



# Transforming Lives Through Physical Activity and Sport

Toolkit: How to engage adults  
55+ in Physical Activity & Sport



**Single Homeless Project**  
preventing homelessness  
transforming lives

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**“If I didn’t have these sessions I would be isolated, it’s the only thing I go to. It’s like a home away from home.” Dawn**

# Who we are

Single Homeless Project is a London-wide charity. Our vision is a society where everyone has a place to call home and the chance to live a fulfilling life.

At the start of 2017, and as part of Sport England's Active Ageing Initiative, Single Homeless Project launched the Sport Project. This introduced physical activity into the daily lives of those aged 55 and above who were experiencing homelessness and associated needs. Since its launch, the Sport Project has grown its offer to include all adults across SHP services.

On average, those experiencing homelessness die 34 years younger for men and 40 years younger for women than the general population. As a charity we had a larger older population and we wanted to help them achieve a good quality of life.

## Since 2017 we have:

**600**

Engaged over  
**600 clients**

**30**

Partnered  
with over **30**  
**organisations**

**130+**

Worked  
with **130+**  
**volunteers**

## Sport Project - Our Vision:

- To share our experience, insights and findings
- Engage, grow and nurture a network of enthusiastic partners
- To encourage organisations to introduce sport and physical activity into their offering
- Influence and inspire others to join the conversation around the positive impact sport and physical activity have on the lives of people experiencing or at risk of homelessness



**62%**

Improved quality  
of life of 62%  
participants

## Physical Activity For All

The Sport Project believes that the introduction of physical activity into core homelessness provision is essential to bring about positive change, transform lives and prevent homelessness.

**Since 2017, our Sport Project has transformed the lives of over 600 people, improving participants stress, anxiety, and depression levels by 76% and overall quality of life by 62%.**

That's why we've launched the **Physical Activity For All initiative, consisting of:** information sharing **toolkits**, roundtable **events** and **sport bags**.

This toolkit will set out the work and findings of the Sport Project's first three years (2017-2020). It will give information about how we got started and will highlight areas our future toolkits will focus on.

Our work during the first stage of the project highlighted some key findings, evidencing that **regular physical activity can bring significant improvements in physical and mental health, socialisation, and isolation.**

We hope by sharing this and future toolkits we will inspire organisations to join us in using physical activity and sport to transform the lives of people throughout our communities.

# Why we introduced Physical Activity & Sport

Those who are at risk of or are experiencing homelessness are some of the most excluded people from society and face multiple barriers and exclusions on a daily basis compared to the general population. This is evident in a range of areas: from not being registered with primary health care such as a GP or dentist to experiencing long term loneliness and isolation.

**Our residents were spending 18 hours a day sat down alone in their rooms. When asked, 92% reported high feelings of isolation and loneliness,** and despite living within a hostel setting, the majority were not interacting with others within the hostel or joining in on activities outside of their rooms.

Our clients face a range of barriers when accessing physical activity and sport, from digital exclusion and financial constraints, to low confidence and mental health issues. People experience social stigma and negative pre-judgement about their interest in, and ability to engage in physical activity.

Those who experience homelessness are at a higher risk of developing certain health conditions and often experience multiple and complex physical and mental health issues at the same time.

**When completing health checks on those taking part in the Sport Project, baseline measures showed that 85% had a health condition that affected their daily lives, 73% had blood pressure outside of the recommended range and 89% experienced stress, anxiety and/or depression.** It is shocking that in light of this, and the early mortality rates found in homelessness populations, that physical activity is not considered an integral area of work by health professionals, sports providers or the homelessness sector generally. This area is often not discussed or referrals made into programmes such as **social prescribing or exercise referral schemes**. The same is not mirrored for the general population, where the benefits of physical activity are widely recommended and often prescribed to help improve specific health conditions such as diabetes, Parkinson's, and high blood pressure alongside depression and stress.

**“I think the willingness of clients to get involved breaks down social perceptions that suggest those who are experiencing homelessness don't want to get involved in sport, whereas in fact they do, they just don't have the opportunities to do so.”** Sam Sainsbury, Sport Manager



# How we delivered the Sport Project

Over a three-year period we introduced physical activity into the lives of our 55+ clients in our hostel and floating support services, building the project up to cover 12 boroughs, delivering 36 sessions a week.

The sessions covered a range of activities from chair aerobics to boxing and were decided upon based on participants interests and abilities.

All sessions were run on the same day and time each week allowing for consistency. Each session was delivered following the same structure, allowing time for participants to arrive, have a chat and get comfortable, followed by 30-60 minutes of physical activity and then time for a cup of tea and socialisation.

All sessions were set up in a group setting as a result of assessments carried out prior to the project starting.

The majority of participants had not taken part in physical activity for a considerable

period and were facing multiple barriers when it came to accessing physical activity.

To help remove barriers, sessions were run in hostel spaces. This allowed participants to engage in physical activity for the first time in the comfort of a familiar atmosphere, creating safe spaces and removing the fear and anxiety experienced around visiting a gym.

In addition to hostel sessions, four weekly sessions were run using outside spaces and six sessions using community spaces. This allowed for participants to progress as their confidence and trust grew and to build towards independence and the exploration of community sessions or the gym on their own when they moved on.

**“We saw an opportunity to positively influence the lives of those we support by providing access to physical activity in a way that formed lifelong habits, created friendships and improve overall quality of life.”**

**Eloise Moller, Department Head of Health & Sport**



# Client stories

## Meet Peter

**When Peter first came to the Sport Project, he joined the chair-based exercise sessions that were hosted in one of our services.**

He was nervous about being active due to mobility issues and didn't know anyone else within the session. With regular session participation, Peter's confidence grew and started to make friends who encouraged him to try new exercises and become less dependent on being sat down to complete the exercises. Over time with his newly formed friendships, Peter and others moved on to another Sport Project session that was hosted in a community centre away from Single Homeless Project Services. The boost in Peter's self-esteem inspired him to take part in activities outside of the Sport Project sessions, such as art groups with his new friends. Peter continues to engage in the community-based session and has also gone on to attend weekly yoga sessions outside of Single Homeless Project that sees him sitting on the floor and standing up and is completely confident in his ability to perform exercise without being seated.



**"I truly believe that the exercise sessions are slowing down the process of my Parkinson's."**

## Meet Jason

**Jason came to Single Homeless Project during the pandemic, he had been sleeping rough and was moved into a Covid protect hotel run by our organisation.**

Jason engaged with our Sport Project during the pandemic and participated in 1-2-1 personal training sessions twice a week. After two months, Jason's confidence and self-worth improved and he introduced running into his weekly physical activity routine. Jason was moved on into a hostel with a gym inside. He progressed from his park personal training sessions into weekly gym sessions, alongside building his running up to 5k. Jason reconnected with his love of boxing and started volunteering in a local boxing club. He is now undertaking a Sports Rehabilitation course and hopes to go on to work in the Sport Sector while volunteering back with our Sport Project.



# Key findings

An evaluation of our Active Ageing Initiative consisting of our 55+ participants regular sessions over the three-year period 2017-2020, discovered these encouraging findings:

## 1 Socialisation

The majority of regular participants listed socialisation and friendship as one of the main reasons they attended sessions. Participants started to talk to other people that lived in the same hostel and discovered common interests. Participants explained that they attended weekly sessions because they felt like other people were depending on them and they enjoyed chatting and catching up with other participants.

**"It is because of this project that we became friends." Cynthia**

## 2 Improved Mental Health

A significant improvement in mental health was observed over the project with participants reporting improvements in Depression, Anxiety and Stress alongside improvements in isolation and loneliness.

**"I've been really depressed recently and doing the exercise definitely makes me feel better, I didn't want it to stop." Danny**

## 3 Improved Physical Health and Activity

As part of our evaluation, participants completed questionnaires and had their parameters such as weight, blood pressure and handgrip strength measured quarterly over a year. The results showed that participants experienced improvements in weight, handgrip strength, quality of life and primary care engagement. In addition to this the results showed that 97% of participants reported improved physical activity levels, and 87% were engaging in the recommended activity levels.

**97%**

Participant's activity levels improved

**87%**

Engaged in recommended activity levels

**4**

### Reduced Substance Use

Regular participants reported decreases in substance use for several reasons including better use of time, caring for their health, wanting to be sober and present for the sessions, improved mental health and friendship.

**“You can see the benefits of it echo out in other areas of their lives.”**

**Rachel, Recovery Opportunity Coordinator**

**5**

### Improved Engagement

The Sports Project provided safe spaces for participants to build confidence and start to talk about their wellbeing. As a result, those who regularly engaged in sessions went on to further engage in socio-therapeutic activities such as art, music and gardening, alongside ETE (education, training and employment) and key worker sessions. All building blocks to our participant’s recovery and supporting attendance to substance misuse and primary care appointments.

**“I think the aim of our sessions isn’t just to improve physical health but to give them the social skills to develop past sport.”**

**Billy, Sport Coordinator**





# A guide to getting started

## The Team

Implementing a separate team specific to physical activity was key to establishing participant buy in and consistent engagement. One of the key factors that saw our project become a success was the introduction of a new team, those delivering the sessions were coming into the services specifically to run physical activity sessions, ensuring the lines weren't blurred between the Sport Team and our participant's support staff. By doing this, we separated sport sessions away from conversation around rent, substance use, and move on options that residents normally have with staff and created safe spaces to talk all things health and deliver fun engaging physical activity sessions. However, understanding the financial constraints of implementing a new team, we hired a small team that consisted of one Programme Manager, a Coordinator, a Sport Assistant and established a strong community of volunteers and freelancers to help us deliver weekly sessions.

## Volunteers

To establish our volunteer community, we used Team London, a free website that allows you to post volunteer adverts for ongoing and one-off roles. It's simple to use with step-by-step instructions and friendly staff.

Over time we learnt the more specific, open and honest you are in the adverts, the more success we had with our recruitment. In addition to recruiting external volunteers, we've supported participants over the years to go from taking part, to sport champion roles, into volunteering with the Sport Project. Look out for our next toolkit specific to volunteers coming out in Spring 2022.

**"I don't want to leave SHP because of all the activities. They give me things to do and I really enjoy them."**  
**Anthony**

## Encouraging Engagement

- **Become a friendly face:** Make in-person introductions in hostels, spend the time to knock around resident's rooms and introduce yourself and your new project.
- **Taster sessions:** When introducing physical activity into hostels we would run a series of taster sessions to allow participants the opportunity to try out new physical activity sessions without the commitment or anxiety of signing up to a regular weekly session.
- **Ease of accessing and removing barriers:** Ensuring the session covers everything from providing equipment and clothing, to water and snacks, meaning the only thing residents have to do is come along, say hi and have a look at what the session has to offer.
- **Reminders:** Bright and easy to read posters and email reminders to staff.
- **Visible sessions:** Running the initial sessions in a space that is visible to residents to encourage interest and enquiries.
- **Staff buy in:** Running sessions for staff so they believe in the project and can talk first hand to residents about what it has to offer.
- **Loyalty cards:** To help sustain engagement, using these cards can track sessions and incentivise through awards. For example, eight stamps over 12 weeks could award new gym gear.
- **Field Trips / Excursions:** We ran a series of external trips across the year such as Go Ape and Ice Skating. These sessions acted as both a fun introduction to physical activity for those who had not come to a session and a celebration social event for those already engaged in sessions.



## Communication and Language

We found that the language we used when promoting the Sport Project and talking to both staff and participants was important. If we used the wrong language or did not explain the project well we lost participants before they had even come to the first session. We quickly learnt the following:

- Do not use the word 'Sport' use 'Physical Activity'.
- Emphasise the cup of tea, chat and social side of the project over the activity element.
- Do not talk about commitment to attending to regular sessions.
- Share simple, concise information about the sessions that's positive.
- Peer promotion is the most successful method to engage in first sessions.



**“If I didn’t have these sessions I would be isolated, it’s the only thing I go to. It’s like a home away from home, we’re like a little family now. If it wasn’t for these sessions me and Cynthia wouldn’t be friends.” Dawn**

### **Maximising socialisation**

Socialisation was one of the main reasons participants came regularly to the sessions, with many stating they made friendships within the sessions. However, we saw first-hand that these relationships take time to build and that initial sessions can bring around a lot of anxiety for participants. We wanted to share a few tips we found useful on helping to remove some of the anxiety felt by participants and create a social environment for those in the session.

- Tea, coffee and biscuits help to break the ice with participants and session leaders.
- Holding space before and after sessions for a chat and a drink, allowing participants to ease into sessions and to chat once the session has finished so they feel more comfortable.
- Play music quietly from the start of the first session and use it as a conversation starter asking participants for suggestions and their favorite songs.
- Starting sessions small, initially inviting smaller numbers to sessions, to allow for a less overwhelming feeling when participants are attending first sessions.
- Leading introductions for participants within the sessions, taking the pressure off the first session for everyone.
- Introducing gentle partner work and group activities.
- Hosting trips and activities outside of services.
- Hosting social events alongside major sport events. For example, enjoying strawberries and cream whilst watching Wimbledon as a group, introducing a social element outside of sessions but still for a common theme of sport.

# How to attract partners in the community



## Corporate Partners

To maximise the offer and variety of sessions we were running alongside providing progression and move on options, partnerships become an integral part of our project. We formed several partnerships both within the corporate and charity sector alongside local communities. Through partnering with corporate organisations such as Decathlon and O3E we were able to grow our equipment and clothing resources. In addition to this, through strategic partnerships, we built out gyms within some hostels with corporate sponsored and co-sponsored gyms.

## Community Partners

Partnerships with local community centres, leisure providers and churches allowed us use of free space that were better equipped for the sessions we wanted to run, such as the use of a spin and gym studio in a leisure centre in Islington. These amazing opportunities aided participant progression - from sessions within hostels to similar sessions within new settings which helped prepare them for move on into community sessions or independent physical activity.

## Peer Partners

The final set of partners we formed were with similar charities and organisations to share our work and to expand our reach. In some cases where we hosted similar sessions with our peers we combined our efforts to maximise the reach of these sessions, such as cycling in Westminster with charity partner, Sustrans.

**“As we think more about what the future of London holds, this sort of work is only going to become more and more important. We have been so proud to know Single Homeless Project, and quite frankly very often blown away by the impact of the work they have and we just wish them all the very best for the future, we really do.”**

**Chris Scott, London Sport**

# Addressing challenges



## Digital Exclusion

Not only is digital exclusion a huge barrier within the homeless sector but also within the older population. Therefore, when establishing sessions, we ensured that digital exclusion was not a barrier to participation. We created printed promotion material both in poster and leaflet form, sessions were run in person and virtually, reminders were delivered in person and not by text and sign-ups for external trips & excursions were shared in printed forms in the hostel reception area.

## Staff 'Buy In'

Every project faces challenges, especially when trying to establish something new. We placed heavy emphasis on ensuring residents engage at the start of the project, that we overlooked putting measures in place to get hostel staff onboard and comfortable talking about the project with residents.

At first, we were met with resistance and staff struggled to see why in the chaos of our clients lives that they would be interested in coming along to a physical activity session. To encourage staff buy-in, we ran physical activity sessions specially for staff who worked with residents daily. The sessions explained the benefits of physical activity, but also provided taster sessions of what we planned for residents to support staff to engage potential participants through first-hand experience.

In addition to this, by including staff in external trips and our annual Sports Day, these opportunities provided staff to witness first-hand the benefits the participants received from the project. These collaborative experiences played an important role in staff - client relationships and role reversals, allowing participants the opportunity to show staff how to do tasks and help them in an activity.

# Resources

**Sport England:** [www.sportengland.org](http://www.sportengland.org)

**Single Homeless Project:** [www.shp.org.uk](http://www.shp.org.uk)

**Sport Project:** [www.shp.org.uk/sportproject](http://www.shp.org.uk/sportproject)

**Team London:** [www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/volunteering/search](http://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/volunteering/search)

**London Sport:** [www.londonsport.org](http://www.londonsport.org)

**Homeless Link:** [www.homeless.org.uk](http://www.homeless.org.uk)

**Kings Fund:** [www.kingsfund.org.uk](http://www.kingsfund.org.uk)

## Partnership resources

To establish partnerships within the local community, homelessness and physical activity sectors we attend conferences, networking events, and approach places of interest both virtually and in person. A few key events we found useful and websites to find events are below;

**London Sport Connect Series:** [www.londonsport.org/our-events/connect-series](http://www.londonsport.org/our-events/connect-series)

**Active London:** [www.londonsport.org/our-events/active-london/](http://www.londonsport.org/our-events/active-london/)

**London Sport Awards:** [www.londonsport.org/our-events/london-sport-awards](http://www.londonsport.org/our-events/london-sport-awards)

**Why Sport Conferences:** [www.whysports.blog/conference](http://www.whysports.blog/conference)

**Homeless link:** [www.homeless.org.uk/events](http://www.homeless.org.uk/events)

**Kings Fund:** [www.kingsfund.org.uk/events](http://www.kingsfund.org.uk/events)

### Our future Sport Project - Physical Activity For All - Toolkits are as follows:

- How to build a network of Volunteers & Freelancers
- How to combat isolation and encourage socialisation
- How to break barriers & bridge the gap between the homeless and physical activity sectors
- How to engage women in physical activity & sport
- How to engage Adults 24+ in physical activity and sport

# Summary

Our Sport Project has proven that by introducing regular physical activity and sport into the lives of those experiencing homelessness, we can dramatically improve the quality of life of participants.

We hope that this toolkit has shed light on the positive outcomes of the Sport Project and has offered insight into how you can introduce physical activity into your organisation, and those that you support.

We look forward to hearing from anyone who is interested in receiving additional support, guidance and/or facilitation in introducing physical activity and sport into your offer.

**Email:** [sport@shp.org.uk](mailto:sport@shp.org.uk)

**Website:** [www.shp.org.uk/sportproject](http://www.shp.org.uk/sportproject)

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Registered Charity Number 287779



**Single Homeless Project**  
preventing homelessness  
transforming lives



# Transforming Lives Through Physical Activity & Sport

How to build a network of  
volunteers & freelancers



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**“Martial arts is one of the highlights of my week, I always look forward to seeing Jonny and learning new skills.”**

**Ian (resident) talking about Jonny (freelancer)**



# Who we are

**Single Homeless Project is a London-wide charity. Our vision is a society where everyone has a place to call home and the chance to live a fulfilling life.**

We help single Londoners by preventing homelessness, providing support and accommodation, promoting wellbeing, enhancing opportunity, and being a voice for change. From supporting people in crisis to helping people take the final steps towards independence and employment, we make a difference to 10,000 lives every year across all 32 boroughs.

In 2017 as part of Sport England's Active Ageing Initiative, Single Homeless Project launched the Sport Project. This introduced physical activity into the daily lives of those aged 55 and over who were experiencing homelessness and associated needs. Since its launch, the Sport Project has grown its offer to include all adults across Single Homeless Project services.

