

Hestia Radio CIC

Received £10,168.80 to hold 4 mind body fitness sessions per week for 80 women (largely from BAME or refugee communities) to ensure good mental and physical health and to develop community relationships.

The funding provided enabled us to carry out two main activities, which encompassed general physical fitness sessions with cardiovascular exercise classes and competitive team-based badminton sessions. Both activities were aimed at getting Asian women more involved in sport and exercise. We used a local specialist to deliver these programmes of sporting activities. For the Asian Women's fitness sessions, Facebook was used to market the activities along with word of mouth. Our lead Shakila Bano meets each participant individually each time they attend enquiring on how their week has gone. She makes sure everyone is hydrated by having a drink before the start of the activities if required. Then a series of fitness routines are performed, and badminton games are played in teams. At the end of each activity the whole group chats with each other helping to form new friendships and reaffirm old bonds between the participants which helps to improve people's mental wellbeing.

Shakila Bano is a fully qualified fitness instructor with over 20 years of experience who joined us in offering physical fitness courses to the local community. Hereward Community Radio chose to work with her as she is the only female Asian instructor in Peterborough with this wealth of experience and has specialised, very successfully, in reaching the most difficult demographic and culturally sensitive group of ethnic minority women which have been traditionally neglected and overlooked when it comes to the sphere of physical fitness. Shakila has been based at Gladstone Park Community Centre (our home base) since starting her career and has specialised in reaching ethnic minority women in a culturally sensitive manner. We provided these activities at the Gladstone Park Community Centre as it is based in a highly ethnically diverse, and economically deprived, area, with Asian women making up a large percentage of those living close to the community centre.

Over the past 20 years, Shakila has been working to help close the gap between health inequality, in this highly deprived area of the city. The sporting and fitness activities we provided tried to take a new and unique approach to fitness and exercise. Rather than just concentrating on one element of physical body fitness Shakila addressed the 5 elements of mind-body fitness; exercise, food, hydration, stress management, and sleep. This allowed members to not only enjoy the benefits of keep fit, but also introduced them to meditation, nutrition advice and a

greater understanding of mind-body fitness. We have also supported our local community by offering avenues to further information and education on physical and mental health and fitness during the sessions.

Building on the strength of our organisation, we have now expanded into the area of sport, where we know the demand exists and we were pleased to offer these sessions to 174 people in total which was double our original estimate of the number of people we could help, and as we are based in a sports community centre, this was seen as a logical progression for us and we are delighted to say after one year of provision for the local community the project has proven a great success and hopefully this will continue going forwards, with plans to bring a greater variety of sports activities to the local community. By offering support and working in partnership with local organisations like Shakila's Ladies Mind Body Fitness, we have been able to help promote the work they do, utilising our own community project skills and network and their own strengths in sporting provision to help them to reach a wider audience.

Our Asian Ladies Fitness and badminton sessions have continued to improve the participants in the following ways. Gentle physical exercise is utilised during a session which is complemented by a cardiovascular-based workout which has had the effect of reducing blood pressure and increasing overall body strength.

Our activities have increased people's fitness and social interaction and encouraged them to learn how to work in a team and make new friends. Hand-eye coordination and physical stamina have been developed through team badminton games. At the end of team badminton



games, players are encouraged to form new teams with different people. This has encouraged people to make new friends. The wider community has benefitted by money going into Gladstone Park Community Centre which helps to keep the centre financially viable as it has been an extremely important community facility for the last 30 years.

The wider community has also benefitted by targeting a demographic that has traditionally suffered from poorer health than the average and by addressing this

and enabling this group to benefit from a healthy lifestyle and to have a greater knowledge of how to live a healthier lifestyle and to give them greater access to additional health related activities and medical services. The wider community has come together with shared aims and goals, and it has fostered greater community spirit and pride in the achievement of increased physical and mental health.

The community centre has benefited financially but also by being utilised and a valuable community asset is not underused and left to decay. A vibrant centre is crucial to the local community and Hereward Community Radio is proud to continue its support of this centre, which we have been very happily based in for nearly 10 years.

