

Case study – Us Girls Activity Programme at East Durham College

In Spring 2012 East Durham College embarked on an Us Girls pilot activity programme to test research relating to young female's attitudes and engagement in sport/physical activity. The college ran an activity programme comprising a variety of activities including dance, pliates, boxercise, bokwa, and box-fit. The aim of the intervention was to test the concepts of 'Fun/Social exercise with friends' and 'Exercising with mum/family' both of which the research showed to be significant motivating factors college aged girls. A number of sessions were set up in college time for female care students. Evening sessions were also established so that college students had the opportunity to join an extra curricular activity away from their fellow students, these were also open to members of the local community.

Target group, Promotion & marketing

Female care students (college sessions). Female students & women from the local community (evening sessions). Promotion took place via student tutorial sessions and using social media (College Web-Site-Face Book), posters and flyers/leaflets.

Venues & Timings

College - Daytime activity for students only Monday 9-10am & 2.15pm-3.15pm, Tuesday 11-12noon, Friday 9-10am. College - Weekday evening activity for students and local community.

Success factors

- After consultation with staff and students the above times were identified as gaps in the student timetables so an ideal time to get the girls to 'have a go'
- Students took part in their own course groups and so were comfortable with each other
- After initially putting on an unsuccessful multi sport session (table tennis, volleyball, badminton, dodgeball), students were asked what they wanted to try – the programme was restructured accordingly (dance & fitness)
- The girls were consulted after each session to find out what they did and didn't enjoy and sessions were adapted accordingly
- The sessions were not full of young fit sporty girls which made participants feel more comfortable
- Open age group – Community Zumba was very popular engaging more than 50 young women including students, mums, daughters, friends and aunties of varying ages
- The sessions were fun, physical and noisy
- Instructors were selected carefully to ensure the girls were comfortable with them
- Sessions took place in a female only environment.

"It's a great stress release after a hard days work"
Participant

Impact

Staff have been able to learn a lot from the girls as a result of this pilot programme. It has highlighted many reasons why students not on sport courses previously did not make use of the colleges excellent sports facilities. This has enabled the college to address the issues and make the changes needed. The main reasons given by the girls for not previously using the facilities were that they felt intimidated by the sports students and felt uncomfortable mixing with others. The Us Girls programme has broken these barriers and perceptions and now the girls are more comfortable with using the facilities. As a result of taking part in the pilot, the girls self confidence and self esteem has grown. Course tutors have reported a rise in communication in the classroom, the girls are no longer sticking to little groups and are working as a whole group and are more confident in class discussions.

Some girls were disappointed in how unfit they were and have progressed in to some evening sessions as well as joining the gym. The Us Girls activities have now been added to the timetable from September 2012 as a weekly 'shape it, try it' class giving all new and present care students their own sessions. The community Box Fit and Zumba sessions are also now running weekday evenings and will be on going sustainable classes.

- Number of female students engaged – 83
- Number of volunteers engaged – 6
- Number of coaches/instructors used – 2

"This pilot has given the girls a voice that has been heard at a strategic level" Project Lead



Case study – Us Girls Activity Programme at Chesterfield College

In Spring 2012 Chesterfield College embarked on an Us Girls pilot activity programme to test previous research relating to young female’s attitudes and engagement in sport/physical activity. The college ran an activity programme comprising of Body Tone, Spinning, Strike, Circuits, Gym, Street Dance, Kick Boxing and Swimming. Street Dance and Kickboxing were particularly popular. The aim of the intervention was to test ‘Fun/Social exercise with friends’ which the research showed to be a significant motivating factor for the girls.

Target group

Child care students – split in to 2 groups. Mainly non-sporty

Promotion & marketing

Activities were promoted within the college environment through the Activity Coordinator. Promotion was aimed at all Female Tutorial groups. Promotion ran through college plasma screens, Student Support Managers and social network sites eg, Twitter, Facebook.

Venues & Timings

Chesterfield College & Ringwood Hall (private health club), Wednesdays 9.30 – 11.00 / 1.30 – 3.00. 8 week programme

Success factors

- The girls enjoyed being part of an all female group that they are familiar with which made them feel at ease
- The instructors were very good at motivating the girls and are extremely experienced with working with all kinds of learners
- The group of girls liked and developed a good relationship with the instructors
- The sessions were fun and took place in a relaxed and exclusive environment (female only)
- Variety of activities - the girls had the opportunity to try lots of new things and liked this challenge
- Girls were given the opportunity to experience using a facility outside of college
- Use of incentives/rewards – The Hooded Tops and Water Bottles went down extremely well and the girls paraded around college with a form of identity
- Support from college marketing team.

Impact

The Us Girls College Activity Programme has had a great impact on the learners. Most of the girls don’t do regular exercise and most hadn’t taken part in active exercise since mid secondary school. Despite this, all the girls loved the Us Girls sessions. They have had the opportunity to try new activities and also go out to a private health club which none of them had had the opportunity to do before. Some of the girls have enquired about joining the Leisure Club with their families and other girls have gone on to join the Kickboxing classes outside of college time. The college also runs Street Dance sessions as part of their Enrichment timetable and a few of the girls have now joined in with these as well. Staff members accompanying the girls through the programme have also enjoyed being part of the project and both staff and students would love the opportunity to be involved with similar activities in the future.

