

Case Study: Forth Canoe Club

Summer School Courses – Making Paddling a Real Choice for Children

What was/is the aim of the project?

At Forth Canoe Club one of the goals is to increase participation in the sport. They see the future of the club as being closely linked to the development of a strong junior section and have a DCI funded Club Coach who is tasked with helping to introduce children to paddlesport. The Club Coach was, herself, introduced to Forth through a summer school course and they now have a number of national and international paddlers who were introduced to the sport in the same way. Summer courses are a regular part of their activity and here's a quick summary of how they deliver them.

How was it delivered/achieved?

A set of five, two hour sessions throughout each week of the summer holiday. They ran four sets of sessions each day, 9-11am, 10-12m, 1-3pm and 2-4pm. Each session had a maximum ratio of 1:8 children, this meant that we usually had 16 boats on the water, which in turn means we needed lots of junior boats. They solved the issue by running sessions in junior GP's, open boats, polo boats, slalom boats, Lightnings and sprint K2's meaning that while one group were trying slalom another could be open boating.

The club's boathouse is located on the canal in central Edinburgh and this is where the courses ran. As they had two groups on the water all the time, one coach took their group into town, while the other went out of town. The central location meant there was good visibility within the community and lots of people stopped to look and ask how their children could get involved.

Who was involved?

They used two paid for coaches on the water and their focus was the delivery of the sessions. In addition, the club paid for a bank minder who could deal with meeting and greeting, getting kids in and out of changing rooms, dealing with the 'I'm cold.... hungry.... need a wee' issues, which freed up coaches allowing them to concentrate on the rest of the group.

How was it funded?

£70 for a week of sessions, this price included junior membership of the club plus Paddlepower passports and certification. The club took all the bookings through Entry Central and were charged a 5% fee for this. This was money well spent as it meant they had structured data (allergies, emergency numbers, medical issues etc.) about each child which could be easily passed to the coach on one sheet of paper.

What are the lessons to help others?

They used posters on the side of the boathouse and on the gate to promote the offer (Vistaprint is an easy site for huge vinyl posters). All enquiries were pointed towards the club website.

Where can others find out more information?

Through the summer the club saw 160 children on the summer courses and raised £11,200. After expenses, they were able to buy a fleet of Lightnings for the club so that they could return the SCA ones they had been using – thereby helping other clubs develop their own junior sections.

We all want a strong paddling community and if you would like more information about the lessons they have learned then please contact Mick James - mjames@rgare.com

