



THE PROJECT PT
EMPOWERING WITH MOVEMENT

Executive Summary

We worked with over **100 girls**

in Oxfordshire carrying out research into participation in sport and physical activity as well as delivering workshops.

We dedicated **242 HOURS**

from 2021-2022 to our signature Lift Youth Program with Life Chances. We worked with teenagers and young people to help them gain skills, qualifications and work experience.



10-20 YOUNG PEOPLE PER WEEK

engaged in our Strong Stance boxing course, helping 12-17 year olds gain skills, confidence and a Level 1 boxing qualification.

**ORGANISATIONS
WE PARTNERED
WITH:**

**Active Oxfordshire,
Sport England,
Substance and
Thames Valley
Violence
Reduction Unit.**

In 2022

The Project PT completed

**1872
hours**

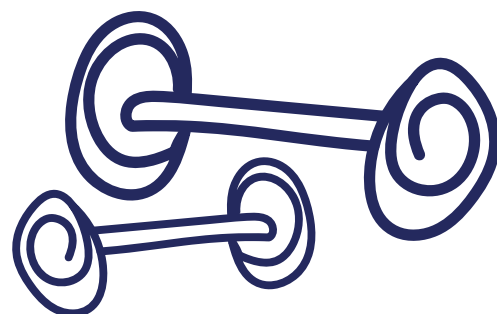
of social impact project work.

Since January 2022

we have built an inclusive and welcoming community of 200 gym members.

23%

of our members
were not
physically active
before joining.





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SOCIAL IMPACT REPORT

Introduction

The Project PT is a women owned business set up in 2018 by Ajaye and Alexa. Our current site on Magdalen Road was established at the beginning of 2022. We opened the gym with the aim of creating an inclusive space that allowed our members to be empowered with movement and to have a positive experience with exercise. So much focus currently in society and in many gyms around exercise is based upon how we look. The Project PT aims to educate members about both the mental and physical benefits of exercise and create a supportive environment where members can enjoy exercise with others: 'learn, lift, laugh'. Since the beginning of 2022 we have built a community of over 200 members.

Alongside our gym, we also run social impact projects for the wider community funded by our gym memberships and events. These projects aim to support vulnerable people in the community who would not otherwise have the opportunity or support to access exercise and experience the benefits of it. Many of our projects work with young people, providing them with courses to enjoy and learn about exercise whilst also gaining a qualification.

We are passionate about working with vulnerable young people. We fundamentally believe that sport and exercise can change the course of someone's life and that every child deserves the opportunity to experience sport. From 2019-2020, less than half of children in the UK met the recommended amount of sport and exercise per day, and this figure gets worse when you adjust for socio-economic deprivation, which is on the rise.



We think that this is a travesty. Every single one of our coaches has had their lives improved and shaped by physical fitness, and it is heart-breaking to know that so many children across the country are denied these opportunities.

In 2022 we completed 1872 hours of social impact projects. Although we're super proud of this, our goal is to exceed this in 2023. Alongside our funders; Active Oxfordshire, Sport England, Substance and Thames Valley Violence Reduction Unit, we're committed to improving our social impact year on year.

Our aim as a company, is to build business while staying true to our core company values. These values come in the form of 5 promises, which we aim to stick to, whenever we make a decision.

These are their 5 promises:

1. We will always buy locally and responsibly.

2. We will always be inclusive.

3. We will always put social and environmental justice first.

4. We will always buy and pay at a fair price.

5. We will always be proud of everything we do.

Community Projects

Life Chances

Year 1: 141 impact hours

2022-2023: 141 impact hours

Life Chances is our signature program, in 2022-2023 we collaborated with Oxfordshire Youth on this project. This program is a weekly course, for teenagers and young people in the local area who are falling out of the traditional education system or at risk of becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training), at risk of child criminal exploitation (CCE), are involved in the care system, or are otherwise struggling at this crucial stage in their lives. We work with small groups of vulnerable young people in our gym to teach them the basics of safe and effective strength training and sports science.

We don't just show them how to get strong though - we use strength training as a vehicle to teach them about team work, communication, emotional regulation, discipline and coaching. It's always a pleasure watching our young people develop throughout the course, becoming confident, independent people, able to not just train in a gym safely, but to lead others in doing the same. Upon completion of the course, they are awarded

a CIMPSA accredited certification, and offered the chance to undertake a period of work experience with us, further developing the skills that they learnt during the course, and exposing them to the dynamics of a professional work environment.

'Luke's Journey'

Luke is 13 years old and has been participating in our Life Chances programme since July 2022. Luke has a very vulnerable family dynamic. When he first started coming to the sessions, he was extremely shy, refused to engage in sessions and didn't talk to anyone.