## **Physical Activity For All**

The Sport Project believes that everyone deserves equal access to physical activity and sport. We also believe that the introduction of physical activity into core homelessness provision is essential to bring about positive change, transform lives and prevent homelessness.

Our work has shown that regular physical activity can bring significant improvements in physical and mental health, socialisation, and overall quality of life.

That's why we've launched the Physical Activity For All initiative, consisting of: information sharing toolkits, roundtable events and sport bags. This toolkit will set out how you can engage and grow a supportive and enthusiastic team of freelancers and volunteers; highlighting the benefits, challenges and share tools and tips to support you in your journey.

We hope by sharing this and future toolkits we will inspire organisations to join us in using physical activity and sport to transform the lives of people throughout our communities.

### **Sport Project - Our Vision:**

- To share our experience, insights and findings
- Engage, grow and nurture a network of enthusiastic partners
- To encourage organisations to introduce sport and physical activity into their offering
- Influence and inspire others to join the conversation around the positive impact sport and physical activity have on the lives of people experiencing or at risk of homelessness



## Why this toolkit is for you

Are you looking to find a **budget friendly** option to expand and grow your offer?

Would you like to offer a **variety of skills and activities** to your clients?

Do you have a **diverse group of people** to engage that would benefit from **different personalities** to connect and work with?

Would you like to introduce the benefits of **community engagement** - connecting your community to the people you work with?

Are you looking for ways to inspire your clients to **engage with other opportunities** to improve wellbeing and overall quality of life?

Are you looking to create more **consistency for you clients**, and a safe and comfortable setting?

Would you like to introduce more members to your team to **increase advocacy and pride** within your programme, organisation and in the community?

Since 2017 we have:

**600**

Engaged over 600 clients

**76%**

Participants improved stress, anxiety and depression levels

**130+**

Worked with 130+ Volunteers & Freelancers

# Do you need volunteers or freelancers?

The success of our Sport Project and its growth is largely down to our volunteers and freelancers. The Project relies heavily on both freelancers and volunteers to run weekly sessions and one-off opportunities.

## Volunteer



Member of the community who donates their time or skill to the project free of charge.

## Freelancer



Someone who is self-employed and not committed to the employer long term.

When advertising for a volunteer or freelancer, aspire to have the highest level of applicant possible to ensure maximum engagement and benefit for participants to reap the benefits of the programme. Take time to consider whether a session advert should be for a volunteer or a freelancer. See the breakdown below to inform you of your decision.

## Volunteers



### Regular volunteers – When a specific skill set is required, and dedicated time period needed

When hiring volunteers for our sport sessions, we advise that the role is ongoing and ask that they commit for a substantial period of time. By doing so this helps build consistency, and better rapport with participants. Some of our volunteers have been with us for over two years and that has enabled the participants to build meaningful relationships resulting in increased engagement and lasting physical activity habits.

### One-off volunteers – For events and trips

When running events or trips we require extra support to help run these and ensure everyone's safety. As part of our annual sports day, we require additional volunteers to assist with the day, from roles such as team captains through to presenting. Most of these volunteers will be one-off, and will volunteer with us just for the day, no other commitment is asked. Similarly, we run trips such as ice skating at Christmas, these one-off volunteer opportunities are often filled by volunteers in other roles who want a one-off extra day to take part in a fun day out.

### Corporate volunteers – For one off trips and financial support

These roles are very unique and often cover one-three days per year. Our corporate partners donate a select number of staff working days to help support us. These days often see our corporate volunteers filling two distinct roles; 1) Our one-off volunteer roles, for example Sports Day or 2) Corporate days, where they will support the project by covering the cost of equipment and spend the day building, these days have seen the creation of three gyms in our hostels and a bike shed.

## Student volunteers – Set periods where extra hands or administration work would be useful



University courses such as Social Work or Master students often have a set period of 3-12 weeks where they complete student placements. We have benefited from students joining the team for select periods of time to support us with administration work, evaluation, or double cover work.

**Other volunteers** – Sometimes we require volunteers for a shorter amount of time if we are trialing new sessions. Six-week trials can be a useful tool to gauge the success of sessions and volunteers. If the results are promising, then we can look to extend the volunteering or to hire a freelancer into the role.

## Freelancers



**Set period** – When trialing a new sport or venue, we normally hire a freelancer for a set period, a six-week period to assess its success.

**Rolling** – When running a session that has no end date and we hope to maintain long term we will recruit a freelancer into the role for an indefinite period of time.

## Meet Louis

**One of our long-standing volunteers is Louis. He has provided consistency with his sessions and has gone above and beyond to make a positive impact.**

One participant he works closely with is Matthew who resides at one of our hostels in Islington. Louis and Matthew have built a great friendship and see each other once a week during the activities session.

Matthew has great engagement with the Sport Project as well as some of the other activities including the music programme, SoundHouse Project. Matthew feels comfortable with Louis, and this has been one of the reasons for Matthew's prolonged engagement with the Project.

Louis has played a key role in the Sport Project since he started. At this year's Sports Day, he was extremely helpful throughout the day; often being on hand to help participants and helped with the logistics of some of the events. His willingness to engage participants through physical activity is testament to his commitment to make a positive change.



# Complete the flow chart below to find out if you need a volunteer or freelancer



 **Now you're ready to go!**

# Lone Working

## A key consideration for your recruitment journey

As a homeless charity we support a vast range of clients across London including those with multiple disadvantages which include those who are vulnerable, domestic abuse survivors, severe mental health, prison leavers and substance misuse issues. Therefore, we have to take into consideration lone working when hiring volunteers and freelancers.

All volunteers and freelancers will be accompanied in their first 2-6 sessions by a member of staff from the Sport Team, after this those who had previously agreed to lone work will continue on their own and those who can't lone work will continue with support from hostel staff each session. Due to the nature of our participants, lone working is situational and dependent on the service. For our partnership with a Women's Aid charity, as the participants are vulnerable and fleeing domestic violence the session requires a female lead and a personal approach, therefore our yoga volunteer Carmen, lone works to run these sessions. This is one of our most engaged sessions by women, as a safe and open space has been created by the volunteer.

For services where the need of participants is high and behaviour is more unpredictable, we do not permit lone working. For example, in a large male only complex needs hostel our female volunteer is not permitted to lone work and our male freelancer does not lone work with certain participants. For a one-off volunteer, we do not complete DBS checks and therefore lone working is not permitted. The safety of our volunteers and participants is of paramount importance so we limit any potential risks.

All volunteers and freelancers who lone work must read and sign the policy and procedures alongside undergoing a site specific lone working induction. You will need to assess your lone working decisions on a service-by-service approach.

When considering lone working there are constantly changing variables and you should regularly assess the suitability of the session and lone working. For example, our lone working policy involves freelancers and volunteers having a radio and CCTV in the room we are delivering the sessions in. If for some reason these are broken double cover will be required for that session.

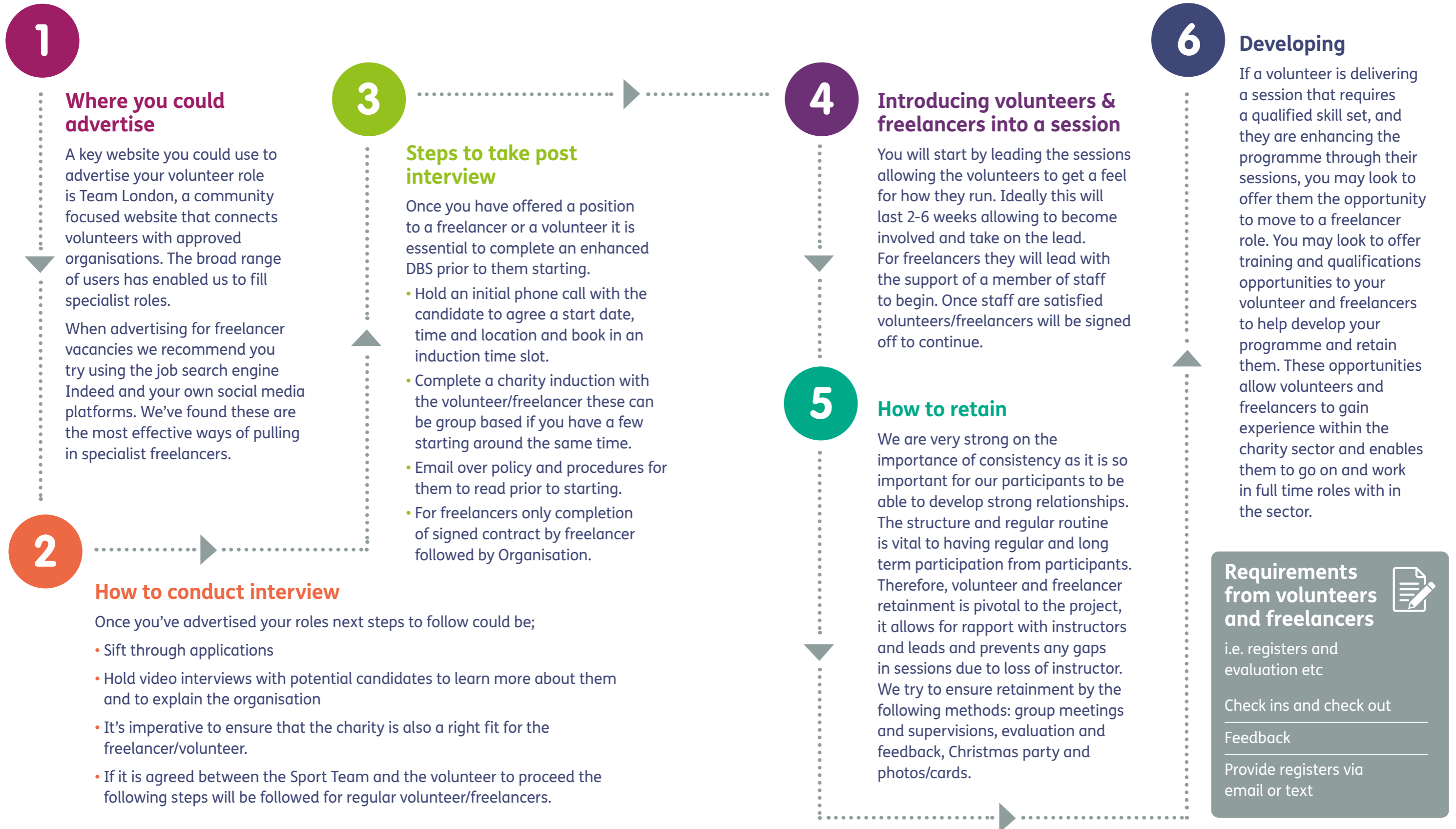
## How to assess lone working suitability

| Common risk factors                                   | If mentioned in risk assessment |
|---|---------------------------------|
| Disruptive behaviours                                 | ✓                               |
| High risk to themselves                               | ✗                               |
| High substance use                                    | ✓                               |
| No single same sex working allowed                    | ✗                               |
| Offending history                                     | ✓                               |
| Double cover stated                                   | ✗                               |
| More than 6 participants in a session                 | ✗                               |
| Trips – if you have a 1:4 staff to participants ratio | ✓                               |

✓ Can lone work

✗ Cannot lone work

# Your guide through the volunteer & freelancer journey



## Interview details

We advertise for roles requiring qualified volunteers which enable us to select from skilled individuals. We have found the more specific you can be with your volunteer adverts, the higher quality of applications you receive. This will allow your programme to build a community of highly qualified volunteers.

We know that interviews can be daunting, and therefore The Sport Team aim to make the process as relaxed as possible. We run our interviews in an informal style and try to host them in a conversational manner. Due to the current climate, all interviews are conducted online via Zoom or Microsoft Teams. Moving forwards, we would like to revert to meeting in person as this was the process prior to the pandemic. To arrange a call, we converse with the prospective volunteers / freelancers through email to arrange a suitable time slot. We are flexible with dates and times as we try to be as inclusive as possible. We try to host volunteer and freelancer interviews with two members of the team to ensure two perspectives and opinions before offering a candidate the job.

## Consultation phase

Gauging interest from participants is crucial in deciding what activities to run. Prior to the implementation phase, it is important to meet with participants to discuss their interests. This allows an understanding of the activities that may encourage consistent engagement and avoid activities participants would not be interested in. This is also a beneficial way of starting a session as it allows participants to feel valued in the creating of a new session. When participants feel they have some responsibility with a session, we have found they are more likely to remain involved for a longer period.

Following consultation with participants, it is then possible to effectively onboard a volunteer/freelancer with the skillset required to deliver the desired session.

## Organising groups

Below is a written example of how the Sport Team organise groups that you can follow and implement.

The Sport Team initially support the volunteer/freelancer to practically set up and organise their session. This provides support and ensures the volunteer/freelancer can effectively deliver their session. As the volunteer/freelancer becomes more comfortable leading their session, the Sport Team begin to handover complete control of the session. This requires both volunteers and freelancers to manage all aspects of their session.

During the initial sessions when the Sport Team are assisting, roles are shared. For example, the volunteer will lead on the warmup and first exercise, then the Sport Team will lead on the second half of the session and the cool down. This provides an opportunity for the volunteer/freelancer to develop an understanding of what a session should look like. Collaborating in this way also allows the volunteer/freelancer to develop a relationship with participants while the Sport Team is there to help facilitate this.

## Developing the sessions

Planning session progressions is key for participants' engagement and motivation. Volunteers and freelancers will implement a progression plan for participants. This could range from increasing the weight of an exercise each week in a gym session to more advanced martial arts techniques. Doing so allows participants to recognise the progress they are making. We have also found it beneficial to visually represent progress participants are making. For example, having a chart displayed on the wall of the gym showing the progress they have made in an exercise since getting involved in the programme. Below are examples of progressions you could implement.



## Gym progressions

Increasing weight to bench press / dumbbell exercises



Improving upper body strength and endurance

Increased time spent on the rowing machine



Increased cardiovascular endurance, improving capabilities on cardio focused exercises

Progressing from seated stretches to standing stretches



Improved core strength whilst improving posture



## Martial Arts progressions

Perfecting the techniques taught



Enables the participants to develop all round skills

Work on warm up stretches / exercises



Improved core strength whilst improving posture which are crucial for martial arts training

## Session feedback

Session feedback is pivotal to providing consistently high-quality sessions. Liaising with volunteers and freelancers to obtain feedback after each session is important to both provide support to the volunteer/freelancer and to provide the best possible session for the participants. This also assists in creating innovative ideas to increase engagement in sessions. It is also important to receive session feedback from participants to ensure they are getting what they want from the session. This allows sessions to be tailored following feedback from both volunteers/freelancers and participants. By receiving feedback, we can plan future sessions to meet the needs of the group. For example, it is possible to move the time of a session or change the activity if that is the only way we can achieve consistent engagement.

# Volunteer and freelancer story

## Meet Carmen

Carmen is one of our newer volunteers and has taken to the participant group and session seamlessly. Carmen has taken on the role of yoga instructor at our Solace partnership. This is one of our newer sessions as we try and expand our outreach into women's services.

Working with vulnerable women, Carmen has seen great engagement with her session. Her kind nature and consideration towards the participants has allowed for a safe space and she is extremely accommodating to everyone. If some of the participants simply like to come and watch, she allows them to feel at ease and places no pressure on them. She makes time for all the participants and the continued engagement typifies how valued she is.



**Working with vulnerable women, Carmen has seen great engagement with her session**

## Meet Karchun

Karchun's support and enthusiasm has helped maintain the session he runs. Karchun often works closely with participants leading with static and dynamic stretching as well as boxing pad work which enables the Sport Coordinators to divert their attention to other participants within the session.

As the numbers of participants at his service vary, having Karchun there has supported some 1-1 work occasionally and it has helped keep participants engaged for the majority of sessions. His resilience, patience and strong knowledge has led to some of the participants engaging regularly, leading to consistent physical exercise. As Karchun has volunteered with us for over two years, he has built some meaningful relationships with our participants so the sessions are often very social and the participants feel comfortable engaging in frequent conversation.



**Karchun has built meaningful relationships with our participants**

# How volunteers can enhance your partnership network

## **Solace (voluntary)**

This is one of our newer sessions as we try and expand our outreach into women's services. We are also planning to start a women's only swim session for Solace. This was also at their request as they had many women asking for these sessions. We have interviewed several volunteers with the plan of beginning the swim sessions in the summer.

## **The Zen Project (voluntary and freelancers)**

A mobile meditation space running micro calming sessions out of a renovated American school bus. The Zen Project has been hired for different services and hostels across London. The owners of the bus, Corinne and Kaye, have built strong relationships with the participants and have seen good engagement whenever they have been hired. The bus is a very calming space and the participants have mentioned how relaxed they feel whilst on it. Due to the relationship that has been built with The Zen Project, they have occasionally volunteered their time for a day, meaning we can reach a couple of services in one day putting on a morning and afternoon session.

Corinne and Kaye's laid back nature and general calmness allows the participants to feel relaxed and comfortable whilst on the bus. Their willingness to engage participants accompanied with their passion for yoga and mindfulness has led to some really positive sessions.

## **Meet Jordan**

### **The impact of volunteers & freelancers have had on The Sport Project**

#### **Insight from Jordan Bedford, Sport Coordinator for the Sport Project**

Overall, the volunteers and freelancers I have worked with have been extremely enthusiastic and passionate to increase engagement with the participants. Having a wide range of volunteers and freelancers has supported our programme expansion. Incorporating specialist positions provide a wide range of activities, such as martial arts and fishing, creating an inclusive environment. Consistency of staff and volunteers is key to building relationships which creates the platform for participants to succeed in sport sessions.

Having volunteers and freelancers at sessions helps in numerous ways, but importantly it is an extremely good social tool, encouraging client socialisation and friendship. Engaging volunteers and freelancers provide specialist knowledge to the participants and an additional person to interact with during sessions. Volunteers and freelancers are an integral part of the Sport Project, and their involvement has allowed me to settle into my role.



# Challenges and Solutions

## Challenges



### Application drop off

When using the advertising platforms 'Team London' and 'Indeed', we have recognised that we receive a higher concentration of applications immediately after the advert is put out, then shortly after applications stop coming through as they're less visible on the search pages.

### Unrealistic session expectations

A programme like ours and possibly yours is likely to be running in a unique way due to the variety of target groups/ clients involved. This means that when applying for a role, volunteers will often have differing or no expectations on what a session will look like. If the session then doesn't match their expectations in areas such as group size, ability level of session space/ venue, it can reduce their motivation to be involved in the sessions, and they may become disheartened if they experience low engagement to begin with.

### Session absence

The nature of having a large volunteer/ freelancer programme is that there may be regular occurrences of session leaders being unable to run the sessions with little notice, perhaps due to illness, childcare emergencies or traffic (especially with freelancers who will likely have other freelance roles with travel in between). This is likely to result in larger consequences if freelancers are absent, as they are more likely to be running sessions independently.

