

McCain Athletics Networks

Cheshire Network Submission

Appendices

Appendix 1: SWOT Analysis (to identify key delivery priorities).

Strengths

Good blend of T&F expertise and road running in the participating clubs.
The clubs in the network have already demonstrated a willingness to cooperate, with no barriers to sharing experience and best practise between clubs.
Keen to be inclusive.
Network has a mind set that it can solve problems and is enthusiastic.
There are 4 good T&F facilities within the county.
There is already an excellent GP and handicap road running scheme operational within the county.

Weaknesses

The clubs cover a wide geographical area with a relatively low density of population.
Currently the majority of affiliated clubs have not signed up to the network approach.
Expertise in chosen throws and PV is thin for both coaches and athletes, and no indoor facilities.
No overall coordination with schools/FE colleges and no central university.
No strategy from clubs about how to improve standards, in endurance running.
Clubs are more used to competing against each other rather than sharing and cooperating.
Athletes are tempted to go to bigger clubs outside our geographical area.

Opportunities

By pooling coaching resources and having coordinated training camps and talent identification sessions;-
coaching in Discus/Hammer/PV will strengthen, performances will improve, and more athletes will participate.
Clubs will have the opportunity to enhance their structures and adopt best practises.
Utilise outside help so that clubs can market themselves better, and extend the county website and monthly newsletter to signpost achievements of action group.
Endurance camps focusing on mental/physical preparation, nutrition and, core stability will help raise standards and reduce injuries.
By promoting Run in England and parkland runs, more clubs will benefit from increased numbers participating and joining clubs.

By pooling resources sharing venues; all chosen events will benefit from focusing on common key elements, as well as reducing admin. and keeping costs low. By the use of common assessment formats and by providing mini competitions - improvements can be quantified.

Promote the benefits of networking with students at colleges to raise athletics awareness and for them to gain more hands on experience.

Extend the athletics network model to other disciplines and subsequently get more clubs to share in the benefit of partnership working.

Pooling resources will provide interest experience and benefits that individual clubs cannot provide.

Innovation and ideas are promoted shared and delivered through the network. Clubs become stronger.

Threats

Current weaknesses will continue, other sports and partnerships will progress at the expense of athletics in the area.

Without an indoor year round training facility for throws/PV; progress will be limited and disjointed.

It may not be possible through the network alone to overcome some of these deficiencies.

With only a limited number of clubs participating initially, full benefit will not be gained.

Enthusiasm with participating clubs will wane if tangible benefits are not realised early.

Resources within participating clubs are limited and some clubs may be unable to commit fully to the network.

Continuing the current isolated way will mean that the full potential of communal improvement will be missed.

Some athletes may be tempted to go to clubs/ areas where better targeted coaching and networks are in place.

By accepting funding there is a clear obligation on the network to succeed and to be audited.

Spending against undertaken activities does not yield desired results.

Appendix 2: Long Term Benefits (+ Success Factors)

Overall we will be a partnership that improves participation and performance through people across the club and community network.

Clubs will grow collectively and individually.

Experience knowledge and expertise will be shared to the benefit of all Clubs. Common areas of coaching, volunteer involvement, conditioning and club structures will be discussed and best practice shared.

Clubs and the Group become recognized and visible in the schools and the community.

We will identify specific areas for improvement in our County running and athletics needs and together agree and implement a course of action. Initially this will be targeted at Pole vault and Throws.

Our critical success factors, the way we measure success over the 3 years, are:

1. Partnership will improve, increasing from 20% clubs of the 32 in Cheshire involved in the network today, by a minimum of 5% each year.
2. For each club, more people will be involved in its organisation. Each club will map its current contributors, and we will have people development plans being actively used to bring in new and develop existing volunteers and coaches.
3. Participation, measured by total club membership, numbers attending specific events, and numbers attending network events, will increase year on year.
4. Performance, measured by the proportion of improved members across all disciplines against agreed network measures, will increase year on year.

Appendix 3: Focus on Greater Participation

The network provides opportunity to share the benefits of local and national initiatives aimed at increased participation and performance. Already the regular Network meetings have provided a forum for general update, e.g. for Run in England, where the local coordinator, Alison Lysons (Area Development Officer) gave a presentation. It was clear that several clubs have compatible starter initiatives and will directly link into the scheme.

Local initiatives include the Parkland Run and the Cheshire Road Grand Prix and Handicap Scheme. The latter has been ongoing for several years and is described below, including measured benefits:

CHESHIRE ROAD RUNNING GRAND PRIX SERIES

The Cheshire Road Running GP series was introduced in 2003 by the County AA Licence Officer, Adrian Thiemicke. His aim was to encourage more members of Cheshire affiliated athletic clubs to participate in road running events held in the County which to a large extent were organised by the Cheshire clubs. In addition by encouraging more club runners to take part, the competitiveness in the races would be increased with the additional aim of improving standards of endurance running. Initially it was solely an inter-club team event, but after the first year, clubs requested the introduction of individual awards for the series.

In 2006, a handicap was also introduced into the GP series using a novel handicap system invented by George Bunner. The aim of this was to encourage the slower runners to improve, by providing equal opportunities for runners of all standards to win a handicap award/prize. This could also assist in improving endurance running standards.

Analysis of entrants in the GP races has shown that adding GP status increased the number of Cheshire club runners by 50 to 60 (which for some events doubled the number of Cheshire club runners) compared to when it did not have GP status. In addition, the GP series encouraged the revival of a 10 mile event in the County in 2008, with the 2009 event doubling its entry level. In 2008 the County AA was able to fund some awards to the first 3 individuals and teams at the end of the GP series. At the final event in the 2009 series, this produced some very close battles between several clubs for the overall series prizes.

Each year so far we have had a different male and female handicap winner in each of the GP races; nearly all express complete surprise at winning a prize and most have continued to improve in subsequent events.

Co-incident with the introduction of the handicap was the start of performance data collection for Cheshire club members. This is beginning to show some positive trends in performance levels (the top 10 in most events in 2009 have, on average, run faster than in any of the previous years). The increased detail of this data will, if collection is continued in years to come, provide information on both participation and performance trends.

(John Driscoll - Cheshire County AA)

Appendix 4: Network Activity Coordinator Role

The role title will be 'Network Activity Coordinator', to cover all aspects, not just coaching or administration. The job description will include the following requirements:

- Must have extensive experience in sport, as an athlete, coach, official or event organiser – or all four.
- Must understand the needs of athletics clubs
- Must be a good communicator at all levels – and have a network of useful contacts at Club level and within the organising structure.
- Must be capable of acting as a facilitator/ administrator as well as directly delivering in at least one particular skill area.