

Newham All Star Sports Academy

Everybody Benefits – Long Term Award

Describe the work of the charity organisation being nominated

Newham All Star Sports Academy (NASSA) is a charity based in east London which gives young people the opportunity to play basketball in a fun, safe environment whilst also educating them on the dangers of knife crime and gang culture. It was established after a local mother took her two boys to Balaam Park for an impromptu basketball lesson in 2005. Other young people asked to join in, the boys' friends came along and within a month, 30 young people were attending every week. Seeing the need, the mother, Natasha Hart, set up NASSA in April 2006 with £20 in the bank. NASSA has evolved ever since, adapting to local circumstances. In 2008, two friends of NASSA player, Anthony Okereafor, were stabbed to death within weeks of each other. One died in Anthony's arms. With Anthony's guidance, NASSA set up its Carry a Basketball Not a Blade (CABNAB) educational initiative. Every block of NASSA sessions includes a talk on how to avoid being drawn into the world of knife crime and the potential consequences of carrying a knife. Anthony now delivers over 30 CABNAB workshops each year. NASSA is part of the Newham Junior Citizens Programme. We deliver CABNAB workshops to over 3,000 local schoolchildren every year. This is in addition to the 1,000 schoolchildren who attend the extra-curricular basketball sessions NASSA delivers in schools and colleges across east London. The knife crime talks are tailored to each age group because the messages have to be different. As its original core of participants reached those aged 18 and 19, NASSA decided to help them into work by giving them the opportunity to gain officially recognised sports qualifications. Many participants come from disadvantaged backgrounds, but these qualifications have helped them gain jobs within sport across east London.

Give examples of the projects or work the organisation has done

NASSA established junior coaches in 2015 to equip east London with its next generation of sports coaches. Many of the 237 unique participants (of whom 39 were girls) in the programme – which was supported by L&Q Housing Foundation and ended in February 2019 – came from disadvantaged backgrounds, including a significant number from single-parent families. Many find school too prescriptive so the officially recognised sports qualifications they were able to gain on this programme have been vital in convincing potential employers to take them on. The programme took place in five locations across east London (Newham, Leyton, Redbridge, Hackney and Barking & Dagenham) on different evenings of the week. The sessions were scheduled at the time of day when young people are often drawn into anti-social behaviour. Between them, the participants gained a total of 314 sports qualifications, specifically:

- 192 Level 1 qualifications were gained in Basketball Refereeing and Table Officiating with a target of 75
- 68 UKCCL1 (Level 1) Basketball Coaching qualifications were achieved (52 boys; 16 girls) with a target of 60
- 54 UKCCL2 (Level 2) Basketball Coaching qualifications were achieved (44 boys; 10 girls) with a target of 40

NASSA is always looking for new ways to broaden the life experience of local young people through its programmes. In September 2019, we began a unique, new collaboration with London's Air

Ambulance to educate young people more fully on the realities of knife crime. In 2018, for the first time, the primary reason for the despatch of London's Air Ambulance was not to attend road traffic accident victims but victims of violent crime. The participants – many of whom are young offenders or those at risk of offending – will attend a basketball session. The middle section is devoted to educating them on knife crime. London's Air Ambulance staff give talks on what happens to the human body when someone is stabbed. The participants are also given a tablet on which a special London's Air Ambulance app allows them to play the role of the control centre despatcher in deciding whether to despatch the air ambulance. The participants also visit the helipad on top of the hospital. Careers advice talks on roles within the emergency services will also be given to the young people at the end of their twelve-week period on the programme which will run for three years.

What has been the impact of the organisation's projects or work?

NASSA's aim has always been not just to give the young people coming through its doors a chance to play basketball and ignore the rest of their lives or their futures. The NASSA coaches preach the importance of good behaviour and dedication at school. Because of NASSA's close links with schools across east London, we hear frequently that the behaviour of young people on NASSA's programmes has improved markedly in school. If evidence of that impact is anecdotal, NASSA's junior coaches programme has led to many of its participants gaining part-time or full-time paid roles within sport. Indeed, eleven of the 54 young people who gained Basketball Level 2 coaching qualifications through the programme are now being, or have been, paid by NASSA for delivering between two and 20 hours of coaching per week in schools in east London. During this work, they are supervised by NASSA coaches to hone their skills. In addition, 16 parents of the participants were qualified by NASSA on the Level 1 coaching course to be able to assist the coaches delivering sessions across all five locations. NASSA funded their coaching qualifications from its reserves. By involving the parents, NASSA is spreading its impact across local communities and we regularly received phone calls from parents of other young people asking if their son or daughter can join a NASSA programme because they have heard of NASSA by word of mouth. Solomon West Solomon was originally a participant in the Hackney sessions of the junior coaches programme. Now 23, he began coaching for NASSA in August 2016, a month after gaining his Level 2 coaching qualification through the programme. He now works as a NASSA coach, delivering between 16 and 20 hours of paid coaching every week in local schools. In a wonderful example of the wheel coming full circle, Solomon also coached at the Leyton sessions of the junior coaches programme which he first attended as a participant. NASSA is mindful that knife crime also affects girls and young women. In 2018, we established a new girls-only basketball programme for girls to learn the sport and try out new skills. The sessions were taken by a female coach who also delivered knife crime talks based on educating the girls on how to avoid being drawn into the world of gangs.

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