## Solutions



### Refresh adverts on platforms

You can overcome this by implementing a regular refreshing system of the Team London account. This will entail having consistent visits to your Team London account (perhaps monthly) and resubmitting adverts for positions you have not yet filled and are not receiving applications for any more.

### Informative interview and induction

This can be minimised by ensuring some key points are emphasised in the interview process. This will include a clear outline of the client group they will be working with and potential challenges they may be facing, as well as an insight in to what existing sessions look like and how they looked at the start. Then further detail can be given in their induction to equip them.

### Organised timetable with flexibility to cover

Within our core team, we do not have a time in the weekly timetable where everyone is running sessions. We have devised our timetable in this way to be prepared to cover sessions with urgency where needed.

## Challenges



### Maintaining sessions when volunteers and freelancers move on

Inevitably volunteers and freelancers will move on, and a challenge is to create a session that is sustainable and can seamlessly transition from one instructor to the next.

## Solutions



### Establish clear session leader replacement plan

A key solution for this is to keep a spreadsheet of all volunteers/freelancers that have expressed an interest in running sessions, with a clear outline of sessions they are equipped to run and areas they are able to work in. This way they can be contacted as soon as the previous volunteer has expressed their leaving date.

A solution for immediate departures would be to maintain a flexible timetable among your core team to be able to cover sessions when a volunteer/freelancer leaves.

## Future plans

The plan for the future of our volunteer and freelancer programme is not characterised by radical changes and a constant refreshing of our initiatives, since we have a programme with proven efficacy, but instead building on and developing what we have learnt and what we know to have been effective.

We will endeavour to create a progression framework that has a larger focus on internal development of volunteers/freelancers as opposed to solely advertising externally. This can be done through upskilling service users and supporting them into training and employment opportunities, creating a powerful avenue to understanding the needs of participants.

This is something we have begun, and a prime example is one of our freelancer boxing coaches. He began his involvement with SHP as a client, where his participation in boxing sessions marked an important tool in his recovery and development. Due to the stability in his recovery, he became a peer mentor supporting others to make positive changes in their lives, of which part of his role involved supporting others with boxercise. Upskilling him was the clear progression from this point, so we enrolled him on a boxing coaching qualification. He has gone on to become our longest serving freelancer within the Sports Project, running boxing sessions at our two largest hostels in Westminster, as well as running outdoor 1-to-1 sessions for clients during the pandemic.

This experience has broadened our approach to recruiting volunteers, as it has showcased the importance of not just looking externally for volunteers, but also upskilling from within. We would strongly recommend that you look at opening up development pathways for the target groups you work with in order to create a more sustainable volunteer/freelancer programme.



## Our Volunteer & Freelancer Team

### Karchun (volunteer)

Karchun volunteers at one of our Camden services delivering a gym session once a week. Karchun often works closely with participants doing static and dynamic stretching and boxing pad work which enables the Sport Team to divert their attention to other participants within the session. As the numbers of participants at the service are typically quite low, having Karchun there has supported some 1-1 work occasionally and it has helped keep participants engaged for the majority of the sessions. He has volunteered in this role for over two years.

### Ian (volunteer)

Ian is one of our bike mechanic instructors in Islington. The weekly session allows participants the opportunity to make alterations to their own individual bikes. Ian's strong knowledge of bicycle maintenance has allowed the session to progress from basic maintenance to intricate, more advanced changes. Equally, Ian passes on his knowledge to the participants allowing them to learn and enhance their independence with their own bikes.

### Louis (volunteer)

Louis has played a key role in the sports programme since he started. Volunteering at an activities session in Islington, he plays table tennis and other indoor activities with the residents. Often having the same one or two participants, Louis has built a strong relationship with the participants, and this has led to consistent engagement. Louis is very good at interacting and socialising with the participants and is open to doing a range of activities to keep them interested.

### Cerys (volunteer)

Cerys volunteers at one of our complex needs services in Westminster where we deliver a weekly activity session. Her willingness to get heavily involved in the sessions and her patience and understanding with the participants means that the sessions often run smoothly. Cerys has a good relationship with the participants, particularly the regulars. Having Cerys at the sessions has enabled the Sport Team to build good relationships with a few of the participants which has led to consistent engagement.



### **Carmen (volunteer)**

Carmen is one of our newer volunteers and has taken to the participant group and session seamlessly. Carmen has taken on the role of yoga instructor at our Solace partnership. This is one of our newer sessions as we try and expand our outreach into women's services. Working with vulnerable women, Carmen has seen great engagement with her session and we are looking for a new venue to support the uptake. Her kind nature and consideration towards the participants has allowed for a safe space and she is extremely accommodating to everyone. If some of the participants simply like to come and watch, she allows them to feel at ease and places no pressure on them. She makes time for all of the participants and the continued engagement typifies how valued she is.

### **Jo (volunteer)**

Jo has been a long-standing volunteer and has offered gym sessions and personal training throughout the pandemic. She has been able to develop great relationships with the participants throughout this time. Jo is a qualified personal trainer and gym instructor and therefore offers a skill set that we otherwise could not provide. Jo originally began volunteering in one of our hostels before Highbury Leisure Centre kindly offered one of their studios on a weekly basis. The new space has allowed an expansion of the session, meaning we have been able to offer the session to more services. It has also allowed Jo to expand her sessions and offer other activities, for example, cycling and weight-based sessions.

### **Nicky (freelancer)**

Chair aerobics in Islington is a very popular session with our floating support service.

The session has been running at Mildmay Community Centre for over two years. It was originally facilitated by the Sport Team before Nikki began running the session. Nikki has developed a wonderful relationship with all the participants that attend the session. The participants speak so positively of Nikki, and they appreciate the social environment she creates as much as the activity they take part in. The participants have built such a strong bond since the session has started and they socialise with each other outside of the session. They refer to each other as a big 'family' and it is testament to the patience and commitment Nikki has shown with the session. Additionally, Nikki's consistency and high-level teaching allows the session to run without regular attendance of the Sport Team. This means the session is self-sufficient so the Sport Team can be utilised elsewhere.

### **Jonny (freelancer)**

Another one of our newly formed sessions is martial arts in one of our Camden based services. Jonny has a very strong background in martial arts and has made a great impact on the session already. Typically at the session we have one dedicated participant, Ian. He thoroughly enjoys the session as it brings back positive memories he had when he used to be involved in medieval reenactment. Jonny's expertise is great for the session as there is a clear progression each week and he is very good at catering for Ian's lack of mobility. Jonny often shows how patient he can be if Ian struggles to grasp something instantly, repeating tasks as many times as necessary to achieve the desired outcome.



# Summary

Our Sport Project has proven that by introducing regular physical activity and sport into the lives of those experiencing homelessness, we can dramatically improve the quality of life of participants.

We hope that this toolkit has shed light on the positive outcomes of the Sport Project and has offered insight into how you can introduce physical activity into your organisation, and those that you support.

We look forward to hearing from anyone who is interested in receiving additional support, guidance and/ or facilitation in introducing physical activity and sport into your offer.

**Email:**  
[sport@shp.org.uk](mailto:sport@shp.org.uk)

**Website:**  
[www.shp.org.uk/sportproject](http://www.shp.org.uk/sportproject)

## Our future Sport Project - Physical Activity For All - Toolkits are as follows:

- How to combat isolation and encourage socialisation
- How to break barriers & bridge the gap between the homeless and physical activity sectors
- How to engage women in physical activity & sport
- How to engage Adults 24+ in physical activity and sport



# Appendix

## **Volunteer and freelancer interview example**

- Staff intros and roles within the charity
- Tell the volunteer/freelancer more about SHP as a whole and the Sport project



### **Q. Find out more about volunteer/freelancer**

Where are they based? What do they do for work? Have they volunteered/ worked within this sector before.

**Q. The Sport Programme runs Monday – Friday from 10am - 4pm, do you have availability during this time? Will your availability be long term?**

### **Q. What experience do you have?**

Think about sporting experience, coaching, and working with vulnerable people

### **Q. Why do you want to volunteer/freelance?**

Explain more about participant group – mental health services, complex needs, young people, floating support, women’s services, and refugee services.

**Q. Do you have experience working with people with complex needs or people who are homeless?**

**Q. To get the DBS process started, could you please confirm your date of birth, phone number and address.**

**Q. Do you have any questions?**

## Team London advert example

### Team London advert example – bike mechanics instructor example:

#### What will I be doing?

- Volunteers will be leading a weekly 90-minute bike mechanics session in one of SHP's complex need accommodation services in the heart of Westminster.
- The sessions will aim to educate and teach participants the basics in how to repair and maintain a bicycle.
- Those who volunteer are encouraged to engage with participants and motivate them to participate as much or as little as they wish.

#### What impact will this have?

- You will be providing a fun, social and inclusive environment to a vulnerable participant group. Also creating a valuable platform for our participants to develop their confidence, self-esteem, and social relationships.
- Help to remove the main barriers of physical and social activity amongst vulnerable adults, whilst also improving the physical, mental, and social health of our participants.
- Build a positive social rapport with participants, offering support and an opportunity for them to engage, learn new skills and potentially lead sessions on their own.

#### When are you needed?

|           | M | T | W | T | F | S | S |
|-----------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Morning   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| Afternoon |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| Evening   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |

Available times for volunteering role

#### Commitment:

- The Sport Programme runs Monday-Friday from 10-4 so availability during this time is essential. We are looking for a volunteer bike mechanics instructor to teach and lead bike mechanic sessions in one of SHP's high support complex needs accommodation services in Westminster.
- Volunteers must be reliable and able to commit to a minimum of 6 weeks.

## What else do I need to know?

- Consistency is key to the role to build up trust with the participant group. Therefore, we ask that volunteers are committed to their roles and see it as part of their weekly timetable.
- All volunteers need to adhere to government and SHP guidelines regarding Covid-19. This includes wiping of equipment with antibacterial gel/spray before and after use, maintaining social distancing at all times and adhering to restrictions on group numbers.
- Volunteers will also have regular 1-to-1 supervisions with a member of the Sport Team and group supervisions with the rest of the volunteers, to provide an opportunity to discuss ideas.
- Volunteers need to provide at least 2 weeks' notice if they are not available for a session, to give us enough time to sort out cover for the session.

### Expenses

Travel expenses will be reimbursed with proof of purchase

### Background checks

A DBS check is required

### About the organisation

[Link to SHP website](#)

### Training

All volunteers will undergo induction training where they will learn more about their role, the impact they'll have and the participant group they will be working with.

### Location

245 Gray's Inn Road, LONDON, WC1X 8QY

## Additional information

### What skills will be useful:

- Interpersonal
- Advice and support
- Listening
- Mentoring
- Teaching
- Leadership
- Organising

### What skills can I gain:

- Interpersonal
- Advice and support
- Coaching
- Listening
- Mentoring
- Teaching
- Leadership
- Organising

## Opportunities Lone working procedure

- 1.0 All staff to be lone working must notify another member of staff who was previously agreed to act as a buddy by their manager
  - 1.1 Staff acting as a buddy must remain available by phone for the whole duration of the lone working
  - 1.2 The buddy worker must have access to the personal details of the lone working member of staff. This must include phone, email, address, next of kin and any relevant health information.
  - 1.3 The staff member acting as buddy must also have a list of client names that the lone working staff is working with.
  - 1.4 Any staff member supporting a lone working member of staff must remain accessible by phone during the period of time the member of staff is lone working.
  - 1.5 Lone working staff must inform their buddy when they start and when they finish.
  - 1.6 If there is a long period of time in between (and if possible given the activity), regular calls should be made to check the lone working staff is ok (ideally every hour and a half).
  - 1.7 If the lone worker doesn't call in, the buddy must call the lone worker
  - 1.8 The lone worker must ensure they can hear or feel the vibration of their phone at all times
  - 1.9 An agreed secret word (correctly purple folder) should be used by the team should they need to communicate that they are in danger secretly and request immediate assistance.
  - 1.10 If the buddy believes that the lone working member of staff is at risk they, must call the relevant authorities (i.e. 999) and inform the out of hour's manager afterwards.
- 2.0 Any accidents or incident must be recorded on the inform system and any relevant risk assessments updated to accommodate this new risk information
- 3.0 Opportunities staff must maintain a referral system or have adequate access to risk information to be able to assess risk of clients before they lone work with clients.
- 4.0 Staff should never lone work clients that they haven't risk assessed or been provided the relevant risk information about.
- 5.0 Staff lone working should carry an external first aid box if access to first aid equipment was limited.

## Freelance contract example



SHP Head Office  
245 Gray's Inn Road  
London, WC1X 8QY  
T 020 7520 8660  
F 020 7837 7498  
E [info@shp.org.uk](mailto:info@shp.org.uk)

[www.shp.org.uk](http://www.shp.org.uk)

### Memorandum of understanding

#### Date:

**Between:** Single Homeless Project (SHP) and .....

**Definitions:** In this agreement the following words and expressions shall have the following meanings unless the context otherwise requires

Commencement Date:

Services:

Sessional production support and teaching

Termination Date:

Ongoing

*Subject to one calendar month notice by either party.*

#### Appointment

With effect from the commencement date, the provider is appointed as a self-employed contractor to the client for an unspecified period to carry out the services, such services are to be provided using reasonable skill and care.

#### Role of the freelancer

(INSERT SPECIFIC FREELANCER ROLE AND DUTIES)

Registered in England as Single Homeless Project  
Registered Office: 245 Gray's Inn Road, London, WC1X 8QY  
Charity Number 287779  
Limited Company Number 1741926



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE



# Freelance contract example

## Duties

During their appointment, the contractor agrees:

- To help provide a resource material list for the sessions to The Sports and Health team, advising what will need ordering ahead of sessions.
- To attend occasional planning and induction meetings arranged by The Sport and Health team.
- To keep an up to date register of clients for each session, and to keep this register on themselves during each session in case of a fire evacuation.
- To support clients who may attend a session as a new participant. Welcome them, add their full name to the register, and communicate new participants to The Sport and Health team following the session.
- To support SHP clients in participating in cycling activities during the sessions, providing a level of support, and planning for a variety of activities to suit all needs and abilities.
- To set up and pack away each session. Storing the equipment safely in the agreed storage space in the service.
- To work with SHP service staff to ensure a safe and welcoming environment is maintained during each session.
- To liaise with SHP service staff each session in the setting up and running of weekly sessions, including signing in and out on-site, letting staff know you have arrived for your session, asking staff to help get clients to attend the session i.e. knock arounds, and to inform staff of any incidents.
- To contribute to evaluation of the project through recording weekly registers, sharing registers with The Sports and Health team, and providing session feedback once a month.
- To help advocate for the project with internal staff to help promote positive staff buy in and involvement.
- To liaise with The Sport and Health team before making the decision to spend your own personal money on equipment with the intention of personal reimbursement from SHP. Due to budgetary impact this needs to be agreed prior to purchase.
- To adhere to SHP safeguarding policy and session risk assessments.
- To raise any concerns, worries, accidents or incidents with a member of The Sport and Health team.

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## Terms of agreement:

To be available 10 minutes before the sessions start time for briefings with service staff, signing-in on-site and set-up. To send The Sport and Health team feedback once a month on the previous months sessions.

## Delegation of work:

The Client shall not be obliged to provide any work and the provider will not be obliged to accept or perform any work offered, unless and until the Client has requested and the provider has agreed to perform such work.

If the provider is unable at any time to run a session, they must inform a member of The Sports and Health team as soon as possible.

## Invoices

Invoices must include name, address, bank details, amount due, name and date of event, and either a statement acknowledging the Freelancer is responsible for paying their own tax and NI, or a UTR number. For the avoidance of doubt such fee is exclusive of VAT which shall be charged if applicable. Hand written invoices are not acceptable.

(The provider has confirmed that value added tax is not applicable) shall be payable to the provider for the provision of the services and such fee shall be payable within 14 days of receipt of an invoice being provided by the provider subsequent to the time that the services have been performed or provided.

The provider shall submit an invoice, as soon as reasonably possible after, the last day of each month detailing the services provided within that month and the fees due in respect thereof and where they are registered for value added tax shall show any value added tax separately on such invoices.

In the event that there are periods when no services are performed, the provider shall not be paid a retainer for these periods.

It is expected under this agreement that the provider will exercise a right to take up to 6 weeks break during any 52 week period. Fees will not be paid in regard to periods when services are not provided.

## Fee - A fee of £20 per hour (hours to be agreed) which will include:

- planning,
- facilitating,

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## - evaluation & recording

## Expenses

Expenses will be reimbursed separately and must be authorised prior to incurring. The cycling coach shall be entitled to be reimbursed by SHP for all out-of-pocket expenses wholly, exclusively and properly incurred in the performance of the services subject to the cycling coach providing SHP with vouchers, receipts or other evidence of actual payment of such expenses and subject to the arrangement being specifically agreed in advance by SHP.

Additional travel: The cycling coach will not be reimbursed for travel costs from home to and from the place of work however travel during the course of work will be funded.

(The provider has confirmed that value added tax is not applicable) shall be payable to the provider for the provision of the services and such fee shall be payable within 14 days of receipt of an invoice being provided by the provider subsequent to the time that the Services have been performed or provided.

The cycling coach shall submit an invoice to SHP on, or as soon as reasonably possible after, the last day of each month detailing the Services provided within that month and the fees due in respect thereof and where they are registered for value added tax shall show any value added tax separately on such invoices.

In the event that there are periods when no services are performed, the provider shall not be paid a retainer for these periods.

It is expected under this agreement that the provider will exercise a right to take up to 6 weeks break during any 52 week period. Fees will not be paid in regard to periods when services are not provided.

provided.

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## Confidentiality & Data Protection

The cycling coach hereby agrees that during the course of activity under this agreement they may obtain knowledge of confidential information with regard to the business and financial affairs of SHP and those of SHPs clients, customers and suppliers, details of which are not in the public domain ("Confidential Information"), and accordingly hereby undertakes to and covenants with SHP that:

- they shall not at any time after the Termination Date use or procure the use of the name of SHP in connection with their own or any other name in any way calculated to suggest that they continue to be connected with the business of SHP or in any way hold himself/herself out as having such connection;
- they shall not use the Confidential Information other than during the continuance of this contract and in connection with the provision of the Services; and
- they shall not at any time after the date of this contract (save as required by law) disclose or divulge to any person other than to officers or employees of SHP whose province it is to know the any Confidential Information and they shall use their best endeavours to prevent the publication or disclosure of any Confidential Information by any other person.
- to comply with all applicable data protection legislation, including but not limited to the Data Protection Act 1998 and any amendments thereto.

The restrictions set out above shall cease to apply to information or knowledge that comes into the public domain otherwise than by reason of the default of the cycling coach.

## Termination and Variation

Either party shall have the right at any time to terminate or vary by agreement between them to vary this agreement by giving no less than 4 weeks' notice in writing to the other party.