Over the weeks and with our encouragement he started to integrate himself into the sessions. He slowly started to communicate with the other young people and participate in more of the activities. Now he's keen to try new exercises, loves to put his own spin on things and even helps and coaches the young people who are newer to the sessions.

It's incredible to see how much Luke has grown, not only with his skills and knowledge around training and lifting, but as a person, someone who is now so much more independent and confident. Luke has now completed his qualification and work experience with us and continues to use the skills he has learnt to coach in the Life Chances sessions and further his own knowledge.

*a false name was used for this case study





‘Musa’s Journey’

Musa is 13 years old and has attended Life Chances for 7 months. Musa comes from a vulnerable background and lives in a challenging area of Oxford. He has multiple learning difficulties which have made mainstream education challenging for him, so when he started the sessions with us he was shy and wouldn’t really engage. Musa had very low self-confidence and a lack of communication and social skills. He was very reliant on the staff that would accompany him to the sessions and did not want to engage with anyone else.

Now Musa is barely recognisable from the person who first walked through our door. He no longer relies on other staff members and is independent and sociable, his communication skills have come on leaps and bounds!

Musa has hugely improved his knowledge about training and uses his own initiative to carry out the different tasks and activities during the sessions. He enjoys the sessions so much he now attends one of our other intervention courses of his own accord! It’s been amazing to see how much Musa has grown and how he now uses his new found confidence and skills to empower and support others in the sessions.

*a false name was used for this case study

“It’s a privilege to be on the journey with these young people and provide a safe space for them to learn and grow”

**- Sophie,
Lead Social Project Co-ordinator**

“It’s incredibly rewarding when the kids engage and enjoy the sessions. Each young person is different and it’s great to see how they all develop”

**- Meena,
Social Impact Coach**

Work Experience

198 impact hours

As part of the Lift Youth, we also offer young people on the course the opportunity to do work experience with us. This allows them to use the skills they have learnt, as well as giving them an insight into what it's like to work in the fitness industry.

We also offer work experience to other young people who get in touch who want to learn more about fitness, or university students who are looking to gain experience in the industry.

During the work experience the young people will carry out daily operational tasks to help keep the gym clean and tidy, shadow during sessions and maybe even co coach!

Those completing work experience come to our team meetings and this is a really valuable time for them to build relationships with other team members, gain an insight into how The Project PT runs and learn from our coaches and team members.

'Mason's Journey'

When Mason first joined Life Chances he was nervous, quiet and worried about what others thought of him.

Over a few sessions, Mason became mates with 2 others in the gym and ended up lifting with them in every session. Over the next few months, he started talking and sharing more information with us, which allowed us to get to know him as an individual and establish a strong rapport with him.

As he became more confident, both as a person and with his skills and knowledge, his weights started to increase and progression followed. Mason has since completed work experience with us, in which he carried out daily gym tasks, attended our staff team meetings and it's been fantastic to see him participating and joining in discussions! Now I'm sure our other team members would not describe Mason as nervous or quiet!

We are now in the process of organising a regular day that Mason can visit for work experience and begin his own coaching.

*a false name was used for this case study



Barton Families

210 impact hours

We worked with our partners Active Oxfordshire and Oxford City Council on a program called YouMove to deliver sessions to children and adults together. We wanted to enable a safe environment for families to exercise side by side, encourage each other and learn from one another. The YouMove program has been introduced to “offer free and low-cost activities for families across the county”.

YouMove allows us to offer less fortunate communities the opportunity to boost mental health and similarly encourage those, who may not ordinarily have access to fitness classes/equipment, to become more active. This is especially important when considering the ongoing health and financial crisis and how this disproportionately affects those from low socioeconomic backgrounds.

Our team designed the family sessions to be enjoyable whilst encouraging communication and

positive feedback between families. We based the sessions around weight lifting and boxing. These activities both encourage learning new skills and feelings of accomplishment! Weightlifting and boxing require people to communicate, allowing for new and existing relationships to flourish among the groups. A big factor for individuals not taking part in physical activity is ‘lack of knowledge’. Our coaches will be there to build trusting relationships with all participants and offer guidance on technique.

The family sessions took place at Barton Park Primary School and Barton Neighbourhood Centre over a 4-month period. Most of the children attending were 5-6 years of age. We chose these locations to engage with communities that may not have access to such opportunities. We partnered with Oxford Food Hub, who provided the participants with food for the sessions. We allocated time at the end of each session to talk and refuel, this offered our team a chance to build further relationships and discuss nutrition and offer advice on healthy food choices. The sessions have been a great intervention to support local families and also provided an opportunity for the young people to have another adult to trust outside their family unit.