Number of female students engaged – 32

Number of volunteers engaged – 3

Number of coaches/instructors used – 3

“I am proud of the work rate and enthusiasm that the girls have put into each session. They have gone in with the right attitude every time and put in 110%.”
Programme Leader

‘Us Girls’ initiative goes down a storm

To encourage young women into sport and physical activity the College recently enrolled on a pilot programme called ‘Us Girls Get Active’ organised by the Active Women Consortium. Attending Ringwood Hall once a week to try out different forms of exercise such as spinning classes and swimming. Childcare students (and staff - which has to be mentioned!) have really taken to the pilot and it looks set to take place once again next year. Many students have actually signed up to classes/gym on a permanent basis as a result. A massive pat on the back must go to Kerrie Robertson who put in a lot of hard work to get the project off the ground. Anyone interested in taking part in the project next time it runs are more than welcome to contact Kerrie to discuss details.



Childcare student Sarah Hickman explains, “I don’t really like exercise but I REALLY enjoyed it – especially the spinning.” Leanne Whitmore adds, “Thank you for all of the sessions, they’ve been really fun and energetic, love the hoodie too. Would love more opportunities like this.”



Case study – Us Girls Active Newcastle and Tyne Met College

The Us Girls Coordinator for Active Newcastle is working in partnership with Tyne Met College to deliver sporting activity for female students.

Target Group

The Us Girls Coordinator initially worked with college staff and tutors to identify the hard to reach “non sporty” girls and set up a plan to engage them in female only ‘Us Girls’ activities. Students from a number of courses were identified as predominantly non sporty: Hair and Beauty, Travel and Tourism & Early years and Child Care.

Engagement & recruitment

The Us Girls Coordinator went to each of the tutor groups and spoke to the girls about sport and physical activity to get their thoughts on the activities they would like to try. From the results of this a series of sessions were put on at the times they had requested. These included Netball, Zumba and Boot camp. Unfortunately no one attended the sessions even though they were heavily advertised and promoted in classes and throughout the college.

It was decided that delivering taster sessions within their tutor periods may be a better way to engage the students. This worked really well with the girls engaging with the activities. Along with the taster sessions during tutor periods, a number of ‘Us Girls Rocks’ mass participation events have been delivered which have included lots of taster activities for the girls to try.

Us Girls Rocks!

A range of activities have been delivered as part of the Us Girls Rocks Festivals including Zumba, Netball, Basketball, Table Tennis, Power Hoop, Short Tennis, Street Golf, Football and Dance Mats. Hair and Beauty students were also recruited to deliver free beauty treatments for the girls attending. The events were a real success with over 160 girls’ taking part in activities at two campuses. On the days there were prizes up for grabs including Us Girls hoodies, sweatbands and bags. Every girl that attended also received a free t shirt. The hope is that from the events the girls will now be familiar with the Us Girls branding and when they see sessions in the future they will associate the brand and sessions with fun, informal activity and the positive experience they had at the mass event.

“The various sports sessions & free beauty treatments on offer created a real buzz!!”
Student

“We did an evaluation of the event with 98% saying they enjoyed it and would like to do more... we just need to get the right activities at the right time & in the right place” Us Girls Coordinator

Success factors

- Mass participation events and tasters during tutor sessions
- Use of sports students from the college as volunteers at the events
- Tutor engagement with the programme and taking the girls along to the events during their tutor enhancement time
- Us Girls merchandise & branding
- Freebies and incentives
- Involvement of staff from Student Services, Sports Academy and Facilities Management.

Challenges & the future

The challenge now is to encourage the girls to take part in the activities out of tutor times and after college or lunch times. Key challenge is timetable clashes as the girls study different vocational courses or A-levels and the timetables differ massively. The College is now looking to develop a programme of activities for individual groups and base it around their timetables.



Case study – Us Girls Activity Programme at Newham College WOWW – Women Only Workout Wednesdays

The female students at Newham College are far less likely to participate than their male counterparts. Consultation showed they were interested in taking part in zumba, yoga, boxercise, pilates, aerobics and dance.

The college therefore started delivering weekly physical activity and sports sessions alongside wellbeing workshops on topics including female health and nutrition which were delivered by the student engagement team.

Target group

Non-sporty female students who are not currently taking part in activities at College

Promotion & marketing

Activities were promoted within the college environment through the Activity Coordinator.

Venues & Timings

Newham College, Wednesdays, 3:40pm, College Sports Hall, 8 week programme

Success Factors and Impact

- **VARIETY** - The activities changed weekly so the students got to try something new each time they went.
- **TIME** - The sessions were on the College Campus straight after lessons finished therefore the participants didn't have to wait around or go home and come back later (something we know puts College students off attending).
- **TRANSPORT** - Students from the Stratford Campus were offered transport to the East Ham campus to ensure they were given the same opportunities to take part; therefore removing travel as a barrier to them participating.
- **FEMALE ONLY** - The girls enjoyed the sessions being all female, it therefore catered for those whose cultural needs required them to exercise in a female only environment.
- **FUN** - The sessions were fun and delivered in a relaxed and friendly atmosphere.
- **TRAINING** - The College are now offering training opportunities for those students who have shown commitment to the programmes. Once they are qualified the students will be able to assist in the delivery of future sessions.
- **INSPIRATION** - Boxing Champion Hannah Beharry visited the Newham College Women Only Workout Wednesdays Project (WOWW) to inspire female students to take part in more sport and physical activity. Hannah visited the WOWW project on 3 occasions throughout November 2012 and delivered a beginners boxing activity during one of the sessions.
- **INCENTIVES** - The participants receive a range of incentives including t-shirts, goody bags and vouchers for beauty treatments as well as a certificate of recognition on completion.

"It was amazing to have been a part of something so special. The ladies worked really hard and you can tell that the organisers will go beyond their means to help these ladies out. It was inspiring".
Hannah Beharry



"It was great to have Hannah here, as a female athlete to encourage the girls we have taking part was really valuable. She is a great character and really engaged the participants, motivating them to do more and do better. She also got fully involved in our nutrition workshop afterwards giving advice and information".

Liana Brown, Activity Coordinator, Newham College