

# SMASH Hockey



Games you can play anytime, anywhere!

SMASH Hockey is a Hockey Wales initiative designed in conjunction with StreetGames to offer Doorstep Sport Clubs an informal and flexible introduction to Hockey across Wales. This case study tells the story of how the programme was designed and implemented, plus it will outline the impact that the SMASH Hockey pilot has had on the DSCs involved and Hockey Wales' learning and development.

## What is SMASH Hockey?

'SMASH Hockey' is the name given to an informal, fun and flexible 'street' type hockey activity that has been designed to be delivered in Doorstep Sport settings. The initiative includes training for leaders and volunteers, a resource pack of games that can easily be delivered and equipment and support for DSCs delivering the activity.



## Where did it all start?

Following a presentation from StreetGames to Hockey Wales regarding current unmet demand for Hockey in Wales' most deprived communities, Tom Little (Hockey Wales Club Development Officer) was keen to explore options for engaging with young people more widely than the existing hockey family. SMASH Hockey was then developed following an extensive consultation and 'trial and error' approach over 6-8 months with a number of DSCs including Kinmel Bay and Pen-y-Groes in North Wales. Via a practical led approach which gained young people's views via them 'voting with their feet', Tom was slowly able to adapt and alter the hockey offer to provide an appropriate activity for the informal settings.

'There are **201,000** young people living in poverty across Wales, and a national latent demand for Hockey equating to **21%** means that **42,210** young people want to play the sport'

*(Source: School Sport Survey, 2015)*

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## What is different about SMASH Hockey?

SMASH Hockey is very different to Hockey Wales' rather traditional existing offers, enabling them to attract a new demographic of young people to try the sport. Key features of SMASH Hockey include:

- A simplified language (removing traditional 'hockey talk')
- Providing fun, informal games which replicate similar games that DSCs may offer
- Offering complete flexibility in approach, thus not requiring structure of session
- Easy to understand resource cards that are attractive to both young people and leaders alike.

From a sport National Governing Body perspective, Tom believes that SMASH Hockey offers an innovative approach to what is often considered a traditional sport.

"SMASH Hockey takes the complexity out of delivering sport. You don't need a qualification to play SMASH Hockey, just grab the pack and play. It can be played absolutely anywhere.. Against a wall, in a field, on the beach; anywhere you can find some space."

## What have been the highlights?

The main highlights of the pilot have been:

- 1) Developing a fit for purpose offer with appropriate resources which have resulted in extremely positive feedback from volunteers and leaders involved in delivering SMASH Hockey. The resource cards in particular offer something tangible to help promote, explain and deliver the initiative.
- 2) The SMASH Hockey activator training was well received by the volunteers, whose questions and challenge helped to further shape the pilot approach. This demonstrates that both volunteers and young people have been at the heart of developing SMASH Hockey.
- 3) The relationship with StreetGames has been extremely positive and has grown over the past 12-18 months. Key to this successful relationship is knowing each other's strengths and what each organisation can do to help develop the initiative.

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## What has Hockey Wales learnt?

For the National Governing Body and Tom, this pilot has been a huge learning curve. Understanding the varied needs of young people living in areas of deprivation and the daily challenges of Doorstep Sport Clubs was a real 'eye-opener' for Tom, but he feels it has made him a better development officer and person. Recognising the need to be more flexible, to explore alternative approaches by listening to young people and 'throwing the textbook out of the window' have all changed the way that the organisation approaches their work if they are to engage more widely across Wales.

"Leading the pilot of SMASH Hockey has taught me and Hockey Wales a lot. It has made us more self-aware as an organisation, recognising the need to be far more flexible. It has taught us to be brave in trying something new and to be open-minded in empowering young people to make choices."

*(Tom Little, Hockey Wales Club Development Officer)*

## What impact has SMASH Hockey had?

Across the 7 pilot clubs, SMASH Hockey has been well received with young people and volunteers positively engaging with the initiative.

A survey was undertaken by StreetGames with 4/7 DSCs involved in the pilot responding. DSCs had around 20 young people attending during the pilot phase. The DSCs surveyed felt that SMASH Hockey offers something different to young people and could be used to enhance community cohesion and volunteer development. In some sessions, a few boys who previously had not engaged in the sport activities joined in with the SMASH Hockey sessions which was extremely positive.

From a leader training perspective, those volunteers who attended rated the training as at least 9/10 and gained a better understanding of how hockey can be delivered as fun games in their clubs. Feedback from the clubs suggested that the informal nature of SMASH Hockey was a positive as it gave their young people the freedom to choose when to play, plus the SMASH Hockey brand is 'cool' and young person friendly.

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## What next for SMASH Hockey?

The plan is to further refine the SMASH Hockey product and add to the resource cards with the aim of rolling it out more widely across Wales. Hockey Wales are keen to develop some promotional materials and videos to better illustrate what the initiative is about and what it can offer DSCs. Key to this will be regional training delivered in conjunction with the relevant Hockey Wales Development Officer to upskill all staff. This will ensure that SMASH Hockey is embedded across the organisation and hopefully lead to longevity and sustainability in the approach. There also needs to be some changes to the current equipment packs by adding larger, softer balls in response to feedback from some DSC leaders that the current balls are too hard for the setting.

**Advice that Hockey Wales would have for other National Governing Bodies of Sport** who are keen to engage more in these communities, is to get out there and experience a DSC setting. Fundamental to the success of the SMASH Hockey Pilot has been adaptability in how sessions are delivered, recognising the 'take it or leave it' choice of many young people attending DSCs. Avoiding structure and coaching but instead promoting a young person-led and multi-sport approach is key to ensuring effective and regular engagement in the clubs. Hockey Wales hope that they can continue to offer a version of hockey which focuses on the fun, social and informal aspects of sport!

*The most important learning from the SMASH Hockey pilot has included the need to provide flexibility in approach, offer a quality experience, and empower young people to decide if they want to join in. After all, a young person playing 10 minutes of Hockey is better than nothing!"*

**Does SMASH Hockey sound like something you would like to introduce in your DSC / community group?**

Visit [www.hockeywales.org.uk](http://www.hockeywales.org.uk) to check out our FAQ's page, which is complete with price list and detailed pack contents. Alternatively, contact our National SMASH Hockey Lead [here](#).

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Hockey Wales would like to make specific thanks to the outstanding, unwavering support that Street Games have provided throughout the SMASH Hockey journey.

People who have been invaluable to the project so far have been Aaron Northmore and Lauren Thomas who have provided unequivocal support and guidance along the way.

Additional thanks should go to all of the Doorstep Sports Clubs that agreed to take part in the Pilot project and aid the development of Smash Hockey. These groups were:

- Kinmel Bay Youth Group
- Llanhari Youth Group
- Alway Doorstep Sport Club
- Flintshire County Council
- Pen Y Groes Youth Group
- Townhill Youth Group
- Beddau Doorstep Sport Club

Now SMASH Hockey has been officially launched, we will be constantly looking for new partnerships to help grow the brand and provide hockey to as many children and young people as possible. Please contact us if you would like to work together to make this happen.

## Our Partners



Boys and Girls Clubs of Wales  
Clwbiau Bechgyn a Merched Cymru

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