Move Together

38 impact hours

In 2022 The Project PT teamed up with Oxford City Council MoveTogether programme and Oxford City Council to deliver at-home personal training sessions. The MoveTogether programmes encourage healthier lifestyles by supporting individuals in their physical, emotional and mental health. Our role in MoveTogether is to offer one to one training in the participants residence.

Our MoveTogether sessions are for vulnerable adults in need of someone to support them with physical activity. This could include older people, individuals experiencing health-related issues, or those who are

socially vulnerable. Participants are referred onto the programme by sources such as GP surgeries, social prescribers, mental health professionals and other health services. There is also an option to self-refer. Each session is tailored to suit an individual’s ability. The sessions will encourage skill development across various types of exercise.

The program has helped people who have been housebound since Covid-19 find strength to leave their house and confidence to try new things.

‘Katie’s Story’

Our coach and Gym Manager Jess has been working with a variety of different clients through our Move Together programme, partnered with Oxfordshire City Council. Jess has been working with an 88-year old female, for identity reasons, we will call Katie. When Jess first met Katie, she wasn’t confident on her feet and wouldn’t go out for walks or drive her

own car. We also found that Katie could only climb the stairs with her right leg leading as the left leg wasn't strong enough. After the first session, Katie and Jess agreed on goals they could work towards over the next 5 sessions including improving balance, strength and confidence in walking.

When Jess returned for the second session, Katie had been out in her car twice and was able to climb to the top of her staircase alternating legs without a problem! Katie said that Jess had given her the confidence to complete these tasks.

Sometimes all it needs is someone else to have the confidence and belief that you will be able to achieve something!

Over the next 5 sessions, Jess and Katie worked on exercises to develop core strength, single leg movements and shoulder strength. If Katie felt well enough, they went out for a short walk and then worked on strength and coordination. At the end of the 6 sessions, Katie's confidence had improved dramatically, she began to go out walking alone and was able to go up and downstairs in her house.



Youth Voice

758 impact hours

In the summer of 2022, The Project PT carried out research into the participation of young girls in sport and physical activity (PA). The aim of this project was to understand how to engage young girls, school years 7-9, in sport, exercise and physical activity. We aimed to understand the current barriers these young people face to accessing and engaging with these activities as well as the enablers. In addition to this, the research aimed to discover the most effective ways to market to this demographic and therefore how to create a product or service that will appeal to them.

This information can then be used to support alternative provision, by charities, institutions and groups in Oxfordshire to support and inform future initiatives that aim to engage this demographic in sport and physical activity.

To carry out this research we took a team to the Active Oxfordshire School Games to conduct a questionnaire to understand this demographics opinion's and feeling about sport and PA. The majority of young people at the School Games already engaged in sport so this was a useful setting to gain information about the enablers to these activities.

We then went into four schools to carry out workshops on three different sports; boxing, weightlifting and skateboarding. We also held focus groups after the workshop to discuss what they



enjoyed about the workshops and understand their feeling towards sport and PA. The majority of young people in these groups were those who don't currently engage with PE and sport, so allowed us to gain insight into potential barriers.

The project was very successful in providing feedback and information about how we can make physical activity more accessible to young girls. Here are some of the main findings and recommendations:

Support

It was clear from all the participants that a supportive network was important to ensuring young girls participate in PA. The research found that this support could be provided by schools and sports clubs in the absence of a family network, and therefore it is important for schools and clubs to understand how to do this. This would take into consideration transport, cost and emotional support.

After school clubs

We found that school provides a safe space for the participants to try new things and for many students, travelling somewhere after school was not viable. Schools should provide appropriate spaces for clubs to take place, the participants were aware of the space and did not want to be 'looked at'. Clubs would highly benefit from offering in school time taster sessions which young girls couldn't opt out of and would help them build a relationship with coaches.

Type of Sport/activity

The project found that the participants enjoyed activities with an element of fear or danger, activities that were not team based and allowed them to partake at their own level.

Culture

All the participants shared common thoughts around girls and particularly inactive girls 'space' in sport and PA. The schools also shared these views and similar language was used by both students and teachers. Schools would benefit from inclusivity and language training for delivering sessions.

Social Media

Social media was a large part of most the participants lives. Most discussed how they did not 'follow' people on social media who participate in sport or PA and there was a view of 'girls don't do sport'. Clubs have an opportunity to provide role modelling using social media.

Clothing

Clothing was expressed by many participants as a barrier to PE, Sport and PA. It's recommended that schools change uniform options, and clubs consider what they recommend as kits.

