

Training Rugby Stars of the Future

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The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) is investing almost £600,000 this year in the Rugby Union's elite Apprenticeship training programme. This forms part of a nationwide series of Advanced Apprenticeships in Sporting excellence, developed by the LSC in partnership with SkillsActive.

The Advanced Apprenticeship in Sporting Excellence (AASE) programme in rugby is designed for promising athletes aged from 16 to 18 who wish to pursue a career in rugby and have the potential to achieve excellence in their game.

Over 200 learners, at 12 academies attached to major club sides, across the country are working towards Level 3 qualifications (equivalent to 2 A levels), in partnership with the Rugby Football Union (RFU), Schools (6th Form) and FE Colleges. This is expected to expand to 250 in 2008/09.

David Shaw from the RFU said:

“The RFU is delighted to be able to offer its young athletes the opportunity to combine their rugby development with the acquisition of meaningful academic qualifications by the AASE program. For the first time we can ensure that the work undertaken by the athletes within their academy programs can be recognised as part of their academic achievement.”

At some clubs, such as the London Wasps in Acton, first team members act as 'buddies' to young players supporting their development. The Twyford Church of England High School, who are delivering the vocational curriculum for the young players have recently been successful in obtaining a £5 million capital grant from the LSC to expand their campus and provision for programmes including AASE.

Clare Arnold, LSC Area Director for London West said:

"We are thrilled to be part of this program which forms part of the LSC's broader Apprenticeship Program improving the skills of England's young people and adults to world class standards. The AASE programme builds on existing talent to develop athletes to perform at the highest level both in their chosen sport and career."

England and Wasp's player Lawrence Dallaglio said:

"London Wasps is a great club for any aspiring young player. I came here as a teenager and still consider it home today. I'm sure the apprentices will have a part to play in the future of this great club."

Ian McGeechan said:

"The apprenticeship is a fantastic opportunity for the lads. To work in such an exciting environment with top class facilities and coaching can only inspire and improve an aspiring young player."

Stephen Mitchell, SkillsActive entry to the workforce manager said:

“The AASE rugby programme is going from strength to strength. Bristol Rugby Club recently became the first club in England to give an AASE completer a professional contract and we expect more will follow next summer. We envisage more talented and highly skilled players coming through the ranks which should result in England reaching more Rugby World Cup finals. Rugby apprentices benefit from the mix of training and teaching combined with one-to-one mentoring from players producing our future World Cup stars with successful careers ahead of them at national and international level.”

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Notes to Editors

Learning and Skills Council:

The LSC exists to make England better skilled and more competitive. It is responsible for ensuring the availability of high-quality education and training for everyone. It has a single goal: to improve the skills of England's young people and adults to world class standards. Its vision is that young people and adults in England have knowledge and skills matching the best in the world and are part of a truly competitive workforce. It works nationally, regionally and locally to deliver this ambition on behalf of learners and employers.

SkillsActive

SkillsActive is the Sector Skills Council (SSC) for the sport and recreation, health and fitness, playwork, the outdoors and caravan industries – known as the active leisure and learning sector. For more information on Advanced Apprenticeships in Sporting Excellence visit:

www.skillsactive.com

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