



THE PROJECT PT
EMPOWERING WITH MOVEMENT

SOCIAL IMPACT REPORT 2023





Introduction

We are delighted to present the 2023 Social Impact Report for The Project PT. We had big ambitions for this year; more projects, more impact hours, more staff and more members! Over the last year our team has grown, both our Gym Team and our Social Impact Team have expanded. This has meant that we've been able to provide more sessions to our members and carry out more projects in the wider community across Oxfordshire.

We are extremely proud to announce that we almost doubled last years impact hours, from **creating 1872 hours of social impact in 2022 to 3475 hours in 2023.**

Alongside our funders; Active Oxfordshire, Sport England, Substance and Thames Valley Violence Reduction Unit, we've been able to build on last year and provide many more young

people and adults with experiences and opportunities that will have a lasting positive impact. **We have engaged with over 600 people in 2023** through our social impact projects, which vary from exercise and activity sessions, nutrition workshops, qualification courses to work experience.

Alongside our social impact projects, our gym membership continues to grow, we believe this is a testament to the power of community. At the beginning of 2022 we aimed to create a space that provides people with positive and empowering experiences with exercise. We wanted to build a space that was welcoming to people who wouldn't normally opt to be part of a gym enjoy these benefits. In two short years we have achieved this, **with over 230 members coming every month to exercise and build a community.**



AS THE PROJECT PT
EXPANDS WE WANT TO STAY
TRUE TO OUR CORE VALUES.
OUR FIVE COMPANY PROMISES
WILL ALWAYS GUIDE AND
INFORM OUR WORK:



I joined the company just over four months ago, and already have worked with well over 100 young people. I absolutely love that no matter what type of day I've had, there are young people in our sessions who help us laugh and smile. These young people are misunderstood by society, and often labelled in negative ways. We see these young people for who they truly are; kind, funny, passionate, smart, and wanting a better life. I know we can help them show the wider world this side of themselves too.

- Kate, Social Impact Manager



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

Social Impact Projects

THE PROJECT IT IS A GYM WITH A SOCIAL PURPOSE. WE KNOW THAT EXERCISE AND SPORT DRAMATICALLY INCREASES PEOPLE'S WELLBEING AND HEALTH IN THE SHORT AND LONG TERM. SPORT AND EXERCISE IS ALSO A GATEWAY TO SOCIAL INCLUSION, EMPLOYMENT AND COMMUNITY. THAT'S WHY WE WANT TO MAKE SPORTS ACCESSIBLE TO ALL, AND IN PARTICULAR, YOUNG PEOPLE.

(ALL INDIVIDUAL'S NAMES INVOLVED IN THE IMPACT PROJECTS HAVE BEEN CHANGED FOR CONFIDENTIALITY REASONS)

Lift Youth

Impact Hours: 307
People engaged: 70

Lift Youth is one of our longest running projects, that has allowed us to work with over 140 young people. The project is specifically for young people who are not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEET), at risk of being NEET, have a criminal conviction or are at risk of child criminal exploitation (CCE). Being a part of this project allows them to have a focus and purpose, learning new skills and building their confidence. This will increase their opportunities in education and employment going forward.

It is estimated that **11.3% of all young people aged 16-24 years old are NEET in the UK, amounting to nearly 800,000 young people at the end of 2023. This is a huge increase from 644,000 in 2021 post pandemic (Office for National Statistics).** This highlights how important it is for different initiatives and opportunities to be available for young people in the UK aside from traditional education, which is why we created Lift Youth.

...11.3% of all young people aged 16-24 years old are NEET in the UK...

A recent study found that there are five risk factors that are most heavily associated with a young person being or becoming NEET, these are: being a parent, poor mental health, a limiting disability, special educational needs (SEN) and not holding an academic qualification above level 1 (Youth Futures, 2023). **This is why the Lift Youth project not only teaches these young people life skills, such as communication, emotional regulation, and responsibility, but also enables them to achieve nationally accredited qualifications in both boxing and fitness.** NEET young people have become disenfranchised with the traditional education system, completing one of our qualifications helps them to understand they can learn. The project also helps young people gain work experience, reengage in education, and find a positive path for success.

Lift Youth uses activities that are enjoyable and physically empowering to teach the young people these skills. Within the Lift Youth project, young people learn how to train effectively in a gym, including using free-weights, cardio equipment, plyometrics, alongside gym-based boxing skills. Every young person makes progress in their knowledge, confidence and strength.