We are extremely happy to report that this research has resulted in more funding from Active Oxfordshire. We will be providing free boxing and skateboarding sessions to girls across Oxfordshire over the summer of 2023. The sessions will initially start at schools and then move to local boxing clubs and skate parks to introduce the girls to these spaces, where they can continue the sports.

Strong Stance

199 impact hours

Strong Stance is a weekly boxing course run out of Barton Neighbourhood Centre. The program is for 12-17 year olds to try boxing, earn a qualification and participate in work experience.

We worked with 10 to 20 young people per week, to help them build their boxing skills as well as interpersonal and communications skills. The qualification the young people would gain in completing this course was 'Level 1: Introduction to Boxing and Padwork'.

In the sessions we took them through warm ups and games, and used these to encourage communication and an understanding of the different muscle groups. We would then prepare them for the boxing, showing them how to wrap their hands, before teaching them various boxing combinations and drills. Our aim with these sessions was to help the young people gain confidence and self-belief while learning a new sport. We would then end each session by coming together and having a chat and refuelling with food and drink.

We found that this project was really valuable in bringing the young people in the local community together, and gave them a safe, supportive environment to learn something new and socialise.

So far, 7 young people have successfully completed the course and gained the qualification.

One young person has even gone on to complete 15 hours of work experience so far, supporting our Barton Family sessions. This person has a huge positive influence in the sessions and has gained so much confidence and grown as an individual from completing Strong Stance.

We are very happy that this course is being continued in 2023 for a further 2 months with funding from Oxfordshire youth.

Summer Camp

8 impact hours

Last summer, in collaboration with Body Politic we delivered holiday camps for those in receipt of free school meals, in addition to our paid places.

The holiday camps we led together allowed young people to try lots of new activities in a safe and inclusive environment. Exposing them to a professional gym and theatre space. The young people got to participate in activities such as dance, boxing, lifting, T-shirt design and much more! The week ended with a performance at Pegasus theatre for the young people to showcase what they'd learnt.

Across the week, the young people were able to gain so many new skills, learn new things about themselves and make new friends!

We're really looking forward to running this summer camp again in 2023!

The Porch

20 impact hours

We joined forces with The Porch, a fantastic charity based on Magdalen Road offering support to people struggling with housing. The weekly sessions we

offered taught boxing, were open to everyone and offered a great opportunity for individuals to learn a new skill and meet new people.

With the expertise of our wonderful coaches, Jess and Sophie, the sessions provided a safe space for individuals to learn a new skill, exercise and socialise. These sessions enabled individuals to experience the many benefits of exercise; improved mood, increase in confidence and a sense of accomplishment, which can be so important when in a vulnerable and stressful situation.

It has been found that 45% of homeless people have been diagnosed with a mental health problem, compared to 25% in the general population (Local Government Association, 2017) and it is thought that the situation has only got worse since the Covid-19 pandemic.

Although not a solution to this crisis, we know that exercise can have a positive impact on mental health and therefore we believe it is imperative to offer individuals the opportunity to participate in physical activity, and what made this project so important.

Members

As well as all our specific Social Impact work and intervention courses impacting the community, our gym has a huge impact on our member's lives. Over the last year we've seen our gym community grow and grow and many of our members have told us how being part of the gym has positively affected their lives.

From members who came to us with pain or injuries now being able to move and live pain free, to others who have been able to benefit from the huge impact exercise has on mental health. It's been wonderful to hear their stories and be on that journey with them. To hear more from our members we sent out a questionnaire to find out about the different ways our gym and exercise can impact individual's lives. We had some pretty amazing responses.

We found that 25% of those who completed the questionnaire had never been to a gym before and



23% were not physically active before becoming a member of The Project PT. One of our aims with the gym was to provide a safe space for people who have previously felt like sport or exercise was 'not for them'. We're so happy and proud to have been able to help more people make exercise part of their regular routine and enjoy its many benefits.

63% disliked PE at school or had mostly negative experiences with it. It's hugely disappointing to hear that young people's first experiences with exercise, and for many their only experience with it growing up, is negative and in many cases marginalises them from sporting spaces. This again highlights why we wanted to make our gym an inclusive space that wasn't just for the 'sporty ones' at school, but was welcoming for anyone to step into.

One of our members responded:

"In one of my first sessions, (coach) Maddie mentioned that she'd hated PE at school and it blew my mind that this cool, strong coach had had a bad experience too!"

We know many spaces exclude individuals from sport and exercise, some of our team have experienced this! As well as doing our social impact work to try and tackle this, we want to give adults an opportunity to create a new positive relationship with fitness and it's great to hear that this is being achieved.

