



## Activity on their terms

Wycombe Youth Action (WYA) provides unique services and projects to reduce social exclusion of young people, building their hopes and aspirations, confidence and skills.

They support girls and young women attending a weekly youth club through a variety of educational, voluntary, social and inter-personal activities, helping them to develop and achieve their goals.

Supporting WYA to set up a satellite club in the youth club meant that they could widen their offer to include physical activity and the satellite club could widen provision into a deprived ward with a high proportion of 14 to 19 year olds.

Girls who attend the youth group are from a variety of cultures and background and some also report having a disability. Ahead of the programme we surveyed the young people using a mental health and well being questionnaire and found many of them reported low levels of mental health.

The project workers who run the youth group added anecdotal evidence to this and said the girls are often very shy and can take some time before they trust people. Coming to the youth group is an opportunity for them to relax and be themselves as they are not intimidated by their peers - something that happens in their school settings.

As it was such a diverse group of girls we had to ensure that we provided them with the right activity and deliverer that was going to support their needs and also ensure that it achieved the aims of the organisation.

This meant taking the time to speak with all parties involved to ensure we created the right offer for them.

“ This project has proven to be successful to the girls and we have achieved our aims with the girls learning social skills, healthy lifestyles and team building.

**Yasmin Harris,**  
Project Officer,  
Wycombe Youth Action

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### A less formal approach

Many of the girls and young women WYA work with have not found the traditional support routes engaging. Some may have faced issues from bullying to anxiety and struggled in educational environments.

Working with WYA and its users the project was developed to meet the need of a less formal and low pressure environment which focused on the social element of the activity and met the diverse needs of the group.



## The right support

Understanding the specific needs of the girls and young women has been crucial to the success of the project. By conducting a focus group with some of the female service users we were able to identify their preferences of activity, their motivations for becoming more active, and the barriers stopping them to date.

Appointing the right people to deliver and support the sessions was vital in helping to engage the girls and helping them to feel at ease.

Taekwondo instructor Fiona was the perfect fit, she runs a local club which focuses on empowering girls and young women through Taekwondo and although it wasn't the girl's first choice of activity, Fiona's approach soon meant that they young girls were engaged.

Fiona delivered the sessions each week; she showed the girls the importance of being physically active and has been a great role model, showing that you can be strong and feminine at the same time.

"I've built rapport and trust within the group; students feel comfortable talking to me about personal issues."

## Making a difference

Fourteen participants regularly attended the sessions, 28% reported having a disability, 43% were BAME and 50% were inactive at the start of the programme.

The attendees have continued to build relationships with each other and are now seeing how fitness can improve their well being and mental health.

They've also reported improved flexibility, confidence, discipline and interest in the sport.

This satellite club example shows how working with different partners, can help engage young people who wouldn't otherwise be engaged in traditional activity routes.

We plan to use this example as best practice to expand work with other organisations across the county.

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