We currently run sessions in our Magdalen Road gym, and in local schools, including The Swan School, Oxford Spires Academy, Meadowbrook College, Wheatley Park School, and The Oxford Academy.

Manuel's Story

Before Manuel attended weight lifting sessions with The Project PT, they were spending the majority of their time inside at home. Manuel then started working with a trusted professional after not leaving their home for a period of 2 years. This young person had very low self-esteem and self-confidence. Manuel had spent much of his time with one other family member, making his return to the outside world challenging.

Manuel joined us in autumn of 2023 on our Lift Youth programme taking place in a central Oxford City school. **In their first session, Manuel was very nervous and showed a lack of confidence.** They did not speak to other participants and were reluctant to participate in the exercises. Manuel presented as very shy, worried of what others may think of them, however, this soon started to change. Within Manuel's second session he began fully participating in the training session alongside their peers, they found Bench Press was an opportunity for them to shine. Manuel took part in many different weight lifts, and plenty of boxing. **Manuel started pushing themselves physically and supporting their peers to achieve their goals, challenging their social and communication skills.** In addition to the physical benefits, Manuel slowly began engaging with other participants and **creating new friendships.** Coaches were delighted to see such fantastic growth within the short space of time.

Manuel has completed their Level 1 boxing qualification. When speaking to Manuel, they express excitement and joy when talking about life. They hold themselves tall, speak well in front of others and are always willing to participate in group work. Outside of this session, Manuel has started to attend school, a huge step in a very positive direction.

Moving forwards, Manuel has decided to engage in another of our projects running from an area in which they live so they will continue to be coached by, and work with The Project PT. Manuel will also continue on their place at college where they will be working towards a course of specific interest to develop their learning.



"HAVING WORKED WITH OVER 200 YOUNG PEOPLE IN MY TIME AT THE PROJECT PT, IT IS FAIR TO SAY THERE HAVE BEEN MANY STORIES THAT HAVE IMPACTED ME. THE ONE THAT STICKS OUT FOR ME IS A YOUNG PERSON CALLED TEBASSA. WHEN I FIRST MET TEBASSA, THEY WERE SUPER QUIET AND HAD A DISLIKE FOR ANYONE WHO THEY DEEMED TO HAVE AUTHORITY OVER THEM. THIS MADE IT CHALLENGING TO WORK WITH THEM AND RESULTED IN MANY INSTANCES OF MISCOMMUNICATION.

AS WEEKS WENT PAST, TEBASSA STARTED TO OPEN UP TO OTHERS IN THE GROUP, AND EVENTUALLY US COACHES. NOT ONLY HAD WE SUPPORTED THIS YOUNG PERSON TO FEEL COMFORTABLE IN DEVELOPING PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIPS WITH OUR COACHES, BUT WE ALSO HAD AN IMPACT ON THEIR LEVEL OF TRUST FOR OTHER PROFESSIONALS IN HIS LIFE. THIS NEW FOUND TRUST AND RESPECT FOR THE POSITIVE PEOPLE IN THEIR LIFE LED TO THEM DEVELOPING A NUMBER OF PRO SOCIAL BEHAVIOURS, DEEPER FRIENDSHIP CONNECTIONS AND GREATER CONFIDENCE IN THEMSELF. HAVING THIS IMPACT ON ONE YOUNG PERSON IS ENOUGH TO MAKE THE ROLE SO WORTHWHILE!"

- SOPHIE, SOCIAL IMPACT
PROGRAMME CO-ORDINATOR



Girls Only After School Boxing

Impact Hours: 498
People engaged: 85

Girls-only After School Boxing sessions were a new initiative to 2023. The sessions were started to engage girls in physical activity, and help remove the stigma of boxing being a male-only space. During the research we carried out in 2022 in our Youth Voice project, it was evident that Boxing was an activity that engaged and interested girls. It was an individual sport but could be done in a group setting so was also social, which participants reported enjoying.

Boxing participation in women and girls has been growing from 386,000 in 2018 to nearly 500,000 currently (Sport England). However, this is estimated to only be 30% of all participation between male and females. Through this project **we are making boxing more accessible for girls** and doing our bit to increase this number.

During the sessions, the girls are taught how to safely and effectively perform a jab, a cross, hooks, uppercuts, and how to block punches. The sessions help the girls embrace their creativity through designing combinations, boxing based games, whilst reinforcing their knowledge and skills.

The sessions run in schools across Oxford, including The Swan School, Oxford Spires Academy, The Coopers School, Carterton Community College, and The Oxford Academy. These sessions are open to anyone who identifies as female in Years 7, 8 and 9 in the relevant schools.