In addition, the Client shall have the right to terminate this contract at any time by summary notice without any payment in lieu in the event of the cycling coach:

- being in material or persistent breach of any of the terms of this contract;
- having a bankruptcy order made against them or making any arrangement with their creditors or having an interim order made against them;
- being convicted of any criminal offence other than a minor driving offence under the Road Traffic Acts;
- persistently and wilfully neglecting or becoming incapable for any reason of efficiently performing the services, including a failure to remedy any fault in work produced within a reasonable period of time of being notified of that fault; or

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# Freelance contract example

- doing any action manifestly prejudicial to the interests of SHP or which may, in the opinion of the Client, bring it into disrepute;

The cyclingcoach shall have no claim against SHP in respect of the termination of their appointment for any of the reasons specified above.

**Tax liabilities**  
The parties to this agreement declare and confirm that it is the intention of the parties that the cyclingcoach shall have the status of a self-employed person and shall be responsible for all income tax liabilities and national insurance or similar contributions in respect of fees.

Accordingly the cycling coach hereby agrees to indemnify SHP in respect of any claims that may be made by the relevant authorities against SHP in respect of income tax and national insurance or similar contributions relating to the Contractor's services under this contract.

**Warranties**  
The cycling coach warrants to SHP that:

- by entering into this agreement they will not be in breach of any obligations to or agreements with any third party;

No employment - nothing in this agreement shall render or be deemed to render the cyclingcoach an employee or agent of SHP and the cyclingcoach hereby agrees that they are a self-employed independent contractor and not an employee or agent of SHP. This agreement does not create any mutuality of obligation between the parties.

The cycling coach does not qualify for any company benefits from SHP.

**Force majeure**  
If either party to this contract is prevented or delayed in the performance of any of their respective obligations under this contract by "force majeure", then such party shall be excused from performance for so long as such cause or delay shall continue.

For the purposes of this agreement, "force majeure" shall be deemed to be any cause affecting the performance of this agreement arising from or attributable to acts, events, omissions or accidents beyond the reasonable control of either party and shall include, but not be limited to:

- strikes, lockouts or other industrial action;
- civil commotion, riot, act of terrorism, war threat or preparation for war;
- fire, explosion, storm, flood, earthquake, subsidence, epidemic, bad weather or other natural physical disaster;
- impossibility of the use of railways, shipping, aircraft, motor transport or other means of public or private transport; and
- Political interference with the normal operations.

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Registered Office: 245 Gray's Inn Road, London, WC1X 8QY  
Charity Number 287779  
Limited Company Number 1741926

**Entire agreement**  
This document contains the entire agreement and understanding of the parties relating to the subject matter of this agreement and extinguishes all and any previous agreements between the parties relating to the subject matter hereof.

**Survival of causes of action**  
The termination of this contract occurring shall not affect the rights and liabilities of the parties already accrued at such time nor affect the continuance in force of such of its provisions as are expressed as or capable of having effect after such termination.

**Waiver**  
The failure of any party to insist upon strict performance of any provision of this agreement or the failure of any party to exercise any right or remedy to which they are entitled hereunder shall not constitute a waiver thereof and shall not cause a diminution of the obligations under this agreement.

No waiver of any of the provisions of this agreement shall be effective unless it is expressly stated to be such and signed by all the parties to this agreement.

**Severability**  
If any provision of this agreement is held invalid, illegal or unenforceable for any reason by any court of competent jurisdiction, such provision shall be severed and the remainder of the provisions of this contract shall continue in full force and effect as if this agreement had been signed with the invalid, illegal or unenforceable provision eliminated.

**Notices**  
Any notice to be given pursuant to the terms of this agreement shall be in writing and shall be delivered by hand or sent by post to the address of the addressee as set out in this contract or such other address (being in Great Britain) as the addressee may from time to time have notified for the purpose of this clause.

Law and jurisdiction this contract is governed by the laws of [England and Wales/Scotland/Northern Ireland] and the parties submit to the jurisdiction of the courts of [England and Wales/Scotland/Northern Ireland].

CyclingCoach  
Signed:

SHP  
Signed:

Registered in England as Single Homeless Project  
Registered Office: 245 Gray's Inn Road, London, WC1X 8QY  
Charity Number 287779  
Limited Company Number 1741926

# Example Sports Register Spreadsheet

| Example Register spreadsheet |                |                |            |   |                  |                  |  |
|------------------------------|----------------|----------------|------------|---|------------------|------------------|--|
| *Service name*               |                |                |            |   |                  |                  |  |
| Date                         | Session leader | Activity       | Attendance | Register  | Par-Q            | Consent          | Comments   |
| 18/03/2022                   | Sam            | Chair Aerobics | 6          | Dave Smith, Jane Jones, James Owen, Sarah Johnson, Ruth Price | Y, Y, Y, Y, Y, Y | Y, Y, Y, Y, Y, Y | Great session today - however, James expressed that he was experiencing discomfort with his lower back, so he only partook in the seated leg exercises - he was advised to visit his GP.         |
| 25/03/2022                   | Sam            | Chair Aerobics | 5          | Dave Smith, Jane Jones, James Owen, Ruth Price, Michael Brown | Y, Y, Y, Y, Y    | Y, Y, Y, Y, Y    | Dave showed great progress and asked to increase from 2kg weights to 3kg. James said that his GP has referred him to a chiropractor, but in the meantime is ok to do some light chair exercises. |

# Sport and Health Referral Form

Please return completed form to: [sport@shp.org.uk](mailto:sport@shp.org.uk)

If you would like to discuss a referral with a member of the team, please call:

| Client information  |                 |              |
|---------------------|-----------------|--------------|
| First name _____    | Surname _____   | Title _____  |
| Date of Birth _____ | Ethnicity _____ | Gender _____ |
| Phone number _____  |                 |              |

|  |  |
|--|--|
| Is the client aware of this referral?  |  |
| If no, can you outline why   |  |
| What service is the client currently receiving support from?                       |  |
| What are the support needs of the client?  |  |
| What are the key risks associated with this client that we need to be aware of?    |  |
| Does the client have a history of offending?                                       |  |
| If yes, please outline the offending history                                       |  |
| Are there any reasons why your client may struggle to work in a group environment? |  |



## Sports referral form

|  |        |
|--|--------|
| How do you hope the client will benefit from the sports project?   |        |
| Is there a current risk assessment on inform.  | YES NO |
| Are there any medical issues that we need to be aware of?  |        |
| On occasion, we provide food at some of the sessions. Does your client have any special dietary requirements?            |        |
| When do you hope to close this client's case?  |        |
| Is the client signed up to Text Magic (SHP's free client texting service).   | YES NO |
| Would you like the clients to be signed up to receive free texts about sport activities at SHP and other special events? | YES NO |

Reason for referral and further information (continue on separate page if necessary):

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Referrer details</b><br>Name, job title, contact number and email address |  |
| SHP Project name   |  |
| Date   |  |





# Transforming Lives Through Physical Activity & Sport

How to use physical activity to combat  
loneliness and social isolation



**Single Homeless Project**  
preventing homelessness  
transforming lives

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**“I feel like a human again,  
before I felt invisible.”**

David



# Who we are

**Single Homeless Project is a London-wide charity. Our vision is a society where everyone has a place to call home and the chance to live a fulfilling life.**

We help single Londoners by preventing homelessness, providing support and accommodation, promoting wellbeing, enhancing opportunity, and being a voice for change. From supporting people in crisis to helping people take the final steps towards independence and employment, we make a difference to 10,000 lives every year across all 32 boroughs.

In 2017 as part of Sport England's Active Ageing Initiative, Single Homeless Project launched the Sport Project. This introduced physical activity into the daily lives of those aged 55 and over who were experiencing homelessness and associated needs. Since its launch, the Sport Project has grown its offer to include all adults across Single Homeless Project services.

## **Physical Activity For All**

The Sport Project believes that everyone deserves equal access to physical activity and sport. We also believe that the introduction of physical activity into core homelessness provision is essential to bring about positive change, transform lives and prevent homelessness.

Our work has shown that regular physical activity can bring significant improvements in physical and mental health, socialisation, and overall quality of life.

That's why we've launched the Physical Activity For All initiative, consisting of: information sharing toolkits, roundtable events and sport bags. This toolkit will set out how to use physical activity and sport as a tool to combat loneliness, and social isolation – as well as improve participants mental health and overall quality of life.

We hope by sharing this and future toolkits we will inspire organisations to join us in using physical activity and sport to transform the lives of people throughout our communities.

### **Sport Project – Our Vision:**

- To share our experience, insights and findings
- Engage, grow and nurture a network of enthusiastic partners
- To encourage organisations to introduce sport and physical activity into their offer
- Influence and inspire others to join the conversation around the positive impact sport and physical activity have on the lives of people experiencing or at risk of homelessness



**10 minutes**  
of exercise can improve your mood and reduce your anxiety

# Why this toolkit is for you

- Are your target group experiencing loneliness and/or social isolation?
- Are you looking for ways to combat loneliness and social isolation?
- Are you looking for a tool to increase socialisation amongst your target group?
- Are you looking for a tool to improve your target group's mental health?
- Are you looking for ways to inspire your target group to engage with other opportunities to improve wellbeing and overall quality of life?
- Would you like to offer a variety of skills and activities to your target group?
- Are you looking to create more consistency for your participants, and a safe and comfortable setting?
- Are you looking to facilitate the opportunities for deeper friendships within your target group?
- Are you looking for practical ways to increase engagement with your target group?

Since 2017 we have:

**600**  
Engaged 600+ participants

---

**62%**  
Participants improved overall quality of life

---

**76%**  
Participants improved stress, anxiety and depression levels

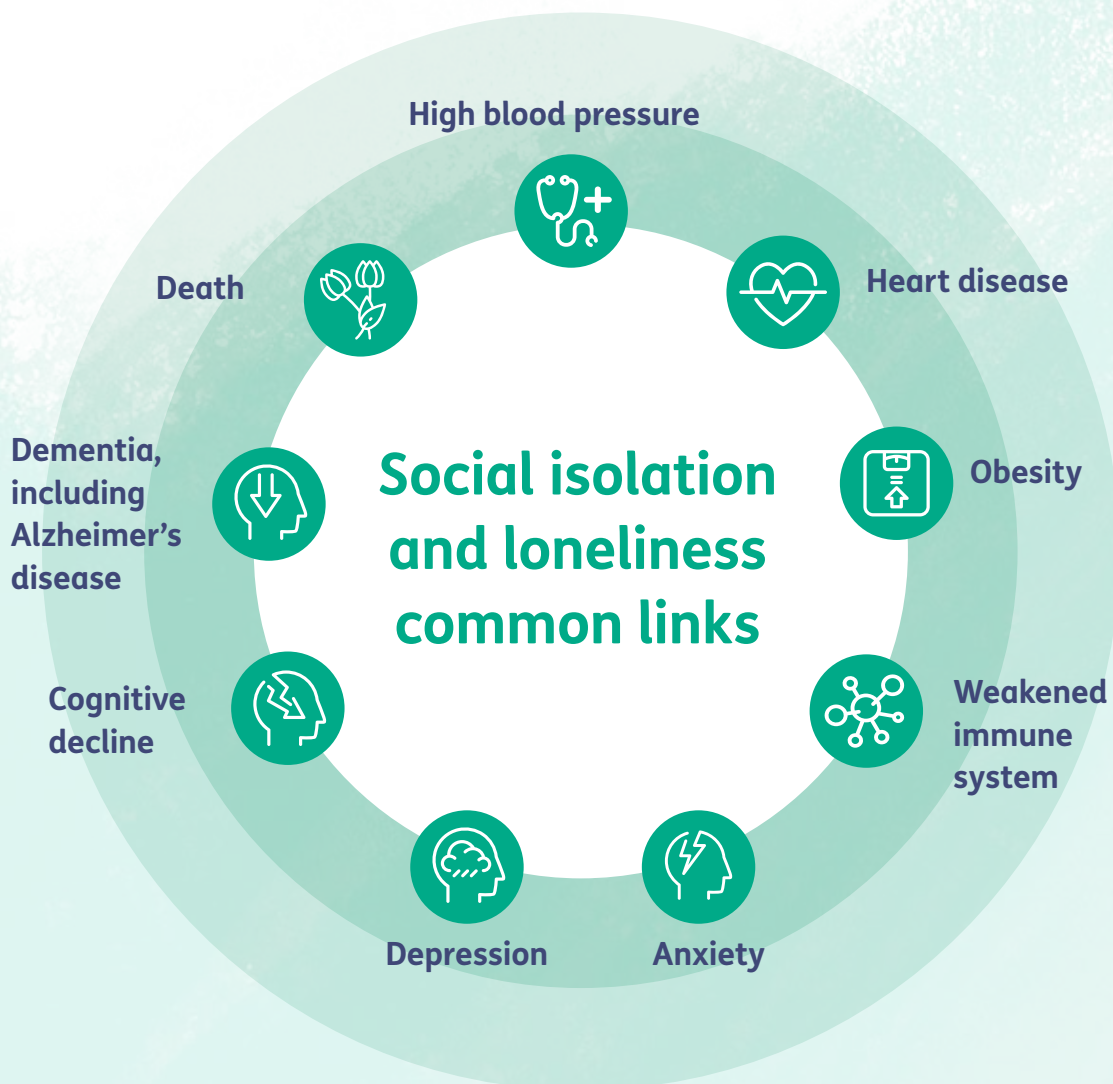
# Key terms and types of socialisation

## Definitions and how they link

Loneliness and social isolation are different, but related.

**Loneliness** is a subjective feeling about the gap between a person's desired levels of social contact and their actual level of social contact. It refers to the perceived quality of the person's relationships.

**Social isolation** is an objective measure of the number of contacts that people have. It is about the quantity and not quality of relationships. You can live alone and not feel lonely or socially isolated, and you can feel lonely while being with other people. People who are socially isolated or lonely are more likely to be admitted to hospital or to a nursing home.



# Different types of socialisation

The table below outlines the different types of sport sessions that incorporate socialisation and when may be best to use them.

| Type of socialising           | Definition  | When you might use it   |
|-------------------------------|---|---|
| 1-2-1                         | Coming together with one other person. This allows for more personal, quality socialisation.  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If a participant suffers from social anxiety</li> <li>• First time engaging in sport</li> <li>• Adaptations are needed</li> </ul>  |
| Group                         | Coming together as three or more people. This allows for interaction over a common goal or activity and allows shared ideas and thoughts. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Similar level of ability</li> <li>• To help aid social connections</li> <li>• Similar aims and goals</li> <li>• Build friendships and independence</li> </ul>  |
| Online                        | Using technology such as phones, tablets, and laptops to facilitate group or 1-2-1 online live sessions.                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To reach those who are isolated</li> <li>• To reach those who cannot travel</li> </ul>   |
| In person                     | Meeting both 1-2-1 or in a group in a mutual setting. For example, a community space, hostel, green space, or public space.               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To add in an extra social element to the session</li> <li>• To add in human interaction</li> <li>• Help build relationships within the group</li> <li>• To aid conversation in the group sessions</li> </ul> |
| Peer to peer                  | Online and in-person meetings between others in the same hostel, housing, situation, or group.  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To add in extra level of support and lived experience</li> </ul>   |
| Session leader to participant | Interactions between session leaders and participants that involves communication for a significant period of time.                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low confidence</li> <li>• Social anxiety</li> <li>• Extra support, mobility issues</li> <li>• Not comfortable exercising around others</li> <li>• Poor relationships with others</li> </ul>                  |
| Gender informed               | Group or 1-2-1 time which involves only those of the same sex. For example, women only or men only.                                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Previous trauma</li> <li>• Religion</li> <li>• Low confidence or high anxiety</li> <li>• Body confidence</li> </ul>  |

# Sport as an accessible bridge into social activities

**Sport can be the first step into broadening a social network and equipping people with the motivation to engage in further socialisation.**

Sport sessions act as a bridge between people experiencing isolation and people moving on into social activities. For many people, the sporting activities we deliver are the first time they come together to socialise with other residents within their hostel.

However, as the emphasis is on sporting activities, the socialisation and building relationships part of the session comes

as a by-product. This helps remove the social pressure and anxiety that residents often feel and allows a more natural process to building relationships with other participants.

The next section of this toolkit suggests methods that encourage participants to build their confidence around socialisation and helps reduce anxiety they may have.

## Meet Denise

Denise is a resident at one of our services where we recently began offering physical activity sessions. She was sceptical at first due to it being something she had not tried before, in addition to her ongoing back pain and use of a walking stick. Denise was not engaging with any activities and struggled to make friends or trust other people. A member of the Sport Team met Denise several times and explained we could do any activity she felt comfortable with; she spoke about chair-based exercises and going for walks. Denise explained how she had been wanting to have someone to go for regular walks with for a while.

Denise has been participating for around six months and it is clear to see the positive changes in her mental health. Denise has spoken about how participating in physical activity has made her feel happier due to feeling better physically and because of the social aspect of the sessions. **“It’s given me confidence to want to join a walking club and be sociable again.”**



# Common causes of loneliness and the solutions through exercise:

## 1. Social Anxiety

The link to loneliness/social isolation:

- When people find social situations anxiety inducing, such as an exercise class, the instinct is to avoid them – leading to isolation and loneliness
- This is a catalyst for poor mental health, as stress becomes the default response in each outcome

### What to look out for?



**Avoidance** - Showing intent to come to a physical activity session, then not turning up

**Nervousness** – fidgeting when they're speaking to you

**Body language** – not facing you or looking at you whilst speaking. Body turned to the side or holding the door, showing intent to end the conversation quickly

### Solutions:



The key to success is gradual exposure by using a stepping stone process:

Is there a staff member or person they trust?

YES

Invite them both to an exercise session with no one else

NO

Build up trust and rapport through multiple visits

1. Have a 1-to-1 exercise session

2. Invite them to a small group session

3. Invite them to a larger group session

# Client stories

## Meet Bernie

Bernie is a 63 year old client that SHP supported into his own flat. He suffers from social anxiety and as a result has reported having feelings of loneliness and feeling socially isolated.

Initially, his project worker brought him to a chair aerobics session after expressing a desire to address his loneliness, but was too nervous to join a group on his own. When Bernie attended the small group he was very shy, did not speak to the other participants, sat with a cup of tea and listened to the others chat before getting involved in the chair based exercise. The exercise acted as a useful tool for Bernie to feel like he was participating without having the pressure to uphold conversation. Bernie continued attending the sessions and the transformation in his confidence and self-esteem was remarkable. As the weeks went by he was getting more and more involved in the conversations laughing and joking with the other participants, and it was clear to see he was beginning to make friends. Bernie has since attended all 3 of our annual sports day events with hundreds of people, which is something he never could have envisioned when he first got involved. After the first lockdown, Bernie's social anxiety resurfaced so we offered him 1-to-1 exercise sessions in the park and it built up his confidence again to re-join the group sessions.



## Did you know...

.....

Regular moderate intensity exercise can improve memory, reasoning and cognitive function.