As an organisation we have benefited through gaining new skills and expanding



into community sports projects we have not been involved with before. As we all are well aware of primary health services are very stretched and the reported and observed improvements we have witnessed and recorded should benefit participants in not having to access these services on such a regular basis and when they do need to access these front-line health services participants should have a greater knowledge of the appropriate service to access initially due to the educational element of our course and their health needs should not be so great due to the aforementioned improvement in

their individual health. Hopefully going forward statistics will show that there are increased life chances through improved health for the community we serve in Peterborough and have made some headway in addressing poor health outcomes for our chosen demographic.

We gathered evidence to illustrate the impact our community health project was having on individuals and the community as a whole in the following ways. We used tick box questionnaires to ascertain how physical and mental health improved during a person's participation in the sessions. This was designed to be quick and

easy to use to give quantitative data on the session's impact. All 174 participants indicated some improvement. This was broken down in the following ways. 11 participants reported a small increase in their overall health. 22 reported a medium increase in their overall health. 141 participants reported a large increase in their physical and mental health.

We also gave participants the chance to write in more detail about their experiences. It was reported back to us that badminton sessions had the effect of increasing family cohesiveness. Those families enjoyed a shared family activity which brought them closer together and they also reported an improvement in their mental health as a direct result of this, and an increase in "family time" where they could chat as a family unit. One person wrote about how participating in the team sessions helped them to become more disciplined in their pursuit of fitness and in their everyday life. Family members were encouraged to train together and forge stronger family links and this feedback and evidence suggested we achieved this aim.

After the exercise and badminton sessions finished, participants were given time to chat together outside of the family groups to make new friends and catch up with old ones. Written feedback suggested this was very enjoyable and people enjoyed chatting and laughing together about the sessions and reported how they also left the sessions very happy and immediately looked forward to the next session. 13 participants fed back that their mental health improved significantly due to this social interaction.

Our fitness lead has used photographic and video evidence alongside quantitative weight measurements to definitively show weight loss and overall health benefits for all participants in our health project, and evidence indicates a loss of fat and increase in muscle for participants. Our fitness lead has remarked on the success of the project and has indicated that she is keen to work with Hereward Community Radio again in the future remarking that our particular skill sets are very complimentary to each other and made the whole project not only very successful but very enjoyable to be part of too, a sentiment that we at Hereward Community Radio also echo and has given us the impetus to apply for further funding in the fitness field and to work together again in the future.

Case Study

"Fatima" was a new participant to general fitness exercise classes, never having been involved with formal exercise classes before. Having a family, she said finding the time was difficult and cultural barriers also posed a problem with getting

involved with exercise classes. Having a female Asian lead was very important to her in getting involved with our project.

Fatima wanted to address her general health issues as a direct result of having a family to look after and the importance of staying healthy for her family. She had a general awareness of health issues affecting her ethnic minority group and the areas where she needed to improve but indicated that the health information part of our project was an important factor in her deciding to participate in the project.

Fatima reported that the additional specialist dietary information given during our project was very useful in helping her control her weight during the project. She reported that the exercise classes gave her not only weight loss but also gave her more energy in her everyday life, which she said was very important for a mother.

Fatima reported that the sessions were well organized and gave her an insight into the importance and role of good hydration and drinking plenty of water and the part this played in good overall health. Fatima reported that she was more likely to get involved in future community projects due to enjoying participating in this one so much and that she would certainly carry on exercising and continue to improve her overall health.

Fatima gave us feedback that she was very nervous about attending her first session but very quickly this turned into looking forward to each session. She especially enjoyed the social aspect of the exercise sessions after they had finished, and that time was given for a wind down after the session and for the ladies in the session to chat and laugh about their week and what had happened during the session. This was identified as one of the most important ways in which the sessions increased her happiness and therefore her mental health improved during her participation in our community health project.

Fatima encouraged her friends to get involved with the project and we found word of mouth very important in raising awareness of our community health project. Fatima told us she felt healthier and happier, and had a better understanding of how to live a healthy life after participating in our Train Smarter, Not Harder community health project and as such was glad she had got involved.