Violence Reduction Outreach

Impact Hours: 236
People engaged: 38

The Violence Reduction Outreach projects are designed to engage young people who have been known to engage in violent behaviour, or are believed to be at risk of engaging in violent behaviour. The Sessions are run in Blackbird Leys and at The Oxford Academy.

We work with the Thames Valley Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) on these projects, whose aim is to reduce serious violence in communities, particularly where it affects young people in public places.

“The Thames Valley VRU was established in 2019, funded by the Home Office to deliver upon the government’s Serious Violence Strategy. They are a partnership body which brings together representation from policing, local authority community safety, children’s services and social care, prisons and probation, education, youth offending and the voluntary and community sector”- Thames Valley VRU.

The projects work on reducing violence across Oxford City, Cherwell, West Oxfordshire, South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse district council areas.

These projects help young people by teaching life skills, such as communication, emotional regulation, and responsibility, through physical activity. The activities vary from weightlifting to boxing, with the coaches working conscientiously to create a safe, supportive and positive environment for the young people to learn and grow in. **The coaches will always take time during the session to chat to each young person to help support their mental, social, and emotional wellbeing and development.**

Young people who engage in this project also have the opportunity to achieve qualifications in both fitness and boxing.



Momentum

Impact Hours: 695
People engaged: 130

Momentum is a summer project where girls in year 7, who are disengaged in physical activity, have access to free boxing and skateboarding sessions. The goal of Momentum is to increase female participation

in sport, and to help young girls access sports that are typically male dominated. At the end of the project there is a celebration for the young people to recognise their achievements.

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 found 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 an available family network. Therefore, schools and clubs should take into consideration transport, cost and emotional support.

THE RESEARCH 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.



Clothing was expressed by many participants as a barrier to PA through how confident and comfortable they felt.

37% of girls

aged 11-16 enjoyed PA, compared to

54% of boys

which is significantly higher.

WOMEN IN SPORT ALSO CARRIED OUT RESEARCH IN 2022 THAT FURTHER SHOWS HOW IMPORTANT IT IS THAT WE ENCOURAGE AND SUPPORT GIRLS TO REMAIN ACTIVE.

The research found that **43% of girls** who felt they were sporty at primary school no longer saw themselves this way.

This equates to 1.3 million girls across the UK no longer feeling like sport or PA is for them.

In keeping with our findings from the Youth Voice research, Women in Sport found that out of these girls 68% reported that a fear of feeling judged stopped them from participating, which 61% said they didn't have the confidence to participate.

From this research, Active Oxfordshire and The Project PT wanted to create a project which encouraged more girls to participate in sport and physical activity. Knowing the barriers to participation, sessions were planned in each school for an extended period of time, 6 weeks, to give the young people an opportunity to learn boxing and skateboarding in a girl only environment.

The project included a 6-week intervention in 5 local secondary schools, working with 30 year 7 girls who had been identified by their PE teacher as being disengaged in physical activity. Coaches from The Project PT delivered 60-minute sessions in each school. These involved both boxing and skateboarding. The groups were split to allow 3 consecutive weeks to learn skateboarding, and 3 consecutive weeks to learn boxing.

In the boxing sessions, the girls learned about the muscles in their body, how to stand and hold a guard position, the different types of punches and how to create combinations. The skateboarding sessions focused on static board tricks, moving forwards on the board and how to change directions. In the final session the girls got to try going down a skate ramp, which created a lot of excitement.

Currently, The Project PT team are planning the 2024 sessions, so watch this space!

Kim's Story

Kim told us she had not previously been involved in any sporting activity outside of school. Throughout the project, Kim became more and more engaged, attending all 6 school sessions and 8 summer sessions. Kim told us that she preferred all female spaces to exercise in. Kim's mum also told us Momentum has positively impacted Kim's life as a result of trying new sports and feeling empowered to take them further.

Summer Sessions

Impact Hours: **247**
People engaged: **80**

The Project PT summer boxing and skateboarding sessions were created as an exit route for participants of the Momentum project.

