

INQUIRY REPORT

Evidence from University of Worcester and Worcester Wolves

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1. Sport versus Education

The Worcester Wolves Basketball Club [**“Wolves”**] was established at the University of Worcester [**“UW”**] in 2000.

This followed a traditional pattern as, historically, sport and education have co-existed together within universities. However, excellence in sport has been seen at times as being at the expense of academic progress.

This partnership immediately tackled the potential conflict between sport and education by recognising that sport can be an important vehicle for encouraging academic progress, whilst also providing an environment that attracts and supports students and becomes integral to developing role models for the wider community.

2. Learning through Sport

Consequently, UW together with the Wolves and a range of professional and voluntary sports organisations, charities and businesses have created thousands of innovative Learning through Sport [**“LTS”**] opportunities for children throughout the region. With basketball as a focus, LTS has included and inspired thousands of able-bodied and disabled children and young adults nationally and internationally.

Through a whole series of LTS programmes, including Hoops4Health; LTS Day; DizzKidz; Read & Play; and IM Basketball, the Wolves engage with the community not only locally in leafy-green Worcestershire, but also further afield by providing educational opportunities to the most disadvantaged of young people.

The educational opportunities offered by UW include:

- academic courses;
- the Physical Education and Coaching Centre;
- Health & Safety courses;
- Basketball referees and officials;
- links to projects run by the international educational institution, FIBA Europe Universitas; and
- collaboration with Chinese organisations.

The partnership offers students the opportunity to:

- earn as they learn, particularly if they choose to work in line with their degree;
- become more employable;
- take advantage of the Aimhigher summer schools programme;
- have access to bursaries and scholarships through the National Scholarship Programme;
- become student ambassadors;
- work with young offenders;
- become more involved in disability sports or working with the disabled; and
- become volunteers in the community.

The LTS programmes have created new skills and developed the positive characters of hundreds of able-bodied and disabled student athletes in order to maximise their academic and sporting performance potential and to act as educators and role models to inspire the next generation in sporting, social and academic arenas.

In recognition of the strength and success of the LTS programmes, Lord Faulkner of Worcester has said, *“I know that the University is a byword for excellence and outreach, and I admire all that they do to ensure that their innovative work relating to sport and education makes a real impact locally, nationally, and indeed internationally”*.

Indeed the LTS project was awarded the 2012 World Leisure International Innovation Prize and was *“Highly Commended”*, as well as the Worcestershire Ambassadors’ Corporate Social Responsibility Award 2012. This recognition clearly highlights the success of the LTS programmes. Some of the achievements are described below:

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i) Hoops4Health

The LTS Hoops4Health project follows the original BBL initiative with an overall focus of fusing basketball coaching with healthy living advice. The project provides a dual purpose - to portray a variety of health messages to young people whilst providing a variety of skills and means for young people to continue playing basketball. The project now encourages youngsters in 30 primary schools to get active and learn more about healthy living.

ii) LTS Day

LTS has led a joint initiative with the region's other leading professional sports clubs to engage over 200 youngsters in a one-day LTS event with the region's elite athletes.

iii) Mathematics and English Booklets and DVDs

In a joint initiative with the Association for Physical Education, LTS has helped local children in Years 5 and 6 to improve their results in SAT Mathematics and English exams. With teachers and players working together, booklets on the two subjects have been produced along with a DVD and these have been distributed to participating schools. Further, the DVDs are now sold throughout the UK and abroad.

iv) DizzKidz

In 2005, DizzKidz was formed as an activity and sports club for children and young adults with motor coordination difficulties (i.e. dyspraxia or developmental coordination disorder).

v) Read and Play

Read and Play is a home-grown LTS project aimed at encouraging children in Years 3 and 4 to play basketball and improve their reading skills and it targets disaffected youngsters.

In the Read and Play programme, the children get a chance to read to the players in small groups or one-to-one, allowing all children the opportunity to read out loud and gain assistance and guidance, whilst improving their confidence. The children have a question and answer session with the players where they can ask such questions as "What was your favourite book at school?" There are two elements of Read and Play: 10 weeks' active basketball coaching and in-class reading sessions.