Someone with physical health problems may have worse mental health outcomes as a result; for instance, someone experiencing long-term pain, loss of independence or social isolation because of poor physical health is at higher risk of depression.

People who are socially isolated or lonely have an increased risk of a serious health condition.

## 2. Memory loss

Link to loneliness and social isolation:

Memory loss can make consistent routine difficult which can result in participants spending a lot of time on their own in their rooms. It also makes building relationships difficult as there may not be any recollection of names, faces, or conversations, which can isolate people. Memory loss can result in confusion around sessions so without the correct support, participants can become distant and disengaged.

### What to look out for?



**General confusion**

**Forgetting names/people/locations (sessions)**

**Difficulty completing everyday tasks**

**Misplacing things**

**Personality change**

### Solutions:



#### Reminders

Sometimes one reminder of a session isn't enough and so regular communication with multiple reminders can be beneficial. Reminders can be done face to face or via phone calls/emails.

#### Escort to sessions

Travelling with participants to sessions is a useful engagement tool as it can be common for them to forget the time or location.

#### In-house

By having sessions based within your organisation/services it can help participants to build routine and familiarity with the sessions.

#### Persistence

It's important to be aware of the extra time and care it may take to engage individuals. By persistently reminding and reiterating the time and place of sessions, it helps build the session into their routine.

## Meet William

**William is a client at one of our hostels who suffers from Korsakoff syndrome (alcohol induced dementia). He becomes easily confused and this has resulted in William spending much of the day in his room alone.**

To combat this, persistence and perseverance was key as this enabled William to build his relationships with the Sport Team and the other residents. Through in-house gym sessions, William has been able to build familiarity and routine into his week. To aid his involvement, the Sport Team regularly remind and escort him to the session so that he attends safely. William has found it hard to build relationships due to his memory loss as people's names and faces can escape him, but as he attends consistently and so do a few other participants, he has been able to bond with them. William has built meaningful friendships with other residents which is testament to his commitment and resilience.



### 3. Lack of financial flexibility

Link to loneliness and social isolation:

Lack of financial flexibility can restrict life in a number of areas, including being less equipped to travel or pay for opportunities to socialise such as group physical activity.

#### What to look out for?



**Wearing the same clothes all the time**

**Never going further than they can walk**

**Not engaging in exercise sessions despite wanting to**

**Self-reported financial difficulty**

#### Solutions:



##### Eliminate travel fees, by:

Bringing sessions to them – provide physical activity sessions in-house or within walking distance. Encourage and support with alternative forms of transport, i.e. build-a-bike workshop. This is something we have had great success with (see case study below).

##### Improve awareness

Make free community sessions known to them. Often people do not know they are out there, so research community groups within their area.

##### Partnerships

Partner with community and sporting organisations to offer free and discounted opportunities. Sport centre managers and community development officers are useful contacts.

##### Incentives

You could use incentives such as free sports clothing to encourage them to come along and give them the opportunities to socialise.

## Meet Gary

**Gary is a participant in one of our hostels. He is a great example of eliminating financial travel restrictions as a barrier to socialisation.**

Since we first met Gary, his motivation to get up and out of the hostel has been evident, however Gary was struggling to socialise due to geographical isolation. We introduced a weekly bike mechanics session, in which participants were taught to build their own bike from old parts. Gary has been the most committed member of this session, building it into a core part of his weekly routine. Not only did this provide the opportunity for Gary to socialise within the sessions, but also a means of transport and the freedom to travel. He now cycles to an English class in a different borough twice a week. Gary now has the confidence to lend a hand helping new participants build their bikes, encouraging other participants to socialise.



## 4. New living environment

Link to loneliness and social isolation:

When moving, it is hard to maintain previous relationships. Participants have to build new relationships when moving.

### What to look out for?



**A change in socialisation with others or self-reported loneliness**

**Any change in behaviour that may be detrimental to recovery**

**Less engagement in the exercise sessions**

### Solutions:



- Creating a progression plan for participants when they are due to move on to ensure physical activity remains part of their routine. This could include participants travelling to stay in the session or creating links with local community sessions in their new area.
- Consistency from your organisation with regular communication. Participants have built relationships and trust and keeping regular engagement can ease the transition.
- Continue extending offer of external trips and events where appropriate.
- Introducing new sessions – speaking with participants to see what form of physical activity they may be interested in.

## Meet Danny

**Danny is a client at one of our accommodation services. He attended a weekly cycling session when at a previous SHP service before moving to the service where the cycling activity takes place.**

This meant Danny had already established relationships with staff and clients at his new accommodation due to attendance in the sport session. He has regularly attended this session for over a year now and speaks so highly of the Project. The Sport Project eased the transition for Danny when moving to a new service and outlined the importance of having a social framework in place before a change in living environment.



**“We’ve got a little family here now, I look forward to seeing them every week.”**

## 5. Injury/illness/terminal illness

Link to loneliness and social isolation:

Injury/illness can have a detrimental effect on mental health which can lead to isolation.

- Injuries can result in a person becoming sedentary and spending more time in their rooms.
- Time carries more weight for people who are terminally ill, therefore they may be more aware of time spent alone and feelings of loneliness could be heightened.

### What to look out for?



Any physical injury

Change in weight

Change in appearance

Change in personality

### Solutions:



#### Session adaptations

To make sessions more accessible, this may involve providing seated variations of the session, for example seated boxercise or chair aerobics.

#### Health check-ins

starting each session with health updates from the participant.

#### Tailored exercise programme

Create an exercise programme tailored to participants to support recovery from injury. Effective physical exercise programmes can reduce the effects of some injuries/illnesses.

#### Social promotion

Even if a participant is unable to join in, promote the social aspect of the sessions. For example, participants can still come along for a cup of tea and a chat, or they can spectate.

## Meet Anthony

**Anthony is a participant in one of our hostels who engaged in weekly group cycle rides. He suffered a severe injury and was hospitalised for several months.**

He became lonely and isolated in hospital, and this continued when he returned to the hostel. Anthony would spend long periods of time in his room and was nervous about socialising again following his injury. After building up social relationships with the team again Anthony took part in a 1-2-1 cycle ride with his physiotherapist to build up his confidence. Following this, he came along to a session and we were able to adapt the session to meet Anthony's needs. An additional member of the Sport Team attended sessions and worked one-to-one with Anthony, ensuring his stability on the bike, and providing a familiar face to make him feel more comfortable in the session. Anthony was very happy to see session leaders and other participants once again. Anthony has now consistently attended the cycling session for six months post-injury and is also engaging with other SHP activities and community groups once again.



## 6. Abuse

Abuse can lead to:

**Loneliness** - If people have been victims of abuse, this can often lead to trauma which can subsequently hinder their ability to trust new people and can create difficulty opening up in social situations. This can lead to loneliness, even if they are able to be around people and social isolation is not an issue, as deeper connections are less frequent.

**Social isolation** – In instances of domestic abuse, the victim will often need to remove themselves from their current living situation and move to somewhere safer, for example, in a refuge. It therefore becomes difficult to integrate with the community and socialise.

### Solutions:



The following ideas outline how to use physical activity sessions as safe spaces to build trust and form social connections for survivors of abuse in a psychologically informed environment.

- **Provide Specialised instructors:** Take into account the needs of your target group and consider whether the instructor has the skills necessary to run the session. Specify the needs of the target group to help find an instructor that is the right fit. Able to adapt and understanding towards needs.
- **Consistency and regularity:** The nature of exercise is that it's not seen as a one-off opportunity, but something to regularly engage in. Therefore, running sessions on the same day and time provides consistent social connections needed to build up trust with others.
- **Awareness:** Being aware of what individuals have been through can inform session leaders about potential triggers for them and how to adapt the environment to suit their needs.
- **Familiarity breeds friendship:** Create exercise sessions that are exclusively for people who have had similar experiences to provide a safe space without their experiences being the focus. If participants can relate to each other, trust is more likely to grow.

## Solace

**Our partnership with Solace is a key example of providing safe spaces, consistency, and specialised instructors for women in refuge from domestic violence.**

We run a weekly yoga session, with several sensitive considerations in place. Initially, sessions were run in the hostel in order to create a safe space. Additionally, we hired a female instructor with experience working with vulnerable women. After the first few weeks, at participants' request we moved the sessions to a local community space. This represents a great example of physical activity being an avenue for re-integrating people into the community and facilitating opportunities to socialise.



# Engagement incentives:

When we first introduced physical activity sessions, loneliness and social isolation were big barriers we had to overcome. Below are a few approaches we used to combat these barriers:

Sport  
Reward  
Cards:

17%



increase in the average attendance of one of our gym sessions

31.5%



increase in the average attendance of one of our bike mechanics sessions



## Planning

Each target group is different, so it is important for each project to adapt how many sessions warrants a reward. The design should also be tailored to the particular target group, e.g. stickers may be more appropriate for certain individuals, and just ticking the card may suit others more.

In preparation for the distribution stage, providing an information card alongside the reward card is important to provide context as to how the reward card works.

## Distribution

Distribution of the cards will vary depending on your target group.

- If all of the target group are based in a hostel – put a loyalty card and information card under the door of each resident
- If target group live independently – send the reward cards to their homes
- If sessions are open to anyone – keep a number of reward cards in the sessions to give out to new participants

## In Use

Each session attended, warrants a sticker/tick on the back of the reward card.

The requirement of attendance time relies on a judgement of the session leader and depending on the target group, either the participants can keep the reward cards on them for each session, or the session leader can bring all the cards (useful in cases where the participants have memory loss).

## Completion

Rewards could be in the form of:

- Group trip out – If a group of participants finish the reward card at a similar time
- Buying an individual reward – If the budget allows for purchase of a requested reward
- Utilising donations – If you have any suitable donations from corporate partners

## Development

If participants are completing the reward cards quickly, then a progression system could be put in place, increasing the number of sessions required for a reward.





## Engagement incentives: Open days

The idea around open days are that they remove some of the barriers faced when starting physical activity. The open days are a great way to engage people in their step to taking part in physical activity while reducing some of the anxiety they have around this. Benefits of open days include:

- Allows people to come and find out more about sessions without the pressure of signing up
- Removes time pressure by being a day event
- Removes financial pressure as there is no cost to come along
- Open to all, participants can come alone or with someone
- People can come and go as they like, so it's less of an overwhelming large group activity
- Other activities involved in the day helping to remove the pressure on sport



## How to run an open day

### Key things to consider

- Location – make it as accessible as possible
- Timing
- Size
- Adaptable activities
- Staff – friendly welcoming faces
- Refreshments
- Make it fun – balloons, bunting, music

#### Location

Find the best location for your target audience this may include a hostel communal space, a local community centre or a garden. Try to make the venue look as inviting and exciting as possible, bunting, balloons and music are always a good start.



#### Timing

Run the day for at least a few hours to remove any time pressure and to allow people to come and go throughout the day. Consider your target audience, is early in the morning or late in the evening appropriate? We find an event over the middle of the day including food at lunch has the most success with engaging more of our target group.



#### Activities

Arrange a range of activities and taster sessions, make sure to include a variety of physical activity to cater for different interests and abilities. Consider including other fun activities such as an art activity or gardening to help engage more people.



#### Refreshments

If you're hosting the event over a meal time or for a prolonged period of time, refreshments are a key selling point and help to engage people for longer and to improve socialisation. Make sure to include places where people can sit down and have a break and a drink.



#### Practical example

An example of this is a summer open day we held in a hostel garden, we put on a BBQ, had a range of tables set up that covered a variety of activities including sport, gardening, art and music. By including other activities, we pulled in a wider group of participants that wouldn't normally have the confidence to come to just a sports open day. Every table had a taster activity that people could take part in alongside leaflets about the sessions they offer and members of staff for them to meet and chat to.

# Creating a session that encourages socialisation:



It's one thing getting people into sessions, but there is no guarantee this will reduce their loneliness, and in some cases could even make them feel lonelier. Here are some ideas of how you can create an environment that encourages people to make meaningful social connections and consequently reduces loneliness.

## What you can do:

**Tea/coffee to start** – It's important to encourage a social aspect to the sessions, not just framing them solely as exercise. This can be in the form of having some time at the start of the session that is allocated to catching up over refreshments.

**Sharing phone numbers** – One of the most effective ways to build meaningful relationships is consistent and regular contact. Attending a session once a week may not be enough, so encourage participants to exchange phone numbers, creating the opportunity to meet up outside of the sessions.

**Encourage peer facilitation** - One of the most effective ways to create a thriving, social community within an exercise environment is to create opportunities for the participants to help/encourage each other throughout the sessions. This can be achieved by allowing them to work together with their exercise choices – whether this is doing chair exercises in pairs, engaging in team sports, or spotting each other during exercises in the gym. Another way to achieve this would be to empower participants by facilitating peer led aspects of the session, in which participants lead a warm-up or the social introduction to the session.

**Do sessions in community spaces** – The advantage of running sessions in local community centres/spaces is that it creates a platform to connect your target group to additional community projects and sessions. Community centres act as a hub for community integration and expose participants to a wide variety of opportunities to socialise, with staff and posters/flyers advertising what is on offer.

**Group trips** – We have found that sometimes deeper connections are made when variety is added to the weekly sessions, as it creates the opportunity for participants to transfer the social skills into a different environment and out of the safety of the weekly sessions. Facilitating trips out such as Ice skating trips has proven a useful tool in growing the relationships which have begun to develop in sessions. It also increases the likelihood that participants will meet up outside of a session, due to them being more comfortable in different environments with each other.



# Maintaining socialisation - beyond your programme/sessions:



Inevitably, your target group will not be able to attend your sessions forever. How can you ensure the progress made in tackling loneliness and social isolation can create sustainable change in the lives of your target group?



## Linking them up with move-ons / community groups

It's important to build up a network of community connections, to refer your participants onto outside of your sessions. This allows participants to continue their personal development and link with others in similar circumstances.



## Building up their confidence by empowering them within sessions

Building the confidence of participants is key to developing their socialisation. It is important to empower participants in sessions through social interactions with both staff and others taking part, in addition to creating an environment where they feel comfortable to express themselves.



## Run our sessions in community spaces

This means that participants have already started building connections with others in their community, developing relationships with staff and with other people using the community spaces. For example, at one of the community centres we use, the participants have received invites to other events they host due to the relationships that have developed.



## Voluntary opportunities in spaces/sessions

Taking part in your sessions can lead to opportunities participants did not know were previously available to them. Through participating in one of our gym sessions, Jason developed the motivation to want to go on and help others. We supported him to contact a local boxing gym, where he volunteers regularly in one of their sessions. He has gone on to make a great impact in the community.



## Summary

Our Sport Project has proven that by introducing regular physical activity and sport into the lives of those experiencing homelessness, we can dramatically improve the quality of life of participants.

We hope that this toolkit has shed light on the positive outcomes of the Sport Project and has offered insight into how you can introduce physical activity into your organisation, and those that you support.

We look forward to hearing from anyone who is interested in receiving additional support, guidance and/or facilitation in introducing physical activity and sport into your offer.

**Email:**  
[sport@shp.org.uk](mailto:sport@shp.org.uk)

**Website:**  
[www.shp.org.uk/Listing/Category/sports-project](http://www.shp.org.uk/Listing/Category/sports-project)

### Our future Sport Project – Physical Activity For All – Toolkits are as follows:

- How to break barriers and bridge the gap between the homeless and physical activity sectors
- How to engage women in physical activity and sport
- How to engage adults 24+ in physical activity and sport

**Find our published Toolkits here:**  
[www.shp.org.uk/physical-activity-for-all](http://www.shp.org.uk/physical-activity-for-all)



**Single Homeless Project**  
preventing homelessness  
transforming lives



# Transforming Lives Through Physical Activity & Sport

How to use physical activity  
& sport to improve health



**Single Homeless Project**  
Preventing homelessness  
Transforming lives

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“

I feel so good after I leave this room. It has reduced the pain in my legs, it's good to get moving.” Brian

# Who we are

**Single Homeless Project is a London-wide charity. Our vision is a society where everyone has a place to call home and the chance to live a fulfilling life.**

We help single Londoners by preventing homelessness, providing support and accommodation, promoting wellbeing, enhancing opportunity, and being a voice for change. From supporting people in crisis to helping people take the final steps towards independence and employment, we make a difference to 10,000 lives every year across all 32 boroughs.

In 2017 as part of Sport England's Active Ageing Initiative, Single Homeless Project launched the Sport Project. This introduced physical activity into the daily lives of those aged 55 and over who were experiencing homelessness and associated needs. Since its launch, the Sport Project has grown its offer to include all adults across Single Homeless Project services.

## Physical Activity For All

The Sport Project believes that everyone deserves equal access to physical activity and sport. We also believe that the introduction of physical activity into core homelessness provision is essential to bring about positive change, transform lives and prevent homelessness.

Our work has shown that regular physical activity can bring significant improvements in physical and mental health, social connection, and overall quality of life.

That's why we've launched the Physical Activity For All initiative, consisting of information sharing toolkits, roundtable events and webinars, and sport bags. This toolkit will set out how you can use physical activity and sport as a tool to engage people with and improve their health.

We hope by sharing this and future toolkits we will inspire organisations to join us in using physical activity and sport to transform the lives of people throughout our communities.

### Sport Project – Our Vision:

- To share our experience, insights and findings
- Engage, grow and nurture a network of enthusiastic partners
- To encourage organisations to introduce sport and physical activity into their offer
- Influence and inspire others to join the conversation around the positive impact sport and physical activity have on the lives of people experiencing or at risk of homelessness

# Why this toolkit is for you

Are your target group experiencing physical health issues?

Are your target group experiencing mental health issues?

Are you looking for a tool to help improve your target groups physical or mental health?

Are you looking for ways to inspire your target group to engage with other opportunities to improve wellbeing and overall quality of life?

Are you looking for ways to reduce inactivity and sedentary behaviour within your target group?

Are you looking for ways to integrate health into your services?

Are you looking for helpful tips and tricks to transition health into your services?

Are you struggling to engage your target group in health services?

Are you looking for practical ways to improve your target group's health?

Would you like to support your target group's health through sport and physical activity?



Since 2017:

**800** Engaged 800+ participants

**62%** Participants improved overall quality of life

**130** Worked with 130+ Volunteers & Freelancers

**76%** Participants improved stress, anxiety and depression levels

# Introduction

## What is physical activity

WHO (World Health Organisation) defines physical activity as any bodily movement produced by skeletal muscles that requires energy expenditure. Physical activity refers to all movement including daily activities i.e. cleaning, during leisure time, for transport to get to and from places, or as part of a person's work. However, only moderate and vigorous-intensity physical activity have been proven to improve your health. The harder the intensity of the activity the better the health benefits. For example, there is evidence that vigorous activity will bring around health benefits over and above that of moderate activity.



**Moderate physical activity** - Physical activity that involves you moving quick enough to raise your heart rate, breath faster and feel warmer. You should be able to talk but you will not be able to sing the words to a song.





