



CSPN Impact Award Submission – Individual Development Category

Sports Partnership Herefordshire & Worcestershire’s Youth Engagement Project – Happier, Healthier, Fitter, Stronger

Background of Project

In a collaborative bid with Energize Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin, Sports Partnership Herefordshire and Worcestershire received funding from West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner to pilot a project engaging hard-to-reach young people (aged 16-24) in sport or physical activity. We are part of a multi-agency approach to help young people who are involved in the criminal justice system, or at risk of becoming involved, access resources in the community ‘ARC’. Typically these young people have limited knowledge of health and fitness and do not have the opportunity to participate in activities that promote healthy living. This project therefore provides this cohort of young people a diversionary activity through sport and physical activities, encouraging direct engagement through active participation, but also through sports-based qualifications and volunteering opportunities within a sports-based setting.

Why?

West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner identified the need to develop a collaborative, cross-agency approach to reduce crime rates through the provision of diversionary activities. Sport has proved to be a successful approach to this and is an effective way to engage even the most challenging and complex individuals. It provides opportunities for these young people to help develop social and employability skills alongside improving self-confidence, self-esteem and helping to reduce anti-social behaviour and offending. Offering sport and physical activity is an alternative means of engaging in risk taking and stimulating activities, allowing young people to access alternative peer groups and introduce them to a range of positive role models. This empowers young people to end the cycle, reduce offending behaviour, as well as challenge the associated destructive lifestyle patterns, including substance misuse and other risk-taking behaviours.

What is the project?

Sports Partnership Herefordshire & Worcestershire have engaged with a range of criminal justice partners to offer alternative provision for the young people that they work with. This project was developed alongside the Worcestershire Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC), in consultation with young people, to provide a creative and positive activity for service users.

Healthier, Happier, Fitter, Stronger (HHFS) has been developed and run in partnership with CRC, i58 (work-skills & mentoring provider) and Mettabox. Young people were identified as being in the ‘contemplation’ stage of the behaviour change model, having told their offender managers that they wanted to take part in sports or physical activity, however did not currently feel fit, or confident enough to do so. Thus HHFS was designed to engage the participants in functional, fitness-based activities to address this need whilst simultaneously increasing their individual development and promoting physical wellbeing to enable them to take up the sport/activity of their choice. Additionally the project also focused on emphasising sustainable lifestyle changes to underpin their mental, physical and emotional wellbeing and facilitate lasting transformation.

The 12-week functional fitness course (first 6 weeks funded through Sportivate) incorporated a physical and mental component that was tailored to the group’s needs. The physical element focused on all aspects of fitness, in particular how they could apply these principles to their daily routines without the need for expensive equipment, or gym memberships, thereby ensuring that participants were able to move through to the “maintenance” stage. Workbooks were also provided which incorporated fitness techniques, log books and nutritional information, offering an educational element to the course, placing emphasis on reading and writing whilst in an informal, sport-based setting.

Impact:

Since the project started in July 2016, 75% of participants have engaged in at least 50% of the project - a significant statistic given the chaotic lifestyles of these young people. Many of the participants had poor engagement levels with the Community Rehabilitation Company but the engagement rates with both the course, and the individual's offender managers increased throughout the duration of the project.

Outcome Star, an evidence-based tool for supporting and measuring change, has been used to evaluate the impact of the project as it specifically focuses on individual development. Self-assessment took place prior to and following completion of the project; young people have seen an increase in all areas – aspiration, contribution, confidence, learning, people & support and communicating, as evidenced in Appendix 1.

Young people identified that they feel more confident, both in their physical ability, but also mentally. One young person reported that he has now stopped smoking, both cannabis and tobacco, as a direct result of engaging in the project as he identified the negative impact this was having on his ability to train effectively. Another young person has stated that due to his increased confidence he now feels able to apply to go back to college, whereas others have identified that they would like support to gain sports-based qualifications to help improve their employability and have expressed an interest in voluntarily supporting the next HHFS project.

Participants Testimonials:

Phil, age 21 – “...it has changed my mind from going out and getting into trouble again.”

Ben, age 19 – “I have done it at home since finishing, and want to carry on with training”.

Usman, age 22 – “I found the course really interesting, challenging and fun. In the beginning I never imagined the course to be that good because all of the physical and nutritional information I gained has now improved my own workouts. I learnt so much and overall the course has been a huge opportunity for me. It has opened more doors where I will be doing a personal training course in March, which at the of I will be successfully a fully qualified personal trainer which I never thought could happen, but thanks to the probation (CRC) team, Ruth & Mike it's happening”.

Callum, age 20 – “I found the course good – it got me motivated, got me fit and healthy, and got me more positive. I didn't want to go out and do anything illegal – I got my skipping rope out instead to make me feel better”.

Challenges:

The main challenge with working with this cohort of young people is engagement as their lifestyle is chaotic so this project competes with many other things going on in their lives. Risk assessments needed to be completed to ensure that the participants were safe to be in a cohort and also there were no on-going issues with other members of the group. It was identified that the influence of peer pressure within the group, combined with low-confidence and self-esteem had the ability to negatively affect individuals' behaviour within the group and this needed to be managed carefully by the coaches.

Appendix 1: Outcome Star Results for HHFS

The Outcome Star measures and supports progress for service users towards self-reliance or other goals. The Stars are designed to be completed collaboratively with service users and their keyworkers. A reading is taken by the worker and service user at the beginning of their engagement with the project. Using the scales, they identify where on the ladder of change the service user is for each outcome area. Each step on the ladder is associated with a numerical score so at the end of the process the scores can be plotted onto the service user's Star. The process is repeated at the end of the project to track any changes made.

Scale	Decrease	No change	Increase
Aspiration	0 %	25 %	75 %
Contribution	0 %	0 %	100 %
Confidence	0 %	25 %	75 %
Learning	0 %	75 %	25 %
People and support	25 %	25 %	50 %
Communicating	0 %	25 %	75 %

The Outcome Star diagram below shows the average outcomes for all participants who have taken part in the project – initial readings are shown in green, final outcomes are shown in turquoise.