An MSc Study entitled, 'The Impact of Sporting Role Models on Children's Motivation towards Reading' looked into Read and Play and initially engaged five pilot schools in the programme, but it now runs in twenty local primary schools.

Evaluations and surveys from teachers, parents, youngsters and coaches all said that Read and Play demonstrated significant and positive impact. The findings were forwarded to the Minister for Schools, Nick Gibb, in 2011 and LTS received positive feedback and a request for further information.

vi) Wheelchairs and Trailers

In partnership with GB Wheelchair Basketball, LTS secured funding for 20 wheelchairs and trailers which are used to encourage basketball participation for disabled and able-bodied youngsters.

vii) Under-represented groups

The number of applications to UW to study and play basketball opportunities from under-represented groups has significantly increased to 120 per year.

viii) Basketball Ambassadors

The LTS programme has introduced elite basketball ambassadors to mentor four national HEFCE-funded Aimhigher Sports Science summer schools designed to raise the awareness, aspirations and attainment of 200 young people from disadvantaged social and economic backgrounds. LTS has also delivered basketball workshops for Aimhigher taster days in schools throughout the region.

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ix) Support to failing primary schools

LTS has given support to failing primary schools with basketball and educational initiatives to lift the morale and self esteem of both staff and students.

x) Basketball Nationally and Internationally

LTS has secured funding to support students from disadvantaged backgrounds to enable them to attend national and international basketball clinics.

Then in August 2013, LTS in partnership with the Basketball Federation of Castilla y Leon in Spain delivered an innovative English language Basketball camp. 35 Spanish students, all aged between 12 and 17, divided their time between the University of Worcester Arena, where they practiced basketball skills, and the St John's campus, where they took classes to improve their English and gained accreditation from the British Council for English Language.

The trip also afforded the students the chance to try different sports, but with the emphasis on basketball, one of the highlights of their stay was a friendly game against the Wolves' junior academy team at the University Arena.

Following visits to LTS workshops and seminars by delegations from leading Chinese universities, including Zhejiang and the National Training Centre of China, LTS officials have also been invited to give keynote lectures with a focus on basketball and education working together in universities in Europe and China.

3. Disability Sport

UW is the university of choice for sports students with a disability, largely because of its Teacher & Coach Education Centre offering a specialisation in disability sport. This has become the national centre of excellence for disability sport.

It is the first university to have offered a BSc Honours degree in Sports Coaching Science with Disability Sports Science and there are currently 60 students taking the degree course with a further 180 studying related modules within their degrees. The course was specifically mentioned by David Willetts in his speech 'A world without boundaries', given after the Paralympics in London 2012. Further, the Independent said on 6th November 2013, "*First disability coaching degree will produce generation of teachers trained to help aspiring Paralympians*".

UW now supports the national teams for the visually impaired, deaf and wheelchair athletes, and its outreach wheelchair programme currently visits 20 schools.

In recognition of its work on inclusion, the FIBA Europe Board has said, "*University of Worcester boasts one of the most inclusive and engaging university basketball programmes in Europe*".

4. Widening Participation

i) Slam, dunk and the scholarship is yours

Writing in the Guardian on 14th October 2008 under the above heading, Chris Arnot asked, "*Could universities offer more US-style sports bursaries to help widen access?*"

"High-flying students abound at the University of Worcester. They can soar higher than most human beings, without springs or wings - and have an uncanny ability to hover in mid-air before gravity reasserts itself. Traditionalists may be relieved that there is not yet a degree on offer in basketball, but Worcester has led the way among British universities in using the game to widen participation in higher education."

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ii) Young teenager in inner city London

The article prompted a letter to UW from a concerned neighbour of a young teenager in inner city London. Excerpts from that letter follow:

"Dear Mick Donovan,

".....the sort of degree course you run at Worcester looked to have what is necessary to motivate a basketball mad 14 year old to a) attend school and b) try harder with a view to getting the right entry qualifications for college and beyond.

"... he has a poor attendance record for last year..

".....he has a very chaotic home life

"He longs for a more enabling environment. He very much enjoyed a residential week at a basketball camp he attended this summer.