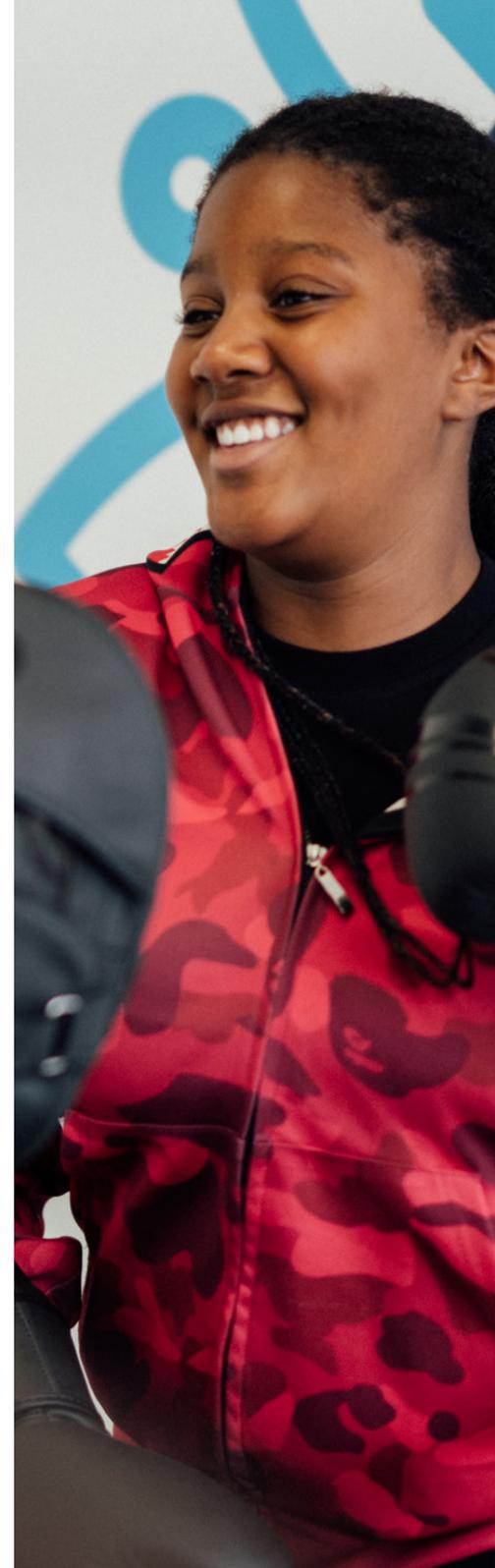
The summer sessions ran throughout the summer holidays in 5 areas of Oxfordshire; Carterton, Oxford, Bicester, Abingdon; Didcot. These sessions aimed to provide free activities for young females over the summer holidays, to encourage active participation. The sessions were carried out at local skate parks and boxing clubs which meant the girls could be introduced to these spaces with the support of coaches, with the aim of them feeling comfortable to attend on their own or with friends once the sessions were complete.

Research conducted through Youth Voice in 2022 highlighted expense as a barrier to young females engaging in sport. The Project PT aimed to remove this barrier with these sessions, making them accessible to families from all socio-economic backgrounds.

Leanne's Story

Leanne was incredibly fearful when she attended her first skateboarding session at Abingdon Skatepark. Coaches worked on small wins with Leanne, first helping her to confidently step on and off her board, and then moving to more complicated skills like turning the board. At the start of every session, **Leanne was nervous and shaking**. This slowly improved as the sessions progressed, where eventually Leanne was able to skate down a slope without holding on to a coach. Leanne was always willing to try something new, regardless of being scared about falling. Coaches were surprised when Leanne first asked to go down a double ramp without hands, but made it clear she was more than capable to do so! This then turned into more speed, tricks and a growth in confidence in Leanne. **The young person who walked into the first skateboarding session was very different to the young person that left her last.** Leanne even purchased her own skateboard and protective equipment in order to skate after the sessions had finished.

...Leanne was always willing to try something new, regardless of being scared about falling...



Jade & Hannah's Stories

Jade and Hannah were very shy when attending their first sessions. Both girls cried at the start of this session as they felt scared because there were males in the room. This was due to a changeover in sessions. Once the room became female only, both girls came out of their shells, developing a willingness to participate and try new things. More specifically, Jade had not participated in a sporting group in a long period of time making the experience more intimidating. Coaches from The Project PT worked hard to make both girls feel comfortable, alongside the coaches at Abingdon Town Amateur Boxing Club. Jade and Hannah returned for 4 sessions, and by the last session were able to join the group confidently, without the need of The Project PT coaches or their guardians standing by their sides. **After speaking to the guardian of these young people, it was clear that engaging in these sessions was a huge jump for them both. Their guardian commented to the coaches that the sessions had supported the girls' personal confidence and self-esteem levels.**

The Project PT hope to bring these sessions back summer 2024.



