



IDEAS | PEOPLE | TRUST

# PARTNERSHIPS FOSTERING FUTURE LEADERS

**F**orging partnerships and building relationships can open your business up to new avenues of opportunity, particularly when it is outside your supposed 'business' comfort zone. Whilst the relationship between business and sport is nothing new, it is the association with grassroots sports that can not only develop potential sports stars of the future but indeed potential business leaders.

You will certainly have seen first-hand just how much sport can capture the attention of the world, with the World Cup not only showing up to four matches a day but a broad range of other issues capturing the world's attention alongside it. The power of sport cannot be overstated.

What sport and business have in common is their ability to develop young people, preparing them with vital life skills and encouraging a healthy lifestyle. This is where the local, grassroots sports play a vital role in developing our future talent and without support from local communities and business organisations their sustainability is not guaranteed.

At #TeamBDO there has been a longstanding commitment to support local grass roots sporting organisations through a range of corporate led partnerships. Resilience, determination, and resolve are all qualities that are needed to succeed in business and many young people learn these traits in their early years, particularly within a sport setting.

BDO NI has supported a range of youth sport organisations, providing strategic sponsorship to clubs who play an important role in local communities across Northern Ireland, while supporting the development of young talent and enhancing their real-world skills that will serve them well on and off the pitch.

Laura Jackson, BDO NI Partner believes that when a company chooses a strategic partner, the decision needs to go beyond the benefit to their business.

"Any partnership, corporate or otherwise needs to have mutual benefits and like any business it is important that corporate partners align with your own business values and can provide added value to your business.

"We at BDO NI have always partnered with organisations who share our values. The support we have provided to a range of youth led sporting clubs and organisations over the last number of years has allowed us to become integral parts of local communities. Anyone who has first hand knowledge or experience of a sport at grassroots level will understand the positive impact it can have on a young person's outlook."

BDO NI have, in recent years, developed corporate partnerships with a diverse range of sporting clubs and organisations, including Ulster Hockey Youth teams, Malone Mini Rugby and Bredagh GAC. IFA Youth will also become their new corporate partner for 2023 - another opportunity to support the development of our future footballers.

These corporate partnerships can also be driven from within the company, with a number of the team



BDO NI Partner Laura Jackson with Marc Scott, Chief Executive of Ulster Hockey.



at BDO NI members of a range of sporting clubs, from running, hockey, rugby, and rowing.

"We know first hand through our own team members just how important these clubs are to the wellbeing and development of young people as well as those who continue to be members throughout adulthood. Partnering with sporting organisations allows you to develop a long-term association with the local community whilst supporting them financially or via volunteering all in aid of allowing them to grow."

It was clear the impact youth club closures had on local communities during the pandemic, young people did not have that outlet or social network that they were used to, and it was a difficult time for them. In many cases, continued corporate sponsorships during this time kept the lights on for these clubs, many of whom rely almost entirely on

partnerships and fundraising to grow.

Laura also believes that corporate sponsorships with grassroots organisations can have a positive impact on increasing awareness of these sports and participation will follow.

"The popularity of youth hockey for example has risen in recent years, not least because of the incredible success of local players on the world stage with both the Irish and GB squads this summer. Many of those internationals started their hockey career playing in schools' competitions and have worked their way up through the underage structures on the way to playing in the Olympics and Hockey World Cup.

"Our partnership with Bredagh Gaelic Athletics Club (GAC) in South Belfast supported the growth of the club that boasts a membership of more than 1,000 members fielding teams at all levels from Under 8 to Senior in Men's and Ladies Gaelic Football, Hurling and Camogie."

Laura believes it is important for local businesses to back organisations who support young people in becoming our future leaders, whether this is in sport, business, health, or a range of other areas. It is about ensuring our young people have the resources and opportunity to develop skills that will help them lead in whatever field they choose.

"As an organisation, BDO Northern Ireland prides itself on the relationships we build with businesses, communities, and like-minded individuals. We are proud to partner organisations across the region that are making vital contributions to their local communities and our future leaders."

**To find out more about a career with #TeamBDO visit [www.bdoni.com](http://www.bdoni.com)**