"Would it be possible to have a motivating trip to your department ...

"A meeting with a role model student....

"This is a huge ask, but it could change a life heading for nowhere just now.

The neighbour continued: *"Something L wrote last night after he'd been out jogging and been threatened by another boy -a bit melodramatic but heartfelt nevertheless - and what led to us discussing his future and to my letter to you thins morning...."* and included the following:

"I need to get out of London it not a good place to bring up children everywhere I go I don't feel safe on the journey back from school there is always a gang of boys waiting outside my school there is even gang members who attends my school. When they see trying to do something good they just want to hurt you for the fun of it.

"I cannot ride my bike without the fear of it being robbed or go certain basketball training without being approached by a gang of boys.

"...my mum has to work a night shift so she can pay for us to live a good life and have the luxuries I have. I seriously need to get out of here because I fear for my life".

iii) Widening Participation in Higher Education

In a National Audit Office report on Widening Participation in Higher Education under the heading of *"What higher education institutions are doing to widen participation"*, the following report from the Worcester Evening News on 28th June 2008 is quoted:

"A SPORT scheme at the University of Worcester has been highlighted as an example of good practice in a new report.

"Both the Learning Through Sport scheme and Worcester's use of basketball to raise the profile of higher education are highlighted in the report on widening participation published by the National Audit Office (NAO).

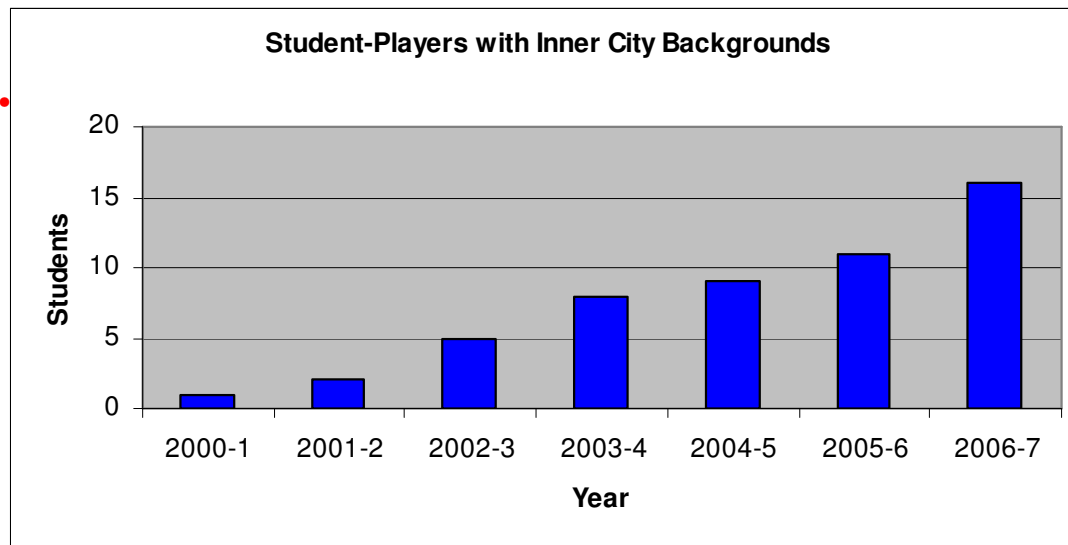
"The NAO report also picks out five other examples of pioneering approaches taken by Worcester to attract more students from low participation neighbourhoods and disadvantaged backgrounds. These include sending students to mentor pupils studying for their GCSEs in schools in deprived areas, and providing impartial careers advice to hard-to-reach adults such as working class parents."

iv) Student Players with Inner City Backgrounds

In 2013/14 over 120 students were studying at the UW with a focus to study and engage with Basketball. A high percentage of these students are from low income backgrounds and all engage in some form of research or outreach work and are engaging with thousands of children.

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5. Funding

Whilst the most significant benefit of the LTS model to UW and the Wolves is clearly the 'added value' within the local, regional, national and international social communities, with significant growth in the number of participants, educators and volunteers, the LTS initiatives have generated over £800,000 that has been reinvested in enhancing the programme.