**Vigorous physical activity** - Physical activity where you are breathing hard, and your heart rate has climbed considerably. You can only say a few words before you need to stop for a breath.

To stay healthy, the UK Physical Activity Guidelines, state that adults should try to be active every day and aim to do at least 150 minutes of physical activity over a week, through a variety of activities.

## Cardiovascular physical activity

The UK Chief Medical Officers' physical activity guidelines recommend that each week, adults should aim for:

|   |    |  |    |   |    |  |
|---|----|--|----|---|----|--|
| <br>at least<br><b>150</b> minutes<br>of <b>moderate</b><br><b>intensity</b><br>physical<br>activity | or | <br><b>75</b> minutes<br>of <b>vigorous</b><br><b>intensity</b><br>physical<br>activity | or | <br>even shorter<br>durations of<br><b>very vigorous</b><br><b>intensity</b><br>physical<br>activity | or | <br>a combination<br>or <b>moderate</b> ,<br><b>vigorous</b> and <b>very</b><br><b>vigorous</b> intensity<br>physical activity |
|---|----|--|----|---|----|--|

# What is inactivity and sedentary behaviour



## Inactivity – Less than 30 minutes of moderate activity per week

Inactivity is described as a “silent killer”. Evidence is emerging that sedentary behaviour, such as sitting or lying down for long periods, is bad for our health. Not only should we try to raise activity levels, but we should reduce the amount of time spent sitting down.



## Sedentary – Periods sitting or lying down while completing tasks.

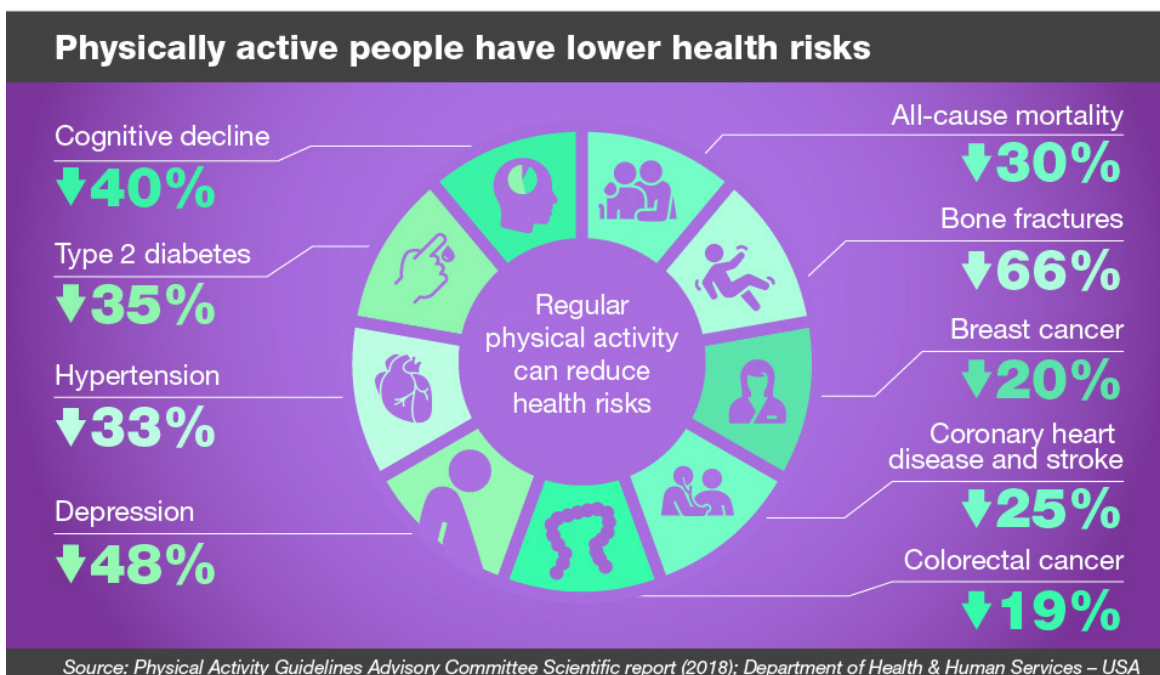
Common examples of sedentary behaviour include watching TV, using a computer, using the car for short journeys and sitting down to read, talk or listen to music.

Sedentary and inactive behaviour is thought to increase your risk of developing many chronic diseases, such as heart disease, stroke, and type 2 diabetes, as well as weight gain and obesity. Crucially, you can hit your weekly activity target but still be at risk of ill health if you spend the rest of the time sitting or lying down.

## Benefits of physical activity on physical health

Physical activity has been deemed an essential part of life if you want to live a healthy and fulfilling life into old age. With those who are physically active exercise regularly having a lower risk of developing many long-term (chronic) conditions.

Exercise has been proven to reduce your risk of major illness.



## Benefits of physical activity on mental health

Research shows that physical activity can also boost self-esteem, mood, sleep quality and energy, as well as reducing your risk of stress, clinical depression, dementia and Alzheimer's disease.

## Challenges/barriers to introducing physical activity

Those experiencing homelessness and multiple disadvantages encounter numerous barriers when it comes to accessing physical activity and some of these include:

An orange line-art illustration of a person climbing a set of stairs. The person is on the left, leaning forward with one foot on a higher step than the other. The stairs are on the right, consisting of several steps. The background features a large, faint orange circle.

**Not having a GP**

**Undiagnosed or untreated medical conditions**

**Have not engaged with health care for a long period of time, unsure on their safety to exercise**

**Serious physical health conditions restricting ability to take part in exercise**

**Substance use or alcohol**

**High anxiety**

**Low self esteem**

**Low confidence level**

**Low mood**

**Fear around exercise**

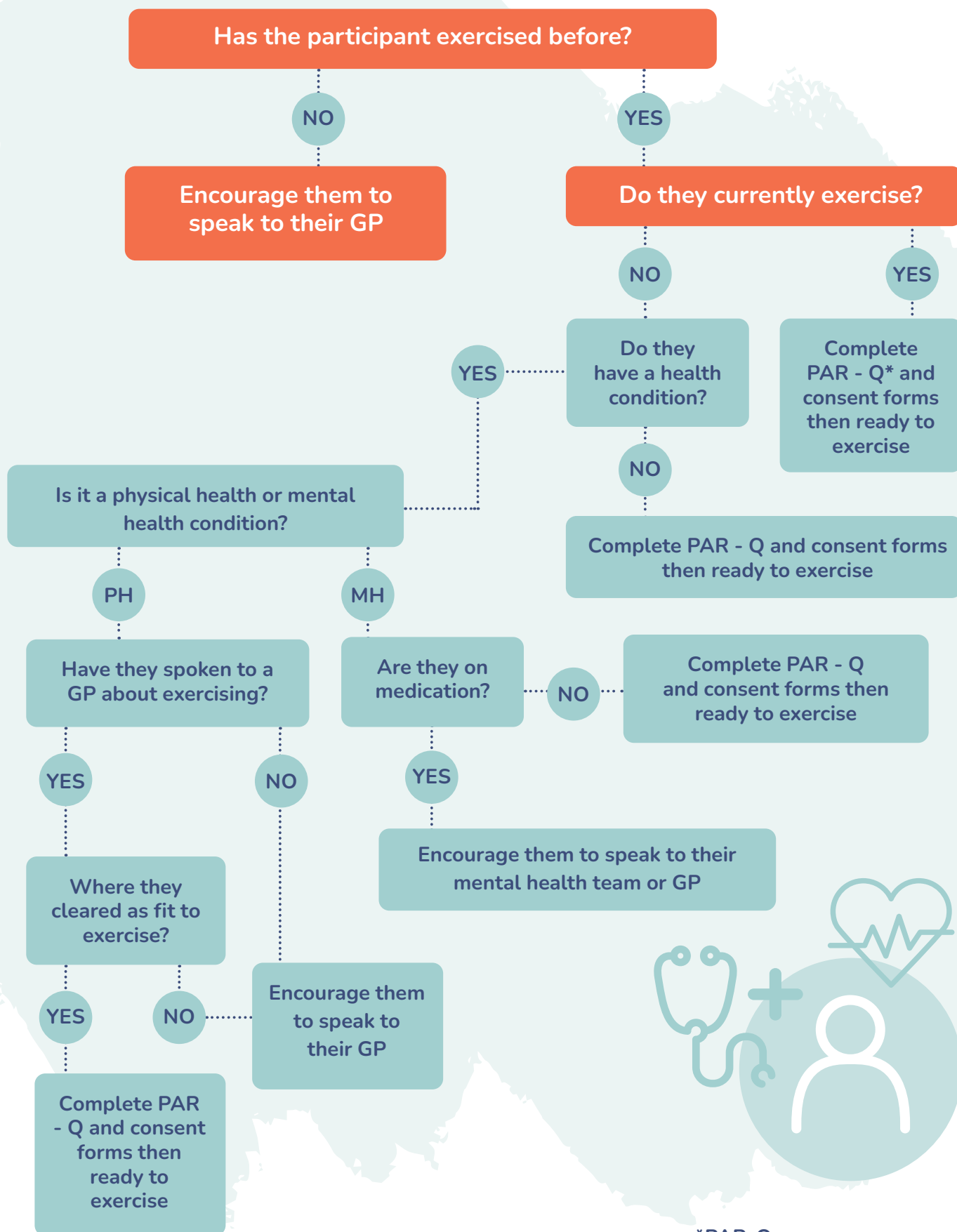
**Social anxiety**

**Low body confidence**

**Depression**

**Stress**

# Complete the flow chart below to help someone safely start their exercise journey



\*PAR-Q  
Physical Activity  
Readiness Questionnaire

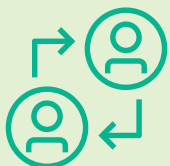
# How we linked up Sport and Health

When we started our physical activity project, we initially had the focus on just physical activity and sport but soon discovered that physical activity and health came hand in hand.

Not only did we need to know a basic background around participants' health and their needs but also, we found that the participants started to use the physical activity sessions as a safe space to disclose health concerns and issues. We wanted to ensure that participants needs were met on all fronts and try to link up physical activity and health as much as we could so we implemented the following ideas;



**Health checks** – We ran health checks and wellbeing questionnaires at the start of a participant joining in the sessions and quarterly after this. This allowed us to monitor improvements in participants health and wellbeing and for any issues to be picked up. Our health checks included blood pressure, heart rate, height, weight, handgrip strength, and our questionnaires included the DASS-21 questionnaire measuring depression, anxiety, and stress, alongside a questionnaire on overall wellbeing.



**In house** – As an organisation we have an internal Health Team that work across some of the same hostels as the Sport Team. In these boroughs we created a referral system between the two projects where if the Health Team were working with a client they thought could benefit from sport they would refer them into the Sport Project. Equally, if the Sport Team had a participant who had bad health or who they were concerned about, they could refer into the Health Project. The Sport and Health Team work within the same wider department and therefore can joint work and introduce one another to participants to help remove any anxiety around health and show a friendly face.



**External services** – The Sport Project formed partnerships with local health providers from healthy eating and smoothie making sessions to nurse drop-in clinics and vaccination days.



These were developed in a few different ways. For some of our health drop-in sessions we took areas that participants were interested in such as healthy eating and put out volunteer adverts.

For others we reached out to local health providers and charities such as Prostate Cancer UK and the local vaccination centre to see if they would come and deliver a session in the hostel in partnership with us. We delivered these sessions in the spaces we run the physical activity sessions in to try and create a familiar vibe and safe space for the participants getting involved as we know health can be an anxiety-inducing and fearful topic.

We also run all sessions in a friendly, informal way with tea, coffee, and biscuits to help keep everyone comfortable and engaged with the session.



“

If I didn't have these sessions I would be isolated, it's the only thing I go to. It's like a home away from home” Dawn

# Mental health



Mental health conditions are very common in the population we work with, with some of the most common conditions being depression, anxiety, bipolar, personality disorder and schizophrenia. The effect these mental health conditions can have on people's physical activity levels are vast and can act as a major barrier.

We often find that the common barriers we see within participants with mental health challenges are:



## Solutions



- Taking things slowly and applying no pressure
- Integrating participants slowly and encouraging them into conversations around topics they are comfortable with
- Gain feedback on a regular basis from the participants making sure to find out how they feel
- Building relationships with staff and encourage them to come to sessions so the participant can have a friendly face reminding them about the session each week
- Invite the participants along to watch a session, allowing them to visualise it before taking part

## Meet Conrad

Conrad is one of our participants residing in a mental health accommodation in Hammersmith. Conrad has really struggled to engage in many things and finds it difficult to meet new people. Due to his mental health diagnosis, Conrad often feels isolated and spends a lot of time sedentary in his room.

As part of the sport programme, Conrad has engaged consistently in football and tennis sessions, making friends within the sessions and advocating for how important these sessions have been for him.

Having consistency in his week has helped him make better use of his time, and he now brings one of his friends to the session!



“

It's been great, I've really really enjoyed myself I find it quite difficult to meet people and the fact that SHP has activities as well as providing housing is a real bonus. It's so much better than just sitting in doing nothing on your own in a room”

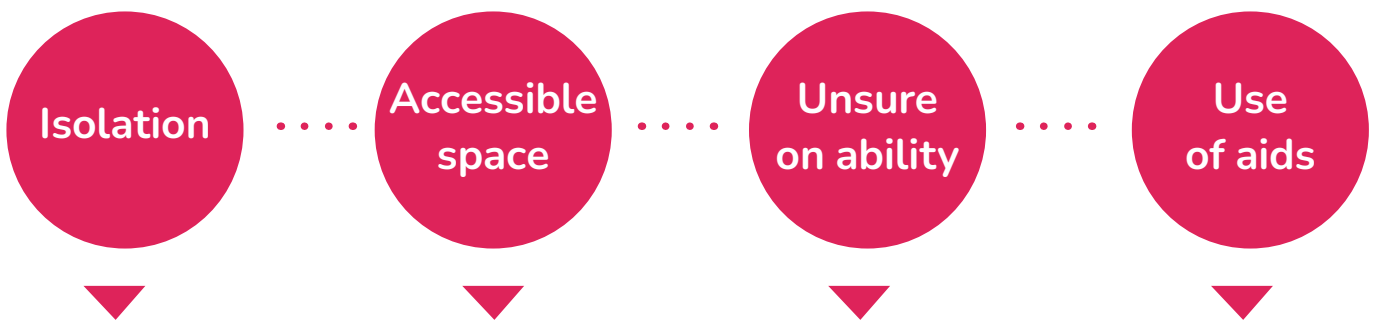
# Mobility

Within our population group a major health concern we see is mobility issues. This is down to early ageing, poor living conditions and ongoing health issues.

This can seriously affect the willingness and ability to join in exercise.



We often find that the common barriers we see within participants with mobility issues are:



## Solutions



- Adapt sessions to suit the participants needs using aids or extra staff
- Deliver sessions in house to remove travelling to and from sessions as a barrier
- Start off with 1-2-1 sessions to gauge ability level, and to help the participant gain confidence going into the group sessions
- Keep open communication with the client to gain feedback on how they are finding the sessions

## Meet Michael

Michael is a 71-year-old male that lives in one of our complex needs hostels. Michael had been engaging with the Sport Project for a few months taking part in chair-based sessions in the gym that was built in the hostel. However, Michael started experiencing pain and swelling in his legs and was hospitalised. Following a period in hospital Michael returned to the hostel and stopped engaging in sport sessions.



He said he was scared of the pain coming back in his legs and started to isolate himself in his room. The Health Lead spoke to our Sport Coordinator and informed them Michael's consultant had said that he needs to spend at least an hour on his feet every day to help reduce the swelling and encourage blood flow. The Sport Team introduced a new weekly activities session into Michael's hostel, which created the opportunity for Michael to play pool, darts, and table tennis.

These activities encouraged him to stand up for 30 minutes to an hour which was great for blood circulation in addition to keeping his mind stimulated doing something he loves. Michael now takes part in weekly games of pool which often see him standing and walking around for long periods of time. It also removes the anxiety he feels around exercise as he is enjoying the game and the competitive element, so is unaware how long he is standing for. The swelling in Michael's legs has drastically reduced and he experiences minimal discomfort and pain. He enjoys the session and has been socialising a lot more.

“

The activities get me out of my room and they keep me fit, its sociable, easy going, undemanding and that's it”

# Lack of medical history

Within our population group we often find that a substantial proportion of participants do not have a GP or have not engaged with care for a significant period of time, alongside being inactive for a substantial period and experiencing substance misuse. Therefore, as part of the project we ensured that people were medically fit to take part in physical activity sessions with no extra risk being placed on their body or health before they started the sessions.



As a result of our participants not engaged with health care the common barriers we see are:



## Solutions



- Form partnerships with local health services and link in health checks with exercise sessions
- Try to use sport as an incentive to engage with health services
- Have a chat with previous organisations or staff members that have worked with the participant to see if they can hand over useful information
- Host introduction meetings and conversations around health in a comfortable safe space
- Invite friendly faces along to the meeting and sessions to help participants feel relaxed

## Meet Richard

Richard lives within one of our complex needs hostels, moving in after being discharged from hospital following surgery on both legs. This required him to wear knee braces on both legs and crutches to aid him walk. Richard faced multiple barriers when it came to accessing sport and physical activity, he had very limited movement in his lower body, pain in both his legs and unstable without his crutches. Richard came out of hospital after being moved around multiple hospitals and having a GP outside of London. We were presented the challenge that we did not know Richard's medical history and he did not know if he was able to exercise following his surgery.



The Sport Coordinator had a chat with Richard during which he expressed his love for football and running and how upset he's been as he's unable to play. The Sport Coordinator told Richard about the weekly boxing sessions that were happening in the hostel and explained different ways they could adapt the session so Richard could take part.

These adaptations included using the punch bag and upper body only exercises so Richard could stand stationary. The Sport Coordinator was always on hand to offer support if Richard felt uneasy on his feet.

Richard was linked in with the Health Navigator and registered at a local GP, where he was cleared to exercise to aid his recovery from surgery. Due to sessions being run in-house, this reduced the distance Richard had to walk which eased any strains or tiredness placed on his legs. Richard has been attending boxing sessions regularly and had the opportunity to go on our trip to watch boxing at the Commonwealth Games.

“

When I wake up I don't have energy, but when I do some boxing I feel so much better”

# Isolation & Stigma

Often people have experienced previous stigma and presumptions about their ability or desire to access physical activity. This often leads to isolation and a breakdown in pursuing interests. This is very common within our participants with a lot of organisations and sporting clubs presuming that those experiencing homelessness would not be interested in taking part in exercise.