Inclusivity is hugely important to us, so it's fantastic to hear so many members mention this in their feedback to us and that they feel the gym is a welcoming and safe space. Here are some of the responses of what our members think of the gym:

"Super warm and inclusive space. Trainers who really know what they're talking about. A place that everyone feels welcome!"

"Very non judgemental, open and inclusive space. Made me feel less anxious about things like weight training"

"Incredibly friendly, welcoming, open, body positive. I was so impressed by the holistic approach to training, where you helped to gradually strengthen and rehabilitate rather than trying to just lift weights"

"Great atmosphere, excellent staff, very friendly, empowering, thoughtful, encouraging. All good things. It has been a great way to get into something completely new to me"

"Super friendly, inclusive, no toxic masculinity, no 'wrong' way of doing stuff, very chill and supportive. Was nice to see condoms and tampons in the toilet, pronouns on your website, your 'social' commitment with school projects etc. Little things that make a difference"

"It's properly inclusive, most importantly of all ages, levels of fitness and body types. I like the female-orientation and that it actively welcomes LGBT+ people. I don't feel marginalised. It's great having coach led sessions with training embedded into the sessions. I also like the scale and the environment. I doubt other gyms do community outreach work too"

We get to see first hand the positive impact the gym has on our members, but rather than taking our word for it, we thought we'd let you hear it from them!

“It has had a huge positive impact on my mental health as I struggle quite a bit with anxiety/depression. I focus solely on strength and boxing lessons and it's helping me realise my own potential and finding a positive way to channel my thoughts”

“I've felt much more motivated and found myself looking forward to training every week - while I would have normally dreaded getting myself to the gym to do the same exercises. Finding a new, consistent training routine (that I enjoy!) has definitely had a positive impact on my mental health”

“I become more confident in myself and how strong I am! After every session I am happy and joyful. It also helped me to become more balanced and changed my mindset about sport, gym and in general physical activity”

“Getting physically stronger is very important to my overall health and well-being so project PT has been an important contributor to my well-being and happiness”

“Enabled me to control my arthritis better through improved strength, flexibility plus very importantly, met some lovely people!”



Employees

It's really important to us that The Project PT's employees are happy and healthy, and that working here contributes to this.

At The Project PT we enjoy quarterly team days out, we do this because we understand and appreciate the passion and hard work our team produce on a daily basis while working. It's also a great opportunity to get to know one another outside of a work environment.

We give each team member their birthday off work, as well as a significant other's, and provide an extra day of annual leave for each year of service up to five years.

We have bi-weekly team meetings with everyone to give us chance to hear about each other's weeks (we all share a positive moment), learn more about the different projects going on, talk about the direction the company is going in and learn lots about lifting and coaching!

We endeavour to provide all our team members with plenty of training opportunities throughout the year. This can range from mentoring and coaching from another team member, qualification courses, training from external coaches or providing resources for our team to learn about different topics.

To ensure we are helping our team to grow professionally we carry out appraisals every 3 months. This gives us chance to check in with that team member on how they feel in their role, and work with them to make sure they are getting the most out of their job, with both what they enjoy and utilising their skill set.

All of our staff reported that they felt they have the opportunity to use their individual skills and strengths in their roles. We try to mould the role around the employee, using their strengths and interests to bring something unique to the business, rather than trying to mould the employee to a role that doesn't suit them. Each team member brings something different to the table and specialises in a different area so we want to make the most of this!

As we might have mentioned, inclusivity is really important to us; for our members, the wider

community and of course our employees. So, it's music to our ears to report that all our employees felt that their identity was fully accepted and welcomed in the workplace.

As we grow our team we will continue to ensure each staff member feels like they are fully welcomed into the business and have the opportunity to work to their full potential.

What's next

We feel very privileged to have been able to work with so many individuals in 2022, and have completed 1872 hours of community social impact work. But in 2023 we want to positively impact even more people!

Our aim for 2023 is to complete **5000 hours** of community social impact work.

Already this year we have been continuing work on our weekly Lift Youth program and have had more young people start with us this year, together with many of our young people carrying on from last year. We've also been continuing to run the Barton Family sessions and look forward to continuing the Strong Stance course later this year.

We've had new staff members start this year, and this has meant we've been able to work with Oxford City Council to take on more Move Together clients. We now have 4 of our coaches currently working with 20 individuals across Oxfordshire.

We can't wait to continue our Youth Voice project, providing sessions and resources to young girls, allowing them to build a positive and lasting relationship with exercise and fitness.

As well as more community projects in 2023 we hope to continue to grow our membership base with our gym and open a new site in Oxford, empowering even more individuals through movement.