Initially a wealthy businessman simply wrote a cheque for £250,000 as a contribution because he was so impressed by the work being done, particularly with regard to the disabled.

Further, nowadays sponsors are less worried about putting their names on the players' shirts and more concerned about forming partnerships with the club and the university.

Funding contributors include:

Sportsmatch	Awards for All	Sports & the Arts Foundation	Bransford Trust
GB Wheelchair Basketball	Sport England	Skills Active	Sport Unlimited
Primary Care Trust	Aimhigher	LEAs and Local Councils	Wickestate charity
Npower	Worcester Bosch	Brooklyn Ford	Universal Display

6. Summary of the Wolves Community Basketball

The following is a summary of the progress made by the IM Basketball Officer who has been in post for five months. It is important to note that the funding from EB is to be withdrawn following the Sport UK cuts.

Community outreach: Vision

- Provide added playing opportunities for participants of all levels across Herefordshire & Worcestershire, with a focus on those aged between 14 and 24.
- Support the delivery of school basketball and increase the number of schools participating in regular intra- and inter-school competitions.
- Establish a clear development route for players, including exit routes for recreational and elite players.
- Liaise with all stakeholders to create a comprehensive, sustainable network of basketball.
- Train and implement a catalogue of local basketball providers (e.g. satellite clubs, coaches, volunteers).
- Increase the profile of the Wolves and build lasting relationships with local schools, clubs and the public.

Three tier development plan:

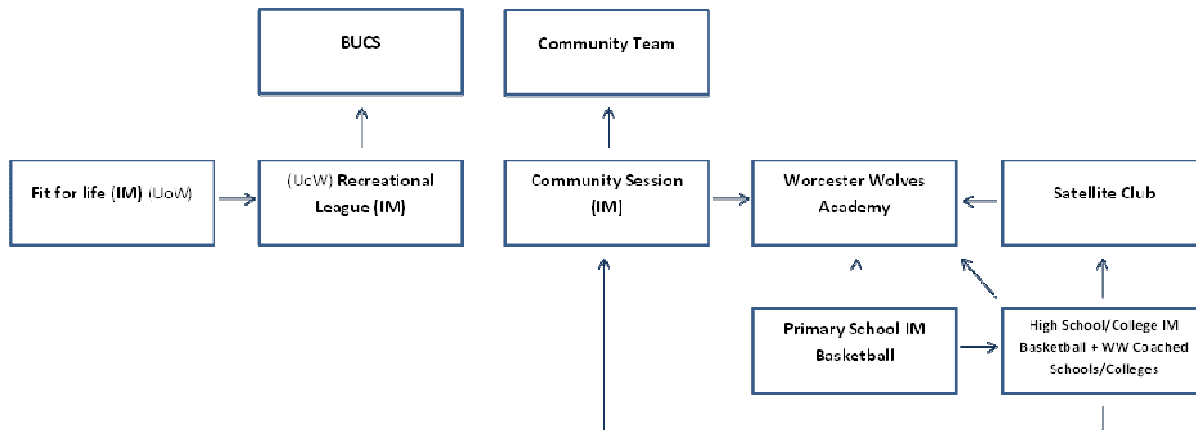
- IM Basketball - an informal, engaging introduction to basketball that can be self-activated and run before school; at lunchtime; during PE; and after school.
- Wolves-affiliated satellite clubs will provide students with weekly coached basketball sessions.

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- Participants who excel and show a keen interest in basketball will be able to choose from several exit routes to suit their needs: Worcester Wolves Academy, community team, and local clubs.
 - There have already been several cases of participants moving from IM Basketball to satellite clubs to Worcester Wolves Academy.