As a result of our participants feeling isolated, the common barriers we see are:

No Self-belief

Hard to engage

Bad past experience

## Solutions



- Run 1-2-1 sessions with the participant to help improve their confidence
- Whenever possible try to positively talk up the participants and their effort and engagement
- Celebrate successes with participants no matter how small
- At the beginning of someone engaging organise regular meet ups to build a positive rapport and relationship
- Hold sessions in a safe space
- Run sessions in the service to help participants feel comfortable
- Set routine, run sessions at the same time and location each week
- Document improvements and changes so participants can look back at how far they've improved

## Meet Denise

Denise is a resident at one of our women's only hostels. Denise has sciatica and nerve damage and uses a walking stick. Denise was told she would always need a stick to walk and did not believe she'd be able to take part in physical activity and she struggled to trust people she did not know.



The team implemented some of the above solutions and met with Denise multiple times in a relaxed setting in the hostel getting to know her and building trust and relationship. After a few months the team started 1-2-1 sessions with Denise so they could adapt and accommodate to her needs. Ensuring sessions were at the same time each week as Denise liked to have a set routine.

Denise now walks without the use of a stick and takes part in weekly group physical activity sessions. Denise has spoken about how participating in physical activity has made her feel happier due to feeling better physically and because of the social aspect of the sessions. Denise explained how these sessions are giving her confidence to start thinking about engaging with health services once again so she can receive the treatment she needs for a better quality of life. She has shared that she has been feeling less stressed and feels happier, something which she attributes to feeling less physical pain and having someone who she trusts to speak to each week.

“

It's nice to have someone to speak to and something to look forward to each week”

# Long term health conditions



A key reason and barrier why many do not participate in exercise or physical activity is the presence of long term or chronic health conditions. Some of these reasons include fear of exacerbating symptoms, unsure on their ability, thinking it's not possible or have not had the opportunity to access exercise. Our participants often experience long term or chronic health conditions ranging from diabetes, asthma, COPD, cancer, and wounds.

As a result of our participants having long term or chronic health conditions the common barriers we see

Declining health

Lack of interest

Fear of making illness worse

## Solutions



- Discuss the risk of exercising with medical workers
- Provide a friendly face within the session, as talking about health can be personal and upsetting
- Take the conversation and sessions slow and steady
- Spend some time to educate yourself and the participant around their health condition and benefit of health
- Place the emphasis of the session on socialising and not on the sport itself

## Meet Peter



Peter was referred by his project worker and had a new health diagnosis of Parkinson's. Peter hadn't taken part in exercise since his early twenties and had recently been diagnosed with Parkinson's. He required a walking stick and was experiencing tremors in his hands. Peter had very low confidence and high anxiety around taking part in physical activity and socialising.

The Sport Coordinator arranged to meet Peter 1-2-1 to find out a bit more about him and tell him about the sessions. Peter's project worker was invited along to the meeting, so he had a friendly face and felt comfortable from the start. They arranged to meet at the venue where the sessions would take place so Peter could see the space and lower anxiety prior to the first session. The meeting was hosted in a very relaxed manor, and they had a chat over tea and coffee and discussed ways in which Peter could get involved. These included a chair-based aerobics sessions which was aimed for people around a similar age as Peter. The Sport Coordinator also provided sports clothes and trainers, so Peter had them for the first session helping him to feel more comfortable and get into the exercise.

Peter came to the first session in his new sport wear and got chatting to a few of the participants over coffee and took part in the session. Peter has been coming every week since for the last 4 years and feels the sessions have helped slow the progression of his Parkinson's and helped maintain the strength of his muscles. Peter has also experienced a massive improvement in his mental health in the areas of isolation, confidence, socialisation, anxiety and self-esteem. Peter plans to attend our annual Sports Day and has signed up to take part in multiple events including the egg and spoon race!



I truly believe the exercise sessions are slowing down the progress of my Parkinson's"



# Summary

Our Sport Project has proven that by introducing regular physical activity and sport into the lives of those experiencing homelessness, we can dramatically improve the quality of life of participants.

We hope that this toolkit has shed light on the positive outcomes of the Sport Project and has offered insight into how you can introduce physical activity into your organisation, and those that you support.

We look forward to hearing from anyone who is interested in receiving additional support, guidance and/or facilitation in introducing physical activity and sport into your offer.

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Email: [sport@shp.org.uk](mailto:sport@shp.org.uk)

Website:  
[www.shp.org.uk/sport](http://www.shp.org.uk/sport)



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Preventing homelessness  
Transforming lives



# Transforming Lives Through Physical Activity & Sport

How to engage women in physical  
activity & sport



**Single Homeless Project**  
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Transforming lives



“

It's given me confidence to want to join a walking club and be social again.” Denise

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# Who we are

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### Sport Project – Our Vision:

- To share our experience, insights and findings
- Engage, grow and nurture a network of enthusiastic partners
- To encourage organisations to introduce sport and physical activity into their offer
- Influence and inspire others to join the conversation around the positive impact sport and physical activity have on the lives of people experiencing or at risk of homelessness



## Why this toolkit is for you

Are you looking to engage more women in physical activity and sport?

Are you looking for ways to remove barriers for women in physical activity and sport?

Are you looking for practical solutions to support women to engage in physical activity and sport?

Are you wanting to understand more about women's participation in physical activity and sport?

Are you looking for ways to improve the physical and mental health of the women you work with?

Since 2017:

**800** Engaged 800+ participants

**62%** Participants improved overall quality of life

**130** Worked with 130+ Volunteers & Freelancers

**76%** Participants improved stress, anxiety and depression levels

# Women in Sport – Why is this a focus?

We know that **women are less active than men**, and this gender gap starts with girls being less active from a very young age

**39%**

of women aged 16 and over are not active enough to get the full health benefits of sport and physical activity

**313,600**

There are **313,600 fewer women** than men who are regularly active

**13m**

When asked, **13 million women** said they'd like to do more sport and physical activity

**Domestic abuse** and other forms of gender-based violence are “near universal experiences” for women experiencing homelessness

**60%**

Nearly **60% of girls** aren't meeting recommended exercise guidelines

**Women** are more likely to experience **hidden homelessness**

**Women experiencing homelessness** are living in a state of survival, often without access to services and in high-risk environments where they are frequently subjected to violence and abuse

**More men do sport** and physical activity than women at almost every age group

## Meet Denise

Denise is a resident at one of our services where we began offering physical activity sessions. It has recently become a women's only service. She was sceptical at first due to it being something she had not tried before, in addition to her ongoing back pain and use of a walking stick. Denise was not engaging in any activities and struggled to make friends or trust other people. A member of the Sport Team met Denise several times before starting the sessions and explained Denise could do any activity she felt comfortable with; she spoke about chair-based exercises and going for walks.



Denise has been engaging with the Sport Project for a year now and it is clear to see the positive changes in her physical and mental health. Prior to beginning these sessions, Denise explained how she hadn't walked without her walking stick for 30 years; she is now walking for 20 minutes per session without her walking stick and improving each week. Denise has also spoken about how participating in physical activity has made her feel happier due to feeling better physically and because of the social aspect of the sessions.

Participating in sports sessions can often be a bridge to further health care and improving other aspects of life. Denise explained how these sessions give her confidence to start thinking about engaging with health services once again so she can receive the treatment she needs for a better quality of life.

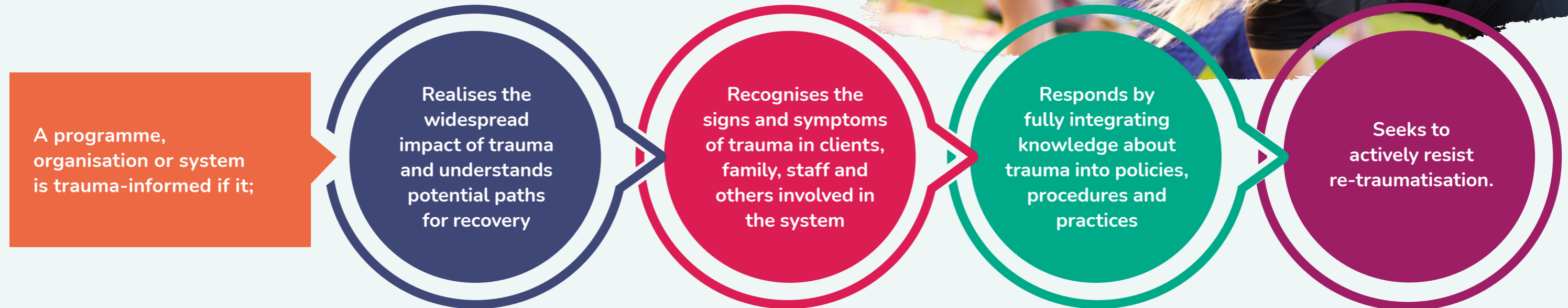
Recently, Denise shared that she has been feeling less stressed and feels happier, something which she attributes to feeling less physical pain and having someone who she trusts to speak to each week. She feels more confident and believes she is heading in a positive direction.

“

I feel like my body is improving for the first time in years. I can't believe my pain is actually getting less.”

## Trauma-informed approach

The main purpose and goal of a trauma informed practice is to inform and teach staff/coaches/freelancer about trauma and the huge impact it can have. Alongside informing around trauma the aim is to ensure those working with people who have experienced trauma do so in a way that prevents the re-traumatisation of clients during sessions that are there to aid their healing and progress.



A trauma-informed approach aims to pursue this way of working in all areas of its delivery to prevent any replication of traumatic dynamics or experiences among clients and staff and avoids adding to the stress and trauma people are experiencing.

### 5 Key principles of a trauma-informed

Rather than following a prescribed set of policies and procedures, a trauma-informed approach adheres to key principles:

**1. Safety** – In all elements of the support clients and staff feel physically and psychologically safe. Including the setting and personal interactions.

**2. Trustworthiness** – All decisions and organisation is carried out with transparency and the aim of developing trust between clients and staff.

**3. Collaboration** – Aiming to work in a way to remove any hierarchy and work in an equal sharing and learning environment, splitting the decision making and power levels.

**4. Empowerment** – Recognising individuals' strengths, both clients and staff and building upon these, validating new skills and providing training where appropriate.

**5. Choice** – Striving to strengthen clients' choice and recognise that everyone's experience is unique and requires individualised ways of working.



# Barriers for Women in Physical Activity and Sport

Women face multiple barriers when trying to access physical activity and sport. As we know regular exercise improves the quality of life of those that take part.

Here are the main barriers we've experienced in the Sport Project when working with women.

We've separated these into three sections and provided more in-depth examples and solutions in each section.

## Practical barriers

1. Childcare
2. Clothing and equipment
3. Personal safety
4. Finances
5. Facilities

## Personal barriers

1. Confidence/fear of being judged
2. Appearance/body image

## Social and cultural

1. Stigma in society
2. Cultural differences

# Practical Barriers

## 1. Childcare

Childcare can prove to be very challenging for women wanting to participate in physical activity and sport. The cost of childcare can be very expensive and often makes taking part in physical activity and sport unfeasible for many women even if they are very keen to take part.

### Potential Solutions:



- Create sessions where children can be brought along – also provides a positive environment where women can interact with their children
- Specificity in volunteer/freelancer adverts is very important to ensure an appropriate facilitator is found – this means detailing the qualifications and experience necessary in addition to exactly what the session will consist of

## 2. Clothing and equipment

Specific clothing for physical activity and sport can be very expensive and be a huge barrier for many people. Not having appropriate clothing can lead to a lack of confidence and people not wanting to participate.

### Potential Solutions:



- **Partnerships** – Partnerships with external organisations have provided a large range of sports clothing, such as Decathlon, Google, and Chelsea FC Foundation
- **No uniform expectation** – Make it known that not having the right clothing will not be a barrier to them getting involved. It sounds simple, but to some people this could make sessions more accessible

### 3. Personal safety

Getting to and from sessions or facilities provides a barrier for some women wanting to engage with physical activity and sport. This can be for a number of reasons such as financial barriers for transport, feeling unsafe outside of daylight hours, fearful of being seen alone outside, or having to travel through areas they aren't safe in.

#### Potential Solutions:



- Speak individually with the women you are working with and asking how best you can support them
- Consider time of sessions – daylight hours
- Going to and from activity spaces with participants to provide support throughout the session
- Offer financial support to take public transport where possible
- Create in-house gyms and activity spaces in services

#### Meet Sandra

Sandra is a client at one of our women's only services who has recently started to engage with the Sport Project. She was originally hesitant about the session as she wasn't too sure what it consisted of and what the expectations were. When speaking with Sandra, something she said would make her feel more comfortable to participate was having the right sports clothing to take part.

The Sport Team were able to pass on brand new sports clothing from donations from partner organisations to allow Sandra to feel more comfortable. She has since engaged with the physical activity sessions at her service and attended our annual Sports Day.



## 4. Finances

Finances are a barrier that can affect all demographics, whether this is the cost of travelling to a session, or the cost of the session itself. This can be exacerbated for women, as there are fewer women only sessions in leisure centres, and therefore women may have to travel slightly further to access opportunities that suit them.

### Potential Solutions:



- **Volunteers** – Using volunteers as session leaders is a great way to reduce session costs and create sessions that are more affordable. We have found success using the Team London website which advertises volunteering opportunities across London. You can find more out in our volunteer toolkit <https://www.shp.org.uk/physical-activity-for-all>
- **Partnerships** – If you are a charity/organisation, forming partnerships with local leisure centres/community centres is a great avenue for acquiring discounted session spaces
- **Location** – Providing sessions within walking distance could remove the financial barrier of travel. Providing sessions in outdoor spaces can reduce the cost of venue hire
- **Apply for funding** – Although not all funding applications will be successful, providing more physical activity opportunities for women is a widely desired movement and could result in funding for your organisation



## 5. Facilities

Accessing facilities including leisure centres, sports centres, and outdoor playing fields can provide a series of challenges for many women. These can include the cost of using facilities, a lack of confidence going to and using facilities and a lack of support and guidance when using facilities.

### Potential Solutions:



- Taking participants to local gyms and supporting them through exercise programmes
- Creating in-house gyms and activity spaces within services
- Creating partnerships with community spaces to use their facilities
- Taking participants to venues prior to sessions to ease anxiety

### Meet Cynthia

Cynthia is a participant who has been regularly attending sport sessions for over two years. Prior to this, she was doing lots of walking but wanted more structure and to attend sessions led by others. However, financial constraints meant attending a lot of sessions that were on offer was unattainable. Cynthia saw an advert to come along to a group chair aerobics session that we had an offer that was free of charge and provided the social element she wanted. She now attends two sessions a week and also attends trips and events we run. Cynthia has been able to get the regular exercise classes she wanted and in addition has made some great friends along the way.



The sessions give me something to do and I get to see my friends.”

# Personal Barriers

## 1. Confidence/fear of being judged:

One of the main reasons why women do not take part in physical activity and sport is because of a lack of confidence or through a fear of being judged. This is a huge problem and is enough to stop women taking part in any physical activity.

### Potential Solutions:



- **Women only sessions** – we introduced women only sessions through discussions with the women we work with who highlighted this would encourage them to participate
- **Catering for all abilities** – adapting sessions to ensure all abilities are catered for
- **1-to-1s** – providing sessions one to one to remove the barrier of judgement from others

## 2. Appearance/body image:

How a person perceives their body image and appearance can be a major factor in determining whether or not they want to participate in physical activity. Someone with negative thoughts of their body image may be put off exercising as they don't feel like they look the way they should when taking part in physical activity and sport. In a recent Sport England study, it was reported that 75% of the women surveyed had a desire to take part in sport but were hindered by a fear of being judged on their appearance and ability. It becomes a vicious circle as the more self-conscious women are of their bodies, the less likely they will get involved with sport, despite sport itself being something that could have a positive effect on women's perceptions of their bodies.

It is therefore essential to create an environment where women feel comfortable, encouraged and want to get involved in physical activity.

## Potential Solutions:



- **Offer 1-to-1 sessions if appropriate** – aims to remove social pressures
- **Clothing** – Provide appropriate and correct sizing of sports clothing if participants want it
- **Changing rooms** – Ensure women can have privacy in changing rooms and facilities
- **Advertising** – If advertising the sessions with posters/fliers, be mindful of the images you use

## Meet Ella

**Ella is a resident at one of our services who has wanted to take part in physical activity but struggled with confidence, motivation, and fear of judgement.**

Ella originally began working with the Health Lead based in her service, who in discussion with Ella's GP, recommended it would be beneficial for her to take part in physical activity. The Health Lead arranged a time to meet with Ella and a member of the Sport Team to make introductions and create a plan which she was happy with. Since then, Ella has been regularly completing walks of increasing difficulty on the treadmill and doing some boxing in the gym in her hostel. These activities were chosen based on what she wanted to do. We do these activities 1-to-1

as Ella feels more comfortable exercising without others around. She also enjoys boxing in the gym located in her hostel as it provides a safe space where she can relax and enjoy her exercise. This reduces her fear of judgement and helps with her confidence.

For Ella, it took a long time to build trust and develop a relationship with the Sport Team, this was achieved by joining her for coffee each week and having a conversation with her. She previously had little engagement with any activities and spent a lot of time on her own. She recently said,

“ I love that I can do boxing here - it's good to come just to talk sometimes.”

# Social and cultural barriers

## 1. Stigma in society

Despite recent ground made with challenging gender stereotypes, the reality is they still exist. One of the stereotypes that widely impacts opportunities for women is the expectation of femininity. This can influence how comfortable women feel lifting weights, sweating or engaging in certain sports. It also can affect people's perceptions on what sports women want to get involved in. As a result, there are less opportunities for women in certain sporting activities.

### Potential Solutions:



- Strive to address it systemically from an organisational point of view – actively pushing opportunities for women
- Talk to the women about gender stereotypes within your organisation and how this can be improved

## 2. Cultural differences

When it comes to participation in sport, the gap between men and women is greater among some minority ethnic groups. Assumptions about minority groups and their involvement in certain sports can be limiting to their opportunities to get involved in sport.

### Potential Solutions:



- **Cultural/religious awareness** – Ensure all staff undergo training in ethnicity and diversity
- **Religious timetable** – Be aware of cultural/religious festivals such as Ramadan, Divali and Eid
- **Sporting practises** – Be aware of different practises that different cultures and religions keep with regards to sport.
- **Clothing practises** – Certain religions have certain clothing practises, which can subsequently be associated with barriers to involvement with physical activity.



