

North East Pole Vault Academy Aiming High With Newcastle Grant

Young athletes from Gateshead will be getting more of a chance to try out one of the most specialised sports in athletics after the North East Pole Vault Academy was awarded a £1,000 grant from Newcastle Building Society.

Set up in 2002, the Academy is designed to encourage participation in pole vaulting by increasing the opportunity young athletes have of trying it out, and to support the development of both participants and coaches.

It organises regular training sessions at various locations in the north east, including Gateshead, along with visits to local schools and athletics clubs, and open 'taster days' in public locations.

More than 600 young people take part in events every year, and specialist coaching for all ability levels is available for those that show potential at the sport.

The Academy is run by a team of volunteer, and the grant funding it is now receiving from Newcastle Building Society will be used to help meet the costs of taking the taster events and coaching sessions out on the road.

Community athletics coach Chris Boundy says:

"The North East has a strong athletics heritage, and the Pole Vault Academy is helping to continue this by spotting and encouraging young talent wherever we find it."

"Sally Scott, one of the athletes that trains with us, has become British number one in her age group and is looking to qualify for the junior world and Commonwealth Games, and we would love to find some more regional athletes who might follow in her footsteps."

"Pole vaulting is one of the very few sports within athletics that you can't do without both specialist equipment and a qualified coach in attendance, so the costs of putting our events on can very quickly mount up."

"The public events we host are always very popular - we regularly get several hundred people turning up to try their hand at pole vaulting and hope to run our biggest ever programme of taster days over the coming summer."

"Funding is always a major issue for any specialist sport, and the grant we have received from the Newcastle will make an extremely welcome contribution to our transportation and equipment costs."

Nicola Green, Corporate Communications Manager at Newcastle Building Society, says:

"It is important that all children and young people, whatever their ability, are able to have a go at as many different sports as possible - the Academy's programme of events provides just such an opportunity, and we're very pleased to be able to be helping them continue to get out into local communities."

Newcastle Building Society and its members support many charities and worthwhile causes across the region every year, through the Newcastle Building Society Fund and the Members' Community Fund.

Projects need to be based within an area where the Newcastle has a branch presence, and grant application forms can be downloaded from the Newcastle Building Society's website (www.newcastle.co.uk). For further general information, please call Su Legg at the Community Foundation on 0191 222 0945.

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