Player development pathway:



Three tier school development:

- Stage 1: Implementation of basketball
 - Initial delivery of basketball programme
 - Use of EB resources and qualified coaches
- Stage 2: Skill development
 - Communication channel between the Wolves and schools
 - Development days
 - Access to qualification and training courses
- Stage 3: Review
 - Assess the success of the programme through numbers, delivery style and participant feedback
 - Provide progression route/exit point for session

Affiliated schools, colleges and universities (approximately 650 additional participants):

Whitecross High School U13	Whitecross High School U16	Pershore High School	Steiner Academy Hereford
Dyson Perrins High School	Somers Park Primary School	Nunnery Wood Primary School	Bishops of Hereford's Bluecoat School
Hanley Castle High School	North East Worcester College	Hereford Sixth Form College	Hereford College of Technology
New College Worcester	Bromsgrove School	Harvington First School	Worcester Wolves
University of Worcester	Worcester College of Technology	Hereford Community Basketball Club	'University' of the third age

Schools engaged with;

Herefordshire & Ludlow College	Hereford Academy	Whittington C of E Primary	Redhill C of E Primary
Lucton School	Perrywood Primary School	The King's School	Blessed Edward Oldcorne
Nunnery Wood High School	Bishop Perowne C of E College	Tudor Grange Academy	Christopher Whitehead Language College
Droitwich Spa High School	Dines Green Primary School	St Georges Roman Catholic	

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Sample basketball sessions led by Worcester Wolves:

Delivery Day	School / Club	Time	Type
Monday	GB Wheelchair Women	7.00am - 8.30pm	Wheelchair
"	Worcester Sixth Form	10.00am - 11.00am	Wolves
"	Dyson Perrins High School	4.00pm - 5.00pm	IM (Satellite)
Tuesday	GB Wheelchair Women	7.00am - 8.30am	Wheelchair
"	Worcester Sixth Form	12.30pm - 1.30pm	Wolves
"	Hanley Castle High School	3.30pm - 5.00pm	IM (Satellite)
"	Pershore High School	4.00pm - 5.00pm	IM (Satellite)
"	Bromsgrove School	4.00pm - 5.30pm	Wolves
"	Women's IM	8.00pm - 8.45pm	IM
Wednesday	GB Wheelchair Women	7.00am - 8.30am	Wheelchair
"	U3A 60+	11.00am - 12.00pm	Ball Again
"	Worcester Sixth Form	2.00pm - 4.00pm	Wolves
"	Bromsgrove School	4.00pm - 5.30pm	Wolves
"	Worcester Wolves	6.30pm - 8.00pm	IM
"	University of Worcester	8.00pm - 11.00pm	IM
Thursday	GB Wheelchair Women	7.00am - 8.30am	Wheelchair
"	Bromsgrove School	4.00pm - 5.00pm	Wolves
"	Worcester College of Technology	5.00pm - 6.00pm	IM
"	DizzKids	5.30pm - 7.00pm	Wolves
Friday	Worcester Sixth Form	11.30am - 12.30pm	Wolves
"	Worcester Wolves Academy (CVL)	6.30pm - 9.30pm	Academy
"	Bromsgrove School	4.00pm - 6.30pm	Wolves
"	Hereford Sixth Form College	4.15pm - 5.15pm	IM (Satellite)
Saturday	Worcester Wolves Academy	9.30am - 11.30am	Wolves
"	Worcester Wolves	11.30am - 1.30pm	Wheelchair
Sunday	Hereford Community (Worcester Wolves)	11.00am - 1.00pm	IM
"	Bromsgrove School	3.00pm - 5.00pm	Wolves

The Wolves were also one of the five pilot BBL clubs to successfully engage in the BBL Foundation Proj3kt 3on3 the youth basketball initiative when it was launched in October 2013.

7. The University of Worcester Arena

UW was engaged in a fundraising campaign to construct a Community Sports Arena that has extended the LTS model further, with a clear focus on disability sport and basketball. The amount raised from the public sector grants, charities, trusts and personal donations was £3 million. Significantly, the Arena is now the home for the Wolves' BBL team and all associated schemes and basketball initiatives of the Wolves basketball club.

With the new Arena, UW is able to offer unique services to local sports clubs in the community as well as elite and professional athletes around the Midlands. The Arena's facilities cater for disability by design and enable true inclusion.

