



Fit Active Braunstone

Background

- The area of Braunstone in Leicester is the most deprived ward in the East Midlands. The mortality rates in Braunstone are higher than in other parts of the city.
- To tackle deprivation Sport England has funded a Sports Action Zone in Braunstone. The aim of the Sports Action Zone is to place sport at the heart of the regeneration of Braunstone and get its residents more physically active.
- One of the first pieces of work the Sports Action Zone conducted was a community consultation needs assessment, involving talking directly to over 900 residents in Braunstone.
- The consultation method used was called 'Regeneration through Community Assessment and Action' (developed by Development Focus UK). Residents were asked for their own views, identified their own needs, barriers to participation and identified their own solutions to accessing physical activity.
- The Fit Active Braunstone (FAB) project was identified in the Sport Action Zone's Needs Assessment and Action Plan as the highest priority in order to increase participation in sport and physical activity.

Barriers to participation

- During the consultation many residents said that they would like to play sport and be active but experienced a significant number of sporting and personal barriers to participation
 - lack of transport
 - lack of childcare
 - poor health
 - cost
 - lack of information
 - lack of activities
 - lack of opportunities for older people
 - lack of facilities for disabled people
 - lack of encouragement on a personal level
 - girls & women no longer play sport
 - being on benefit
 - poor housing
 - children excluded from school
 - territory issues
 - being a carer
 - too many bills to pay
 - fear of going out
- Many of the most socially excluded residents experienced a combination of these barriers and factors and that makes participation very difficult.

Fit & Active Braunstone

- The Fit and Active Braunstone Project was established as a pilot to see if mentoring and practical support would be a successful way of delivering access to

sustainable physical activity, focusing on the most isolated and excluded individuals.

- The project has a co-ordinator, 2 full time staff, part time admin support and several sessional workers. It is a 26-month pilot project funded by Sport England and Braunstone Community Association, and hosted by Leicester City West PCT.
- It aims to support and mentor a minimum of 224 (30 every quarter) Braunstone residents into sustainable physical activity at a cost of £286,259.
- The project began in November 2003 and opened to the public in January 2004. While remaining well within budget, it is already exceeding its targets, 57 participants rather than target of 44 by end June 2004, and has recorded nearly 500 sessions of physical activity.

Project aims and objectives

- The project aims to promote a change in Braunstone residents' physical fitness habits and have a positive impact on their health & well-being. Its objectives are to:
 - encourage residents to join the mentor project by identifying and taking part in a sustainable physical activity
 - give residents of different age, shape, size, ability, gender and ethnicity the opportunity to participate in physical activity
 - support participants by identifying and removing personal barriers that will enable them to increase their physical, emotional, mental and social well-being
 - obtain recognition for participants with accreditation and celebration for their physical activity achievements
 - work with providers of physical activity to give a higher priority to people who haven't been involved before
 - make links with service providers, including the new Leisure Centre
 - encourage project participants to continue their physical activity, by becoming volunteers and/or mentors for the project
 - assess whether the project is an effective way of working by conducting ongoing evaluation.

Access and process

- Participants generally refer themselves to the project however some are referred through organisations such as a GP surgery or Sure Start. Work developing the referral system is continuing.
- The waiting list is made up of priority groups, with conditions such as obesity and high blood pressure as a high priority.
- All motivations are considered valuable and everyone living in Braunstone who wants to join the project will be given the opportunity.
- Participants chose an activity that appeals to them and are able to have a go at several activities to see what they enjoy.
- The project, in partnership with Leicester City Council, provides discounts at leisure centres. The project also helps with travel costs, employs specialist instructors when required, and helps with the cost of equipment.
- Mentors go with participants to their chosen activity for several weeks. Throughout their time on the project participants are provided frequent opportunities to review and reflect on sessions and mentors help develop action plans for once FAB support finishes.

- There is strength in the intimacy of the project; mentors will spend as much dedicated time with each participant as required, normally participants received about 12 sessions however this is very flexible and depends entirely on the needs of the individual participant.
- Mentors make it as easy as possible for participants to access and enjoy their chosen activity including go to participants' homes and get the bus to leisure centre with them, until they feel able to do it on their own. They go to participants chosen activity with them until they are settled into it.
- The project takes a deliberately relaxed attitude to participation – if it takes people several no shows, and changes of date for them to build confidence in themselves and trust in the project, then so be it. A 'three strikes and you are out' policy was considered, and then rejected – all participants would be out if this approach was adopted.

Participants' experiences

- Participants who have become physically active have said they are taking less medication, losing weight, have reduced blood pressure, stopped smoking, changed their diet, and are now better able to look after their health.
- Participants have also found that they have become less stressed, more confident, assertive, and positive about themselves.
- One participant was an overweight taxi driver who never did any physical activity before joining the project. He now swims and climbs once a week, and goes to the gym 3-5 times a week. He is also a successful member of a weight loss group and is thinking about changing his career.
- One lady never left her house except to go to work, she now regularly attends the gym with her daughter and is aiming to go on her own
- An extended family of eight has joined the project. Initially none of them did any physical activity and several of them were overweight. They now all go to the gym together and six of them climb regularly. The over weight members are changing their diet, cutting out alcohol and losing weight.

Results

- Evaluation has show that the one to one mentoring support provided to participants has been a deciding factor in taking up and continuing to participate in physical activity. Without this support people would not be exercising, losing weight and becoming healthier.
- The project has a waiting list and is exceeding its target. Feedback from participants has been positive and the project has helped to create:
 - Open College Network certificated training – get fit for life, looking at exercise, nutrition and stress (26 registered learners)
 - A men's weight care group (14 participants from project)
 - A climbing club (£1000 of funding awarded through SAZ sports grants)
 - A new football team

Further information

- For further information contact the Project Co-ordinator Clare Mills on 0116 2222636 or <mailto:clare.mills@braunstone.com>
- For further information about the Braunstone Community Association and the Sport Action Zone click on: <http://www.braunstone.com/>