

NEW COLLEGE PARTNERSHIPS TO BOOST JUNIOR SPORT

Seven local football and rugby league clubs are to benefit from an innovative new educational partnership with Calderdale College's Sports Academies.

The partnerships, initially drawn up for two years, are intended to be long term, sustained collaborations which support and help to develop the following clubs: Greetland Goldstars JFC, Halifax Irish JFC which plays at King Cross, HX1 United JFC which trains on the Calderdale College pitch, Ovenden ARLFC's youth teams, Ryburn United JFC, Warley Rangers JFC, and Calderdale Rugby League Service which coordinates the development of rugby league across Calderdale by nurturing talent in schools and clubs and creating a team to represent the borough.

Clubs will access master class coaching sessions by top level College coaches, including former Sheffield Wednesday player Des Hazel and rugby league star Damian Gibson. Students studying for the Foundation Degree in Sports Coaching & Performance Management will also work with players. A cash injection of £500 for each season of the initial partnership agreement will be given, to improve equipment and facilities, and the College will offer sustained involvement and advice to help some clubs achieve chartered status.

"Calderdale College is committed to the development and growth of sport in our area and this is a grassroots initiative supporting the great job that clubs are already doing to provide opportunities for young players", said Michael Ainsworth, marketing manager for Calderdale College, who brought his experience of working for the Carnegie Faculty of Sport and Education at Leeds Metropolitan University to bear in setting up the partnerships.

"We really do believe that the College should be at the heart of the community and this isn't just about brand awareness though it will, of course, also have the effect of making people more aware of our three very successful Rugby League and Football Academies which are run in partnership with Halifax RLFC and AFC Halifax", he added.

Nigel Whitworth, secretary of Greetland Goldstars JFC said "We are delighted to have a link with Calderdale College. The Education Partnership represents a great opening for Greetland Goldstars to build upon the fantastic work and foundations already in place whilst providing future opportunities for all the players at the club".

The Calderdale College Football and Rugby League Academies, launched in 2005 and 2006, offer talented young players aged 16 – 18 the opportunity to pursue professional football or rugby league careers while continuing to gain academic qualifications. A Women's Football Academy was added in 2006, following demand.

The Football Academy runs AFC Halifax's Youth team in the FA Youth Conference which is the highest standard in the country and its association with Halifax RLFC allows gifted Academy students to progress directly into the club.