MOMENTUM WAS A HUGE SUCCESS AND WE THEN ARRANGED FOR THE GIRLS TO CARRY ON WITH BOXING SESSIONS IN THEIR LOCAL BOXING CLUBS DURING THE HOLIDAYS. THERE WERE TWO GIRLS THAT CAME TO THEIR LOCAL BOXING CLUB THROUGH US AND GOT SO OVERWHELMED AND DIDN'T WANT TO PARTICIPATE. I THEN TOOK THEM ASIDE AND JOINED IN WITH THE CLASS WITH THEM AND THIS PUT THEM AT EASE. BY THE END OF THE SESSION THEY LOVED IT AND CARRIED ON COMING TO THE NEXT FEW SESSIONS THAT WERE HELD. THIS MADE ME REALISE WHY I LOVE WHAT I DO AT THE PROJECT PT.

*- MEENA,
SOCIAL IMPACT COACH*





Barton Families

Impact Hours: **106**
People engaged: **30**

Barton Families project ran from September 2022 through to January 2023. This project aimed to bring families together through various sports and physical activities that are free or low cost to make them accessible to anyone. **We wanted to enable a safe environment for families to exercise side by side, encourage each other and learn from one another.** We had multiple families attending the sessions, taking part in boxing, weight lifting and other games.

The Barton Families sessions were located in Barton as it was highlighted by Active Oxfordshire as being a priority neighbourhood, that would benefit from a sport intervention enabling families to connect. Our coaches designed and carried out the family sessions to be enjoyable whilst encouraging communication and positive feedback between families. This allowed them to not only learn a new movement skill together but to connect with each other in ways that wouldn't be possible in the other aspects of daily life.

At the end of each session, food and drinks were also provided while coaches facilitated conversations around nutrition and healthy eating.

Casey's Story

Watching a young person walk out with more confidence and self-belief is everything our work is about.

We ran a Teen lift session for 4 weeks in Barton Neighbourhood centre, aiming to give young people the chance to try weight lifting. **Casey walked in to their first Teen Lift session full of anxiety.** Casey was unsure of how they would perform with the weights and felt worried about what others would think of them. Casey also had a fear of getting injured, which impacted their willingness to try different lifts. Casey has SEND, which increased the barriers to them engaging.

Initially, we worked with Casey on a few different exercises on a 1:1 basis and gave them the confidence that they needed to complete the lifts with good technique. As soon as they were familiar with each lift, **they built up the confidence to lift heavier and achieved more than they originally thought they could.** Casey then proceeded to join in with the group and began to help other group members when they saw them struggling.

It is amazing to see this transition with each young person. **Casey is a brilliant example of how lifting weights can increase confidence and self-esteem.**

We love that we can be on this journey with each young person. At the end of the 4-weeks, we had young people that were returning each week and wanted to carry on. We hope to be back to Barton Neighbourhood centre in the future!



MY FAVOURITE PART ABOUT MY ROLE IS THAT I AM LUCKY ENOUGH TO WORK WITH SOME OF THE MOST INCREDIBLE YOUNG PEOPLE ACROSS OXFORD. THE YOUNG PEOPLE WE ENGAGE OFTEN COME IN WITH LOW SELF-CONFIDENCE, LOW SELF-BELIEF AND NUMEROUS UNRECOGNISED SKILLS. I LOVE THAT I GET TO WORK PERSONALLY WITH EACH YOUNG PERSON IN LIFT YOUTH, AFTER SCHOOL CLUBS AND MORE, TO HELP THEM SEE THEIR POTENTIAL AND EQUIP THEM TO GO ON IN LIFE.



*- SOPHIE,
SOCIAL IMPACT
PROGRAMME CO-ORDINATOR*

Strong Stance

Impact Hours: 33
People engaged: 7

Strong Stance is a city-based project which aims to support young people between the ages of 11 and 17 to develop their boxing skills. Young people learn how to put on boxing wraps, understand how to create and perform various boxing combinations and defence drills.

The aim of Strong Stance is to develop young peoples' self-confidence and self-belief, while learning how to do something new. Sessions were taking place weekly, and are finished with food and chats with our Coaches. The Project PT are currently exploring new avenues to relaunch Strong Stance in Oxfordshire.

Move Together

Impact Hours: 83
People engaged: 35

Move Together is a county-wide pathway into physical activity, designed to provide support, advice and guidance to adults living with long-term health conditions, helping them to move more and improve their physical and mental health and well-being.

