

Wakefield Hockey Club - Flyerz



ENGLAND
HOCKEY

As part of the Eurohockey Championships in August England Hockey will be hosting a Flyerz Festival at the Copper Box Arena on the 26th of August. There are an ever growing number of clubs starting Flyerz sections with Wakefield Hockey club being one of them.

Tom Heyes from Wakefield Flyerz shares Wakefield's story.

How did your Flyerz sessions start?

"I decided to start a Flyerz section at Wakefield Hockey Club after reading about it on the England Hockey website a year ago.

I'd been doing some study on childhood disability in Uganda whilst working with a charity and felt I should do something closer to home. Wakefield is a thriving club and I knew we could sustain a disability section. Ali Taylor who is the club's welfare officer, was keen to help. We gained support from the club leaders and accessed funding through West Yorkshire Sport and Access Sport.

In the summer of 2014 we launched activities and outreach sessions inviting local disability organisations and clubs to take part, and circulated some publicity materials. Most of our contacts and players found out about our sessions through word of mouth from somebody already involved. The sessions took off and since September 2014 we have been running them weekly.

What do your Flyerz sessions look like?

During the summer months we run the sessions at the hockey club on one of the hockey pitches but during the winter months we move indoors and use a local school sports hall.

At present we have six or seven regular members aged 8-25 with various learning disabilities, some movement difficulties and autism. Our aim at the sessions is to make them fun and varied. I recently attended England Hockey's 'engaging games for children' workshop and we look to follow the principles of modern coaching by devising simple engaging games that encourage the development of skills, rather than simply doing drills. The sessions usually finish with competitive games between two teams.

Our sessions last for an hour and the members pay £1.00 to take part. The parents of the players usually stay and help facilitate the session and we're developing a nice supportive group.



What do the players at your club love about Flyerz Hockey?

It is clear that the players who come along to our Flyerz sessions really love playing hockey. One lad says every week how much he loves to come along and take part. He enjoys greeting other members and is delighted when he is praised for the skills he has acquired.

Another boy, who is autistic, is improving rapidly; he revels in applying his new skills and strategic awareness.

Tell us why you're club are looking forward to the Flyerz Festival at the Euro Hockey Championships?

We think the Flyerz Festival will be a very exciting opportunity to meet up with other disabled players, coaches and volunteers. All of us at Wakefield will increase our understanding of disability hockey and will get to watch some top class matches. We think it will give our players and all of us a big boost and will help us to recruit more members.

What tips and advice do you have for other clubs who are thinking of starting a Flyerz section?

To get your Flyerz section started your club will need a few people who are committed to working through any challenges and the backing of your club leaders. In our case the local sports organisations we have worked with have been very supportive.

You will need access to some funding, which does not necessarily need to be a lot. Our main expense so far has been pitch hire. You don't necessarily need to have everything worked out in advance, but you do need to communicate well with your club members and encourage them to invite people they know.

From a volunteer perspective, people can get a lot out of supporting Flyerz sessions, for example it gives credit to someone who is undertaking their Duke of Edinburgh awards or helps people gain valuable experience and skills for their CV.

Lots of advice is also available through England Hockey and other clubs who are running sessions. Once you start, you won't consider stopping – it's a lot of fun! “

We would like to thank Tom and Wakefield Hockey club for sharing their thoughts and experience around Flyerz Hockey.

If your club are interested in setting up a Flyerz section please get in touch via e-mail to bev.blackburn@englandhockey.co.uk