Tech North Talent & Skills Case study
Code Club

Setting the scene

Code Club began in 2012 with the aim of giving children the opportunity to learn about computer programming, by working with volunteers who run free weekly coding sessions after school for one hour a week. Volunteers run the clubs using Code Club's fun and engaging projects to help children create games, animations and websites.


What's Worked?

The support of Code Club's volunteer community across the UK has been amazing. Their hard work has been central to helping Code Club grow over the past few years. Many volunteers not only dedicate an hour a week by running their clubs, they also take part in events, contribute to blogs and articles, and work to make our projects as amazing as they can be.

We also rely on fantastic free software which helps us run our clubs, such as the visual coding language Scratch, which was developed by MIT, and the online coding environment Trinket, which allows our Code Clubs to run their HTML/CSS and Python projects easily online.

Innovation

One of the major benefits of the Code Club model is the fact that the club sessions are run outside of a formal teaching environment. Code Club are strong advocates of the idea of learning through play. That is, that children should be given the opportunity to learn new skills through experimentation and invention, both inside and outside a classroom setting.

The projects offer a balance of directed tasks and independent work, and include open-ended challenges which allow exploration, personalisation and experimentation. The aim is

to give children the space to build their skills, try new things, and ultimately, have fun. We want children who attend Code Clubs to be inspired to pursue other digital activities, whether that's in their spare time, at school or as a career. We also want them to gain skills that are useful to them – not only learning to code but also learning about computational thinking, problem solving, designing, collaborating and sharing. These skills take time to learn, and are best developed in longer, project-based work. Code Club's projects give children the time that they don't always have within lessons to tinker, experiment, find and fix bugs and other problems, as well as refine and improve based on their own (and others') testing.

Lessons to share

Developing children's digital literacy is a great challenge for educators across the UK. Yet, it is a challenge which arguably has been given increasing priority, and which schools have already begun to tackle head-on. There are now a growing number of organisations, initiatives, and support networks which have been developed to offer teachers, parents and children new ways to build their digital skills. Code Club is just one of these, but we believe that our model stands out by offering a free and flexible way for educators and enthusiasts to help improve digital literacy for themselves, and the children in their communities.

Later this year we will be publishing the findings from a study conducted by the NFER, which will show the real impact of Code Clubs in schools, giving an understanding of the children's coding ability, computational thinking skills, and attitudes to digital making. Our hope is that this report will reinforce the feedback that we have so far received from our community of volunteers and educators, who have highlighted the many benefits of extra-curricular computing sessions.

Success and Progress

With a network of Regional Coordinators across the UK, we have been able to expand more widely across the country. We now have Code Clubs running in cities, towns and villages from Aberdeen to Truro. We've also been able to expand the range of venues that Code Club's are held in - originally most clubs were held in schools, but we're seeing increasing numbers being established in libraries and community centres as well. We have also begun to expand internationally, and there are now Code Clubs in over 80 countries worldwide.

Where Next?

In November 2015, Code Club joined forces with the Raspberry Pi Foundation in a merger that will enable us to help many more young people learn how to build their ideas with code.

In the next year, Code Club will accelerate their growth to continue to increase the number of clubs in the UK. We will launch new campaigns to help raise awareness of Code Club's activity with the general public. We'll continue to create new special projects and activities for children, teachers and volunteers.

During 2016 and beyond we will seek to strengthen the focus of the Teacher Training programme and build school and teacher engagement. We will deliver a comprehensive programme of CPD to primary teachers, and, in response to teacher demand, will provide more activity ideas and cross curricular work.

We will be working next year to continue Code Club's global growth. We have invited 10 countries to apply for Code Club's second cohort in our international onboarding programme, which will begin early next year. We will also organise our first ever Global Summit, where the Code Club community across the world will meet for the first time.

Key Quotes

"I was asked by makers and digital leaders in our community be one of their volunteers for Code Club. I have taught code before and was thrilled to be asked. Code Club has been amazing, the support is great, and the workshops are easy to run. It has allowed me to work with some of Liverpool's most amazing coders and children. The satisfaction of working with young people and helping them become some of our new digital leaders can't be understated. I would recommend it to everyone."

- *Caroline Keep, co-founder of Liverpool Makefest and the HEdWorks project based at Liverpool John Moores University.*

Data

There are 4,001 active weekly Code Clubs in the UK reaching over 55,000 children, of which 1,097 clubs are in the North of England.

Contact Details

Find us online at codeclub.org.uk or on Twitter: @CodeClub

You can also email us: hello@codeclub.org.uk