Most of the people we work with on Move together are not able to access a gym or in some cases rarely leave the house, and this has been exacerbated by the pandemic. So, at-home sessions are the best way to give them coaching and support with exercise.

During the pandemic activity levels dropped across the population among those with and without a disability or long-term health conditions, but the good news is that in 2023 levels returned to 2018/19 figures. **However, activity levels are still lower among adults with a disability or long-term health condition, with 47% being active compared to 68% of those without (Sport England, 2023).**

Exercise and physical activity has benefits for everyone, so this discrepancy should not exist. The aim of the Move Together sessions is to give individuals support and motivation to get started and the knowledge and confidence to continue exercising.

Naadiya's Story

Naadiya is a 44yr old mother of four who was referred to Move Together as she had diabetes and anxiety, was overweight and been referred to the project by a health professional. She hoped to use exercise to help her lose weight and improve her mental health. During the first session Naadiya and her coach set out goals, spoke about exercises that Naadiya had previously enjoyed. Since moving to the UK less than a year ago, Naadiya had lost her routine with exercise.

In the next few sessions Naadiya and her coach started do some bodyweight and banded resistance exercises, starting off light and doing low repetitions. From the first session it was clear Naadiya was very determined, pushing herself throughout each 30 minutes. Over the next few weeks Naadiya's improvement was amazing! She could do so many more reps as well as increasing the resistance of the band and being able to do more exercises within the session.

By the last session Naadiya had joined her local gym and planned to go weekly with a friend. This was a huge step for Naadiya, having struggled with anxiety around exercising in the gym. After completing the sessions, **she felt confident and knowledgeable enough to go to the gym and was committed to continuing the progress she had made.**

Naadiya and the coach worked together to create a program that she felt comfortable and confident doing in the gym and discussed how she would be able to continue to progress it over time. It was fantastic to see how Naadiya's confidence and enthusiasm for exercising had increased over the sessions.

...She hoped to use exercise to help her lose weight and improve her mental health...



Stress Buster Days

Impact Hours: **64**
People engaged: **230**

Last year, Gym Manager and Coach Jess carried out two stress buster days at Heyford Park School, the first in February and the second in October.

Jess worked with Active Oxfordshire to deliver workshops to students that were currently going through the GCSE examination period. The workshops looked at and discussed ways to manage stress. Jess specifically spoke to the students on how nutrition can impact stress. There were other workshops delivered across

the day on how physical activity, sleep and mindfulness all impact stress and can be used alongside each other to manage stress.

Jess worked with over 200 students across the two days delivering six 30-minute sessions in February and eight 30-minute sessions in October.

Ukrainian Families Day

Impact Hours: **64**
People engaged: **230**

On Sunday 5th November Active Oxfordshire, in partnership with Asylum Welcome, organised a 'Have a Go Day', whereby they asked The Project PT to run 2 free physical activity sessions over the day. The Project PT believes in empowering through movement so of course we were more than happy to get involved. It has been shown that physical activity not only instils a sense of accomplishment in individuals but can also create a sense of community when taking part in learning a skill together. Coaches Sophie and Sasha ran two 45-minute sessions on boxing and skateboarding. We chose these sports after our Youth Voice research found that both these activities were deemed to be exciting and desirable to most people.

Not only did the young people learn from the coaches, but they also got to connect and bond with their adults, learning together and from each other.

The aim of the day was to bring together Ukrainian Families through participating in sport, showcasing local sports clubs, as well as the Move Together scheme.

Among those who took part in the sessions, many had never tried either of the activities before. 40% of the participants on the day were over the age of 30. **One woman who was 57 years old, confided in the coaches that she had always wanted to try skateboarding but had never had the chance, but she was able to finally try it that day!** The coaches also supported children as young as 6 years old to jump on a skateboard or try boxing.

It was really fantastic to see 10 families have the opportunities to try some different activities together. Not only did the young people learn from the coaches, but they also got to connect and bond with their adults, learning together and from each other. The day provided an opportunity to instil a sense of community and the importance of physical education into those who attended, which hopefully they will carry forward with them.



Giftng Tree

People engaged: 21

For the Christmas of 2023 The Project PT set up a 'Giftng Tree' in the Magdalen Road Gym. The tree was decorated with various tags that had a specific item on with the price and a QR code which directed people to where they could purchase the gift. The gifts ranged from £5 - £50 and had been assigned to particular young people that have been involved with The Project PT social impact projects over the year. The Social Impact team chose specific gifts for the young people based on their individual interests, which included boxing gloves, self-care gift sets, and Footasylum vouchers.