With spacious, high-tech facilities, the 2,000-seat Arena is the perfect venue for the university to develop innovative sports schemes, whilst also providing a venue that attracts a great range of spectator events to the city. Currently, UW provides Worcestershire County Cricket Club; Worcester Wolves Basketball Club; and Aston Villa, Birmingham City and West Bromwich Albion Football Clubs with support in the areas of performance analysis, fitness and nutrition advice.

Since the Arena opened, UW has brought additional opportunities to the region and is attracting a great range of top-class regional, national and international events to the City.

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In recent years, UW has also become a centre of excellence for Coach Education, offering courses at all levels as well as extensive sports science support to a range of sporting organisations.

It is now also the training base for the GB Men's and Women's Wheelchair basketball teams and the host venue for all major national and international basketball competitions, including the European Championships in 2015. Additionally the Arena will host GB Men's and Women's able bodied senior international training camps and games in 2014.

The work of UW has been enhanced immensely by the new Arena, which has greatly increased the resources available to the basketball club and the university. Students from inner city backgrounds have increased from 16 to over 120 since 2006/07. The LTS programmes of the basketball club and the university have received national and international recognition. Funding is from wide variety of public and private sector sources.



Sir Philip Craven says, *“This facility has clearly come from a passion for sport - a passion for everybody being involved in sport.”*

Professor David Green, University of Worcester Vice Chancellor and Chief Executive says, *“The Worcester Arena has both state-of-the-art facilities, and an exceptional standard of universal accessibility.”*

8. Role Model - Alex Owumi

Worcester Wolves' Alex Owumi could never have anticipated that basketball would have led him to the heart of the bloody Libyan uprising, but he says that he is stronger for his Libyan experience.

A Nigerian native who emigrated to the USA at the age of 11, Alex Owumi's exploits on the basketball court led him to a successful career as a small college player. Undrafted by the NBA, Owumi pursued his pro basketball dream overseas, eventually signing with Al-Nasr of Libya, a state-run athletic club privately funded by the family of then-Libyan president Muammar Qaddafi.

Owumi's tenure with Al-Nasr was interrupted by the Libyan uprising and resulting civil war. Imprisoned in his Benghazi apartment for more than 2 weeks with no food, phone, Internet, or hope, Owumi wondered whether he would make it out of Libya alive. Despite his weakened condition and the dangers lurking in the city, he was able to escape Benghazi and flee the country. Smuggled to a refugee camp in Egypt, he was, much to his surprise, contacted by an Egyptian team seeking his services. And so, in a bizarre, storybook ending, Owumi finished the year by helping lead the team to an unlikely league championship, earning league most valuable player honours in the process.

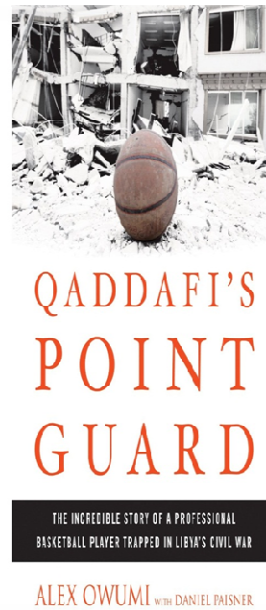
Qaddafi's Point Guard is a book about hope and longing, conflict (cultural, political, and military), and ultimately, triumph – to overcome obstacles and survive against the most desperate odds.

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Alex Owumi says, "The main reason I wanted to write the book was because I wanted my experiences in life to inspire and help motivate people around the world. I want people to see that no matter what obstacles life throws at you, there is always a positive outcome if you stay strong." He added, "Writing is my passion and when it came time for me to write the book, I had to show people that every decision you make in life is an important one and can shape the future."

Wolves' co-founder Mick Donovan isn't surprised the book has already attracted interest from film producers. He confirmed, "Alex has been on a very interesting and challenging journey. I'm sure people will find his personal account both enlightening and inspirational."



9. Conclusion

Following the Olympics in 1996 when France won more medals than expected, the French Government said "We have been building. It's like filling a glass of water. You do it gently. Turn the tap on too hard and you will never fill the glass." The University of Worcester says that they "do not quite have a full glass yet, but solid foundations are in place."