



Transforming Lives Through Physical Activity & Sport

5 key considerations when building
a physical activity and sport project



Single Homeless Project
Preventing homelessness
Transforming lives



Contents

Who we are	3
Why this toolkit is for you	4
5 key considerations when building a physical activity and sport project	5
1. Make your presence known in the community	6
2. Don't stand still – always look for development	8
3. Planning ahead - sustainability	10
4. Participants hold the key	12
5. Sport and health are linked	15

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

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- Double cover
- New equipment

Session space

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

Session alterations

Keeping sessions fresh

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

Flexibility

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- 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

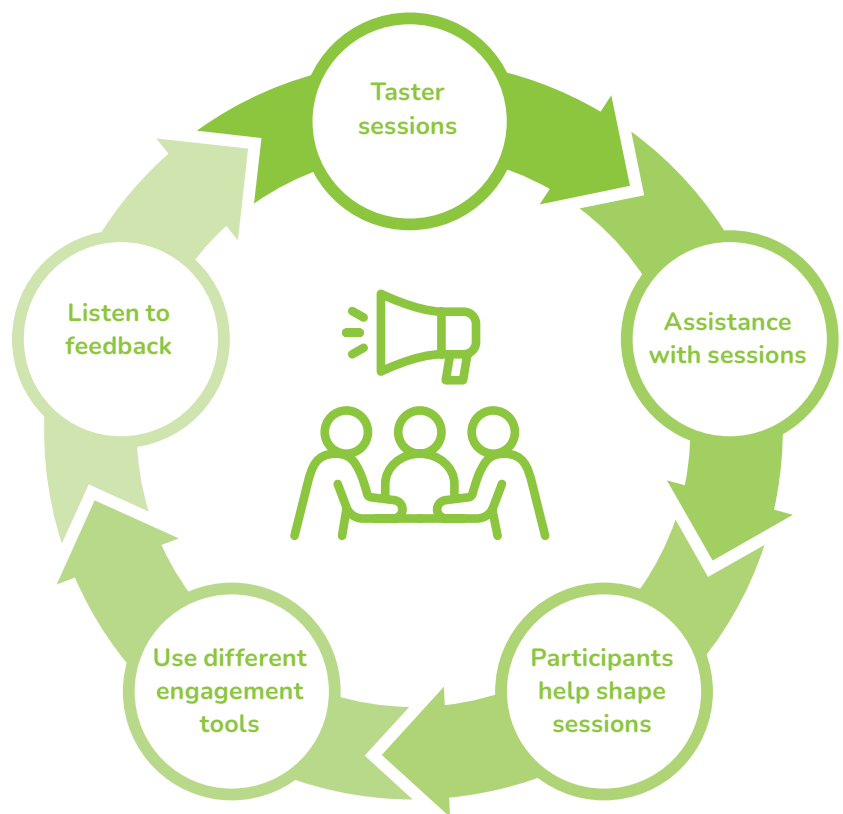
Music, different exercises/drills, inclusion of tournaments

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

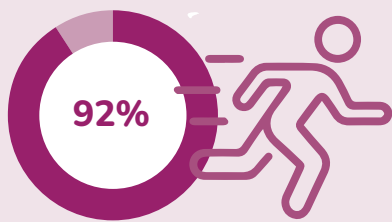
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Stress
- Improved confidence
- Improved self esteem
- Improved coping mechanism for mental health



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

Website: www.shp.org.uk/Listing/Category/sports-project



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