We were overwhelmed with how many members and staff jumped at the chance to give these young people a gift. The gifts were given to the young people at the start of 2024. The young people who received these gifts were incredibly grateful, with one young person telling the coaches it was their only present that year. Another young person, who received a voucher, came to the following week's session proudly wearing their new t-shirt and socks.

We believe this initiative was incredibly well received by members of the gym and had a huge impact on the young people, therefore we will be looking at continuing it at Christmas in 2024.

The young people who received these gifts were incredibly grateful, with one young person telling the coaches it was their only present that year.



Social Impact - Part 2

The Project PT Magdalen Road Gym - Member Impact

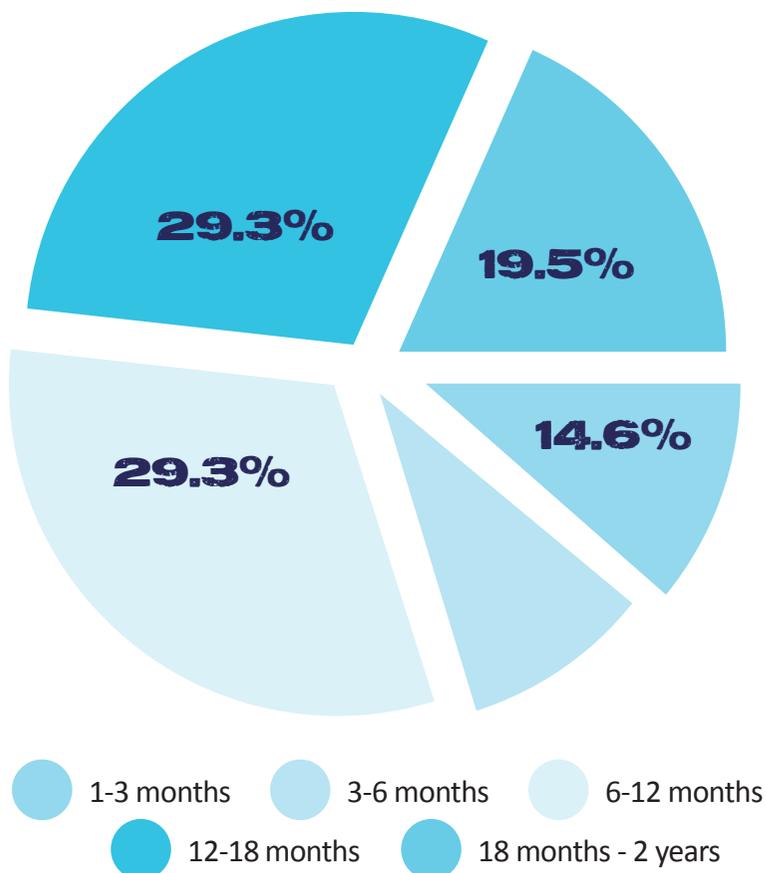
IT'S BEEN ANOTHER FANTASTIC YEAR AT THE PROJECT PT GYM. THE COMMUNITY HAS CONTINUED TO GROW THROUGH 2023. WE'VE HAD TWO NEW AMAZING COACHES JOIN THE GYM TEAM, GIANNA AND SASHA, AND WITH THEM WE'VE BEEN ABLE TO WELCOME MORE MEMBERS AND PROVIDE MORE CLASSES.

IT'S ALWAYS INCREDIBLE TO SEE DIFFERENT MEMBER JOURNEYS, FROM PEOPLE WHO HAVE NEVER STEPPED INTO A GYM BEFORE, TO ATHLETES WHO ARE LOOKING TO IMPROVE FOR THEIR SPORT, FOLLOWING THEIR INDIVIDUAL PROGRESS, BECOMING MORE COMPETENT AND COMFORTABLE WITH STRENGTH TRAINING AND TO SEE THEIR CONFIDENCE IN THEMSELVES GROW AND GROW.

THROUGHOUT THE YEAR WE RECEIVE COMMENTS AND FEEDBACK FROM OUR MEMBERS TELLING US HOW MUCH THEY HAVE ENJOYED THE SESSIONS AND HOW MUCH THE GYM MEANS TO THEM, BUT TO GET A CLEARER INSIGHT INTO THE IMPACT THE GYM HAS, WE SENT OUT A QUESTIONNAIRE TO ALL OUR MEMBERS. HERE'S WHAT WE FOUND OUT >>>>>

Out of those that completed the questionnaire, 20% have been members for 18 months to 2 years and 29% members for 12-18 months. So just under 50% have been members for at least a year.