# Importance of Personnel/ Session Leaders

## How to choose the right person for the role:

A session leader is arguably the most important consideration when implementing a physical activity session for any target group. This is because they can have a direct influence on the participants in areas such as;

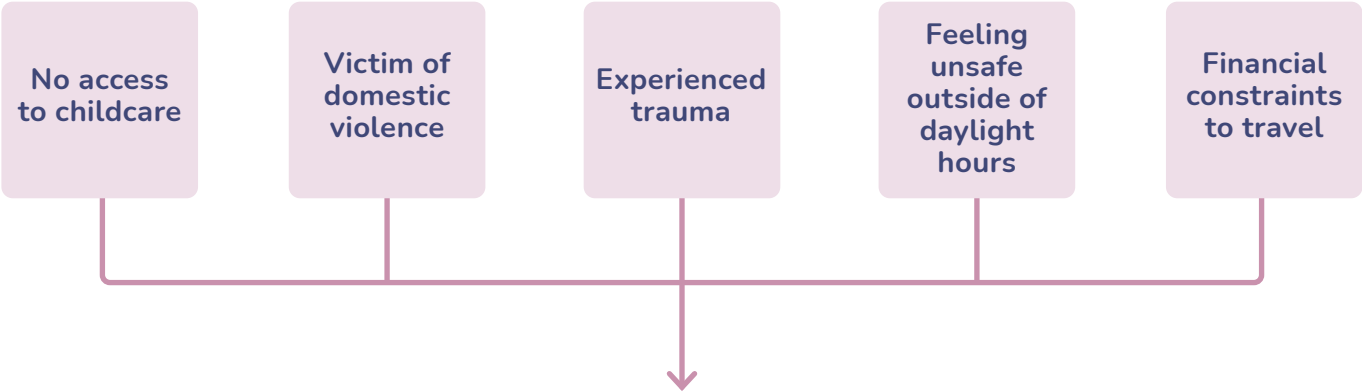
- Feeling comfortable
- Feeling motivated
- Feeling safe
- Feeling inspired to come back

This can become an even larger consideration when looking to engage more women in physical activity, as the majority of women face more barriers in accessing sport and exercise opportunities than men. Having the right person running the session could be the key to overcoming these barriers for some women.



## Key considerations when recruiting a session leader

### Common barriers



### Possible solutions



## Meet Carmen

Carmen runs our weekly yoga sessions in partnership with Solace Women's Aid and is a great example of the need for advert specificity when choosing an instructor. We formed a partnership with Solace in order to expand the offer of our sessions to a wider network of vulnerable women. Prior to advertising the role we spoke with those living and working within the respite service and identified necessary considerations for advertisement. This included a female instructor due to the women fleeing domestic abuse, but also highlighted that many of those who expressed interest in participating had concerns around childcare during the sessions. Therefore, the volunteer advert we created specified that we required a female instructor who specialised in mother/baby yoga.

Through doing this it meant that Carmen was a perfect match to run the sessions. The success of advertising for someone who had mother and baby experience was clear to see in the success of the session as it took no time to see consistent numbers.

Since starting the sessions, Carmen has engaged nearly all of the women residing in the service, and feedback from the staff suggests that she is making a huge difference to the lives of the women.



“

I got the opportunity to volunteer with SHP and it's a beautiful and rewarding experience. Giving a bit of your time, helping others and learning for myself at the same time - it's worth it. Thank you for this opportunity” - Carmen



# Importance of Collaboration

Throughout our project, we have learnt the importance of collaboration and using the specific expertise of different organisations to provide the most effective service possible. It is important to recognise that there will be other services that are better equipped in certain areas:

## An example of how we did this



### Session implementation:

- Single Homeless Project Sport Team – Expertise in delivering physical activity/sport for vulnerable groups
- Recognised that we were the experts in the area of homeless specific sport sessions



### Target group:

Although we do a lot of work with women and have engaged many women in our sessions, we recognise that utilising someone else's expertise in this area can optimise our offer.

- **Solace Women's Aid – Expertise in working with women.**
- **Solace case study** – Solace is a London based charity providing safe refuge and move on accommodation to women and children made homeless through domestic or sexual abuse. We formed a partnership with Solace which would see us lead the way in providing exercise sessions, while learning from them on how to better engage vulnerable women.



### Venues

Due to safety we were unable to run the sessions within our spaces and recognised that Solace's communal spaces were too small. Therefore we formed a partnership with the local YMCA centre offering charity discounted rate for their sports hall.



### Session leaders:

Although our recruitment process brings in many excellent volunteers who provide a life-changing service, we recognised that a women specific instructor with experience working with mother and babies alongside those who have experienced trauma would be best.

- **The Movement Charity** – Expertise in providing trauma informed, women volunteer recruitment.
- We formed a partnership with The Movement Charity who helped us recruit the specialised volunteer we required and delivered trauma training to other volunteers and freelancers we had recruited to work with women.

## Summary of Practical Tips



- Speak to your target group – what do they want?
- Introduce women's only sessions where appropriate
- Consider location and time of day – support with transport or activities on participants' doorsteps
- Consider how you're speaking about physical activity and sport – the word 'sport' may be off-putting for some
- Promote other benefits – socialising and mental health benefits
- Get the right people to run programmes/sessions with specific expertise (trauma informed? Female? Mother/baby sessions?)
- Be aware of cultural/religious calendars in order to run sessions at times/days that are more inclusive
- Collaborate with other organisations to utilise the expertise of others and strengthen your physical activity offer to women



# Summary

Our Sport Project has proven that by introducing regular physical activity and sport into the lives of those experiencing homelessness, we can dramatically improve the quality of life of participants.

We hope that this toolkit has shed light on the positive outcomes of the Sport Project and has offered insight into how you can introduce physical activity into your organisation, and those that you support.

We look forward to hearing from anyone who is interested in receiving additional support, guidance and/or facilitation in introducing physical activity and sport into your offer.

**Our future Sport Project – Physical Activity For All – Toolkits are as follows:**

- How to engage adults 24+ in physical activity and sport

Find our published Toolkits here: [www.shp.org.uk/physical-activity-for-all](http://www.shp.org.uk/physical-activity-for-all)

Email: [sport@shp.org.uk](mailto:sport@shp.org.uk) Website: [www.shp.org.uk/sport](http://www.shp.org.uk/sport)



**Single Homeless Project**  
Preventing homelessness  
Transforming lives



# Transforming Lives Through Physical Activity & Sport

5 key considerations when building  
a physical activity and sport project



**Single Homeless Project**  
Preventing homelessness  
Transforming lives



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# Who we are

**Single Homeless Project is a London-wide charity. Our vision is of a society where everyone has a place to call home and the chance to live a fulfilling life.**

We help single Londoners by preventing homelessness, providing support and accommodation, promoting wellbeing, enhancing opportunity, and being a voice for change. From supporting people in crisis to helping people take the final steps towards independence and employment, we make a difference to 10,000 lives every year across all 32 boroughs. In 2017 as part of Sport England's Active Ageing Initiative, Single Homeless Project launched the Sport Project. This introduced physical activity into the daily lives of those aged 55 and over who were experiencing homelessness and associated needs. Since its launch, the Sport Project has grown its offer to include all adults across Single Homeless Project services.

## Overview of The Sport Project

The Sport Project believes that everyone deserves equal access to physical activity and sport. We also believe that the introduction of physical activity into core homelessness provision is essential to bring about positive change, transform lives and prevent homelessness. Our work has shown that regular physical activity can bring significant improvements in physical and mental health, socialisation, and overall quality of life.

That's why we've launched the Physical Activity for All initiative, consisting of; information sharing toolkits, roundtable events and sport bags. This toolkit will identify the five top takeaways that we've learned from building and delivering the Sport Project since 2017. We hope by sharing this and future toolkits we will inspire organisations to join us in using physical activity and sport to transform the lives of people throughout our communities.

### Sport Project – Our Vision:

- To share our experience, insights and findings
- Engage, grow and nurture a network of enthusiastic partners
- To encourage organisations to introduce sport and physical activity into their offer
- Influence and inspire others to join the conversation around the positive impact sport and physical activity have on the lives of people experiencing or at risk of homelessness



## Why this toolkit is for you

Are you looking to introduce physical activity or sport into your organisation?

Are you looking to share your work or project with a wider audience?

Are you looking to form partnerships?

Are you trying to make your project sustainable?

Are your target group experiencing loneliness and/or social isolation?

Would you like to offer a variety of skills and activities to your target group?

Are you looking to create more consistency for your participants, and a safe and comfortable setting?

Are you looking for practical ways to increase engagement with your target group?

Since 2017:

**800** Engaged 800+ participants

**62%** Participants improved overall quality of life

**130** Worked with 130+ Volunteers & Freelancers

**76%** Participants improved stress, anxiety and depression levels

# 5 key considerations when building a physical activity and sport project



**1. Make your presence known in the community**



**2. Don't stand still - always look for development**



**3. Planning ahead - sustainability**



**4. Participants hold the key**



**5. Sport and Health are linked**



# 1. Make your presence known in the community

## Create partnerships

Don't underestimate the impact of your local networks. We found that some of our best partnerships came from similar organisations and charities. Forming local partnerships allowed us to share resources, knowledge and lend a helping hand, all with like-minded people who were familiar of the target group we're working with.

An example of this is a partnership we created with a community centre in Islington. They offered us reduced rates to use an activity hall to provide a chair aerobics session for a group of our participants. This session has been running for over three years and is one of our most successful sessions. The participants who attend, love the session and refer to each other as a 'big family'. Peter attends sessions and has said "I truly believe that the exercise sessions are slowing down the process of my Parkinson's".

## Go to local networking events

A crucial area that is often overlooked is smaller local networking events such as local forums and working groups. These have been crucial in meeting and building some major influential partnerships and like-minded people. A helpful place to start can be reaching out to your connections and asking local organisations.

## Influencing and advocacy

Not only is it important to share your key ways of working, but it opens up conversation to learn from other's experiences, and maximises your impact too.

Sharing what we do was an invaluable key to getting us known, we did this through;

- Webinars
- Sport bags
- Toolkits
- Best practice sharing and project visits
- Steering groups

# Getting a steering group established

Invite immediate connections both inside your project and external

\*remember to include any funders



Use the first session to ask the group if there is any one they feel is missing



Once the group and purpose is established ask your connections to think wider into their groups and suggest members



Invite a participant of the project to be involved



Decide a frequency at which point the membership of the group will be evaluated





## 2. Don't stand still – always look for development

### Target group – gaps in your delivery

Using registers, participation feedback and any evaluation you have collected can be a great way to review your project and highlight any areas for improvements. Try to focus on key areas i.e. gender, age, ethnic group, or disability.

We applied this approach and recognised our women participation was extremely low and used this to implement a women focus over a two year period, allowing us to see an 87% increase in women participation.

### Session and venue revamps

Acknowledging that sessions can become stale is a great place to start. Use registers and data to regularly review any drop off in numbers, plateau or negative feedback. If this happens it's important to understand why but also to look at introducing change and trying to keep sessions relevant.

For example, when reviewing one of our gym sessions we noticed a decrease in attendance. We discussed this with participants and staff and found they felt the equipment wasn't what they would like for the exercises they want to do, so we revamped and relaunched the gym.

### Break up weekly sessions with events and trips

We paused one of our sessions recently due to low attendance and offered some taster sessions and trips. We organised an ice skating trip and invited along the hostel. Clients from the service who don't normally engage in sport came along and had a great time and shared ideas for sport sessions they would like in their hostel. The day created a positive vibe and led to an increase in participation in sport sessions.

### **Lack of engagement**

.....

- Double cover
- New equipment

### **Session space**

.....

- Communal areas to catch traffic in and out
- Taking sessions outside/new surroundings

## **Session alterations**

### **Keeping sessions fresh**

.....

- Listening to participant feedback
- Staying up to date with new trends/ updated equipment

### **Flexibility**

.....

- Open to changing days and times of sessions
- Breaking weekly sessions up with tournaments and trips



### 3. Planning ahead - sustainability

#### Create self-sustaining sessions

Although running a project completely self-sufficiently is not a viable option for us, we have adapted over the last five years to find different ways of running more sessions for less, these range and include;



Volunteers



Donations



Partnerships



Maximising outside space



Sharing and distributing resources and equipment

An example of how we made some of our sessions self-sufficient is our cycling session. We utilised volunteers and hostel staff knowledge to implement the following:

- Sport staff established a weekly session involving hostel staff and residents from the beginning
- Advertised for a volunteer role to come and assist with the session
- Established volunteer into the sessions
- Sport staff took a step back from running the sessions and gave the volunteer more responsibility
- Sport staff completely remove themselves from the sessions and the volunteer runs the sessions with the help of the hostel staff

It's important to be realistic and acknowledge whether your project can be 100% self-sufficient and if not why and what elements require funding. Breaking up the elements of your project can be helpful in future planning. Below is an example;



## Self-sufficient

- Running sessions with volunteers
  - Move on options
- At home work out session plans
  - Peer support sessions

## Not Self-sufficient

- Management of project
- Advertising, hiring, and management of volunteers
  - Equipment
  - Partnerships
- Freelancers as session leaders





## 4. Participants hold the key

### How to encourage your target group to have a voice

#### Taster sessions

Participants choose a sport

#### Assistance with sessions

Set up, take down, promotion of sessions

#### Participants help shape sessions

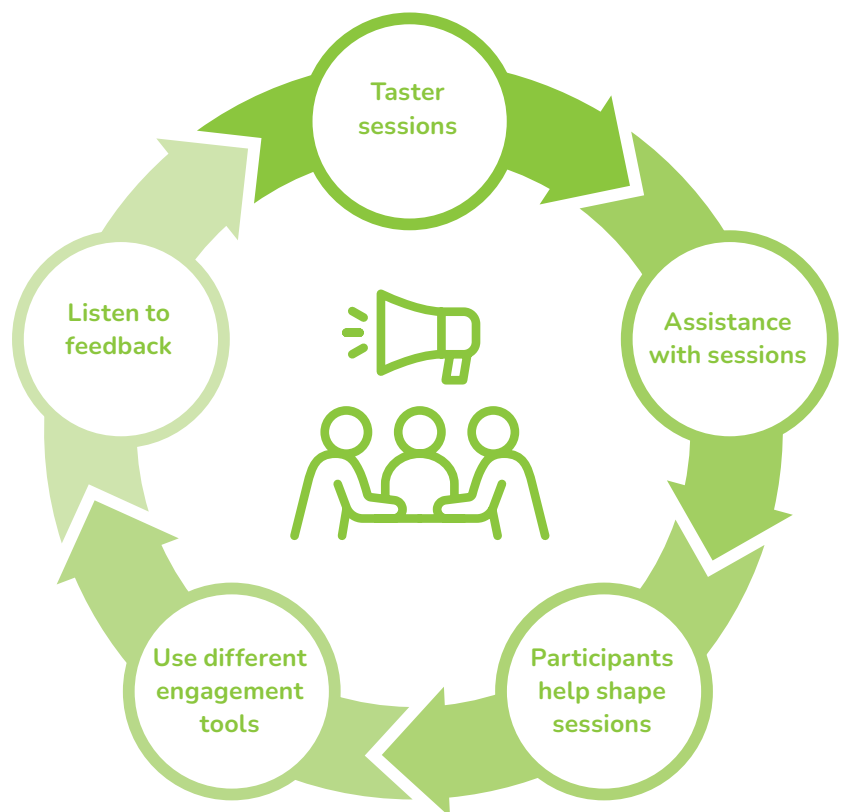
Music, different exercises/drills, inclusion of tournaments

#### Use different engagement tools

Engagement tools to be as inclusive as possible

#### Listen to feedback to run effective sessions

That keep participants engaged



## Sport advocates

Empowering participants in sessions, encouraging participants to teach others what they've learnt



### Sport advocates

Consistent engagement

Participants who take an active role within sessions

Participants who want to take a hands on approach to sessions

Empowering other participants and encouraging engagement

Clients sport advocates





## Meet Andley

An example of this in practice comes from an individual who was a client at one of our hostels. He was attending the boxing sessions being run there, having reconnected with the sport after competing when he was younger.

Due to the progress he was making in his life he became a peer mentor within SHP, which is someone who has lived experience of homelessness that wants to help others along their recovery pathway. He then moved into his own flat, which hugely boosted his motivation. As a Sport team we supported him in completing a boxing qualification, and he now runs his own freelance boxing business, including running a session at one of our hostels. His story shows the impact that participant empowerment can have in driving someone forward to engage in pathways that ultimately can change their life.

### Other key areas to consider



It's so important to hold participants at the centre of your project, here are a couple additional ways to do this:

- Having a participant or two on the steering group of the project
- Having a participant on the board of the organisation or the project
- Involving participants in interviews for staff, volunteers and freelancers
- Participant feedback form



## 5. Sport and Health are linked

The link that exists between Sport and Health has been so evident over the last five years. This has shown how important it is to have a core offer of physical activity within the homeless settings. The impact on health can be seen across the whole of someone's wellbeing including physical health, mental health and socialisation and isolation. Due to the success the Sport project has had on bringing around improvements with physical health and engagement in health services we are now piloting a health project.



### Physical Health

- Blood pressure and heart rate
- Weight
- Hand grip
- Quality of life
- Time spent sedentary



### Mental Health

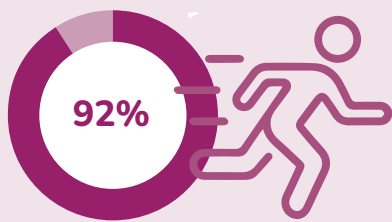
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Stress
- Improved confidence
- Improved self esteem
- Improved coping mechanism for mental health



### Socialisation and Isolation

- Lack of social connection
- Social exclusion
- Loneliness

# Our health outcomes



**92% improved**  
physical health



**89%**  
improved  
mental health



**81%**  
improved  
inactivity levels



**76% improved**  
stress, anxiety &  
depression levels



**improved their**  
**weight** (in the  
direction of  
greater health)



**31%**  
reduced  
substance  
use



## Meet Courtney

Courtney was homeless in Central London for around 10 years before coming to Single Homeless Project.

He came to our annual Sports Day in September last year – he missed the taxi we arranged but walked over half hour to Battersea Park as he really wanted to come along.

Courtney had an amazing day, taking part in lots of activities and winning 'best athlete of the day' award. He spent the whole day with a huge smile on his face and spoke about how it was going to change his life for the better.

He followed through with his words and the very next day had a haircut and a shave and began engaging with healthcare services. He went on to see a dentist and take pride in his physical appearance again.

He began engaging regularly with the Sport Project weekly sessions and continued his positive trajectory.

Courtney has since moved out of his hostel and gone to rehab/detox and is successfully creating a better life for himself. He still speaks about Sports Day and says that was the catalyst for change, his lightbulb moment that made him realise he could have a better life. He is also back in touch with his daughters and rebuilding relationships.

Courtney is an example of a hugely positive, powerful story that shows that sport can be a vital stepping stone in people re-engaging with healthcare.



# Summary

Our Sport Project has proven that by introducing regular physical activity and sport into the lives of those experiencing homelessness, we can dramatically improve the quality of life of participants.

We hope that this toolkit has shed light on the positive outcomes of the Sport Project and has offered insight into how you can introduce physical activity into your organisation, and those that you support.

We look forward to hearing from anyone who is interested in receiving additional support, guidance and/ or facilitation in introducing physical activity and sport into your offer.

Email: [sport@shp.org.uk](mailto:sport@shp.org.uk)

Website: [www.shp.org.uk/Listing/Category/sports-project](http://www.shp.org.uk/Listing/Category/sports-project)



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