and motivation.
- **Ealing Young Carers Project** runs programmes for about 200 young carers.
- **Youth Mentoring Programme** encourages young people to engage in positive activities and supports education, training and employment opportunities.
- **Motivate Hounslow** is a Sport England-funded project that gives 14 to 25-year-olds the chance to get more active. It’s had 3,000 participants since August 2014.



Kids taking part in Project 100 try out different activities designed to help build more positive attitudes towards learning

- **Premier League Primary Stars** offers focused PE, PSHE and extra-curricular provision for primary school children and supports the continuous development of teaching staff within physical education.
- **The Fearless Foundation** is a charity set up in memory of sports journalist Danny Fullbrook, providing classroom lessons with a professional journalist followed by football coaching.
- **Short Breaks** helps disabled children and their families to access adapted sports programmes, from football to curling, in partnership with Fusion Hounslow and Feltham Bees Disabled Sports Club.
- **The Extra-Time Club** offers weekly activities for over-55s at Griffin Park.



► growth had created opportunities, it had also created challenges, says Doyle: "Since becoming a trust, we had introduced a broad range of programmes from schools-based initiatives to young carers projects to mentoring schemes for young offenders. Football activity had remained constant, but we now offered a range of other sports as well as promoting key skills acquisition."

A meet-the-players day gave 60 kids the chance to play with and be coached by the Brentford FC first-team squad

"This diversification showed creativity and entrepreneurial flair, but in terms of our resources, it presented risk as well as opportunity. Increased activity and organisational growth requires increased clarity and communication of purpose, and we knew we needed to carefully consider our direction in order to continue to be relevant and sustainable."

"We'd already spoken to Substance about developing a strategy based on the Theory of Change model, which works by identifying long-term goals and then mapping backwards to identify the steps needed to achieve them. Quest convinced us to accelerate that process and our new strategy now provides much more clarity for staff and partners going forward."

Quest for excellence

Following their first Quest assessment, Doyle and his team were so determined to raise their game that they chose to undertake another full assessment after just 15 months.

On the advice of Quest, they undertook staff and stakeholder surveys, and developed a new three-year

strategy based on the Theory of Change model, in consultation with key local authority partners, as well as Sport England, Brentford FC, the English Football League Trust and the Premier League Charitable Fund. They commissioned Substance to carry out a second social impact cost savings review for 2015/2016; introduced a more hierarchical structure; commissioned an independent review of external communications and developed a communications plan.

The hard work paid off; in May, the trust received confirmation of an 'Excellent' rating in Quest Sport for Development. But there is no danger of Doyle and his team resting on their laurels. Alongside plans to move to the new stadium by 2019/2020 and the opening of the new facilities at Gunnersbury Park, the trust is looking to extend its reach into new communities as well as continuing to build on partnerships across all sectors. "Our vision is to use the power of sport to help people achieve their goals, from sports participation to healthy lifestyles, education, employability and personal development." ●



See Brentford FC Community Sports Trust's 30th anniversary impact report and 2017-20 strategy:

<http://www.brentfordfccst.com/playing-the-long-game-strategy-2017-20.aspx>