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Training Gets Sports Coaches Fit for London Olympics

The 2012 London Olympics are less than four years away and momentum is building in readiness for athletes from across the UK to compete – and succeed – against the very best in the world.

Central to the success of our sports men and women is the creation and development of a world class coaching infrastructure, supported by state of the art sports facilities equipped for the 21st Century.

In the East Midlands, SkillsActive – the Sector Skills Council for the sport and fitness, play work, the outdoors and caravan industries - working via the East Midlands Sector Skills Alliance for Sport, has attracted funding from the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) to subsidise coaching qualifications for 100 of the region's sports coaches.

Jeff Spencer, SkillsActive sector development manager, said: "We need to provide and promote a skilled, active and qualified coaching workforce for the East Midlands in order to meet the challenge of increasing sports participation for an active and healthy nation, not to mention in meeting the legacy needs of the 2012 London Olympic Games and Paralympic Games.

"Workforce development improves skills and increases productivity. Investing in improving skills amongst coaching staff is a win-win – staff motivation and retention is a

statistically proven 'win', but it's the end benefit that better coaching skills delivers; better performance and achievement that can potentially make such a difference, whether personally or for the nation as a whole in 2012."

The injection of money for the development of coaching is a real boost to the region, helping to subsidise coaching qualifications for paid and volunteer coaches while promoting coaching excellence and development. The funding subsidised around 100 coaches in the East Midlands who have undertaken training for UK Coaching Certificate (UKCC) endorsed qualifications at Level 2 or 3 in Badminton, Canoeing, Cricket, Cycling, Equestrian, Golf, Hockey, Netball, Rugby League & Union, Rowing, Swimming, Squash, Table Tennis, Tennis and Triathlon.

Chris Welch, Northampton Casuals Rugby League Football Club, says: "As a new sports club attempting to introduce Rugby League to Northamptonshire we have found the coaching scholarships provided by Northamptonshire Sport to be a valuable asset.

"We have grown rapidly in our first 18 months, supplementing our men's team with four junior teams catering for kids aged from 10 to 16. In order to sustain this level of activity and grow further in the future, a constant stream of new qualified coaches is essential.

"The coaching scholarships provided by Northamptonshire Sport help us make regular concerted recruitment campaigns for new coaches. This has proved very successful with the club hoping to have nine qualified coaches by the end of 2008, over half of these will have been supported by Northamptonshire Sport."

Managed by SkillsActive in conjunction with sports coach UK and the five county sports partnerships in the region - Derbyshire Sport, Leicestershire and Rutland Sport, Lincolnshire Sports Partnership, Northamptonshire Sport and Nottinghamshire Sport – SkillsActive actively identified and engaged with learners from the sports clubs in their counties, as part of their county workforce development plans. All qualifications will be

part of the UK Coaching Certificate and accredited by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority and the national qualifications framework.

All successful applicants will also receive an activepassport, a web-based initiative developed by SkillsActive which allows users to create online curriculum vitae to records skills, training and qualifications, as well as employment and voluntary efforts, easily and efficiently.

The bursary for the East Midlands follows similar projects in the South West and London, where over 700 coaches have already benefited from subsidised coaching courses over the past eight months.

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Editors Notes

SkillsActive's Sector Skills Agreement (SSA) defines the sector's skills needs and forms an agreement between employers, government and funding partners to shape the workforce for the next ten years. Priorities identified as a result of the SSA process are:

- improve the quality and range of services
- improve recruitment and retention
- professionalise and up-skill the existing workforce
- match supply to demand
- redirect funding for training
- increase sector investment in our people.