**CSPN Impact Award Nomination – ‘Move Well Work Well’**

Get Berkshire Active were awarded a Flexible Support Fund (FSF) Grant by the Berkshire, Sussex & Surrey Department of Work and Pensions in 2016 to deliver a programme that will help to improve employment outcomes or prospects of future employment outcomes for long term unemployed individuals and groups facing the most complex and intractable barriers to work.

At the start of 2016, 7% of the households in West Berkshire & The Royal Borough of Maidenhead were workless. These two Unitary Authorities were initially selected by the DWP to be most suited to the revolutionary programme, highlighting that around 16% of the population in these areas were economically inactive.

GBA designed a programme that could develop employability skills through a mixture of classroom and practical sessions aimed at improving core job skills but also developing wider characteristics such as teamwork, leadership, communication and self-confidence. In 2015/16 the NHS recorded that per 100,000 residents in West Berkshire, 31 people were admitted for mental or behavioural problems linked to Alcohol, with 43 in Windsor & Maidenhead and 95 in Reading however as we know, many live with unrecorded mental health issues which can often lead to or be caused by unemployment.

GBA had a target of a maximum of 90 individuals completing the course from a mixture of ESA and 50+ claimants with 30 achieving work experience or job outcomes. The 8 week course consisted of 16 sessions, each session providing 1.5 hours of employability training and 1.5 hours of physical activity to develop personal skills further. In each UA in 2016, around 50% of the DWP claimants were on ESA Support, a benefit support for those who are ill or disabled. At the close of 2017, the programme had seen **27** individuals complete the programme with **15** of those securing either job or work experience opportunity.

Perceived Quality of Life was also tracked using RAND’s SF-36 questionnaire where answers are categorised into 8 domains.

The biggest improvements across all cohorts were improved emotional wellbeing, an increase in energy/reduction of fatigue and a reduction of pain. Other notable improvements were in Social Functioning, an outcome which was echoed through many of the cohorts and the group members often struck up friendships and continued to meet up once the course had finished to support each other in finding work. Activities such as rock climbing were used to push participants outside of their comfort zone, develop coping mechanisms for anxiety and generate a sense of achievement in themselves. Groups also took part in canoeing to work on similar skills but also develop communication and teamwork skills. Tai Chi and Yoga were used for mental wellbeing but also highlight areas of body language and how that can affect the perception of you during interviews.

The programme also engaged many local partners such as Leisure facilities, Volunteer Centres, Libraries, Charitable Trusts and local employers. In Newbury, we set up a partnership with Sainsbury’s where we took each cohort to meet the HR team that informed the group of the types of questions and tasks that may be asked at interview stage. Sainsbury’s were also big advocates of employing people from range of backgrounds and as an example gave the story of a current store manager who joined the company at the age of 50 from an entirely different industry. From the partnership with Sainsburys, 2 members of the cohort went on to secure part time work, with one female with learning difficulties taking part in a work placement at the store.

Participants were also linked with Volunteer Centre’s who explained how powerful having a volunteer placement on a CV can be for employers and each individual was given the opportunity to find a suitable role for their interests. The programme also engaged local adult learning centres and representatives visited the groups towards the end of the 8 weeks to plan a ‘next step’ of education such as IT courses or Maths & English. GBA also recruited certain members of the course to become volunteers on other programmes, with one female trained up to become a boxercise instructor who also attended sign up sessions to encourage others like herself to sign up to the programme.

This programme achieved great feedback from participants and the DWP and now Get Berkshire Active are working with other local charities to use a similar model of empowering hard to reach individuals through physical activity.

**Testimonials**

*‘I started this course thinking I was a confident person and very able, I realised very quickly that I was not as confident as I initially thought. I have benefitted immensely from this course and have built up a lot of confidence and feel ready to apply for jobs, not just that I feel better equipped but to apply myself correctly in an important situation. Thankyou Josh & Nick you've helped me so much’*

*‘This programme has done exactly as advertised and taken me out of my ‘comfort zone’, for the better!’*

*‘After 17 years unemployment & 30 years since my last employment it was worthwhile learning about interviewing techniques, CV's & covering letters. Things appear to have changed considerably, or I had little awareness back then. I have enjoyed meeting new people & getting involved in some of the activities which have helped to build my confidence & selfesteem’*