With the gym only having opened 2 years ago, we're extremely proud of our retention rate and believe this is a testament to the welcoming and inclusive community that both the coaches and members have created. Another 29% of those that completed the questionnaire have been members for 6-12 months, while 7% have been members for 3-6 months and 15% have been members for 1-3 months.



15% have never been a member of a gym before and 12% were not physically active before joining The Project PT. Out of all members who completed the questionnaire, 70% did not enjoy PE at school, many stating that it was too focused on competition with very limited options of activities which were not enjoyable. When asked about their experiences with exercise, most did not start exercising till later on in life but still struggled with exercise and found it often framed around weight loss, stating:

“I only started being active when I was at the university. I wanted to get thinner (I know...). When I was doing my Masters and PhD going to the gym and running was my way to decompress and be less sedentary”

“AVOIDED EXERCISING APART FROM TO LOSE WEIGHT”

“Exercise kind of disappeared until I decided I needed to lose weight, then I became obsessed about exercising only in order to become smaller. That was it until I joined Project PT, when it changed to doing it for myself and my future in an environment I love.”

“UNPLEASANTLY CONNECTED TO WEIGHT LOSS & BODY IMAGE RATHER THAN HEALTH & STRENGTH (MENTAL & PHYSICAL)”

“My experiences were not great - main focus was always to exercise to lose weight rather than to enjoy it”



This is why it is so important for us that we promote exercise as a tool to improve health and wellbeing- not simply as a tool for weightloss.

Here at The Project PT, although we all share a love of exercise, we are all too aware that many people feel that exercise is not for them and gyms are not spaces they feel welcome in. We wanted to create a gym that is inclusive, welcoming and counters the intimidating nature of lifting weights.

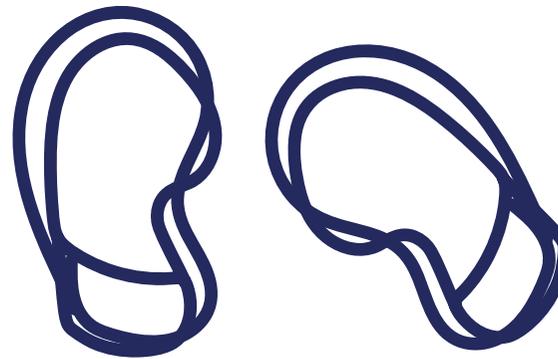
We are delighted that our members feel that we have been successful in this and we hope that not only through our Social Impact work, but through our gym, we can help more people have positive experiences with physical activity. This is what our members had to say about the gym:

“I have met so many people who love it, who weren’t sporty beforehand, so it gave me the courage to try it. I wanted to get fitter and stronger as I hit mid-life. I was in awe of my husband and other friends whose time at The Project PT had seen them transform their fitness. I also really loved the ethos of the business and felt good about supporting it”

“It feels so much more than a gym - it’s a community. It’s something I want to be part of the rest of my life (well, at least as long as I live in Oxford). I’ve never felt that way about any other gym or sporting group I’ve been part of. Also, I know your ethos and the actions and environment of the gym actually match what you say”

“IT IS MORE LIKE A COMMUNITY AND A SAFE SPACE THAT WE ARE ALL WORKING ON THE SAME GOAL TO BE MORE HEALTHY AND POWERFUL”

“Small groups, all the trainers know you & make an effort to greet you. People are encouraged to interact and look out for each other. I love that it’s so inclusive and all the other outreach work that is done. Also staff seem happy and I think are well cared for by the owners.”



“It’s also a strictly no competition/ body image/vanity gym. I’ve noticed that even when people make passing comments about it the staff challenge people (pre-xmas session someone talked about xmas calories and this was immediately challenged in a very friendly way by the staff team - hats off to you!)”

“I appreciate the focus on strength training/weightlifting/ powerlifting in a way that is super inclusive and welcoming. For me, lifting always seemed like this closed off exclusive thing that didn’t want me to take part. I love that there isn’t a focus on exercising to lose weight or ‘improve’ the way you look. The gym fosters loads of community spirit!”

“The classes-based strength training model makes it a very interesting and different place than most gyms. Coaches are much more proactive and thoughtful about training, abilities/disabilities, inclusivity, general positivity. Coaches very much feel like trustworthy people you can seek advice from and feel safe while doing it. I have never heard a Project PT coach talk about 'deserving' some sort of food because of the training we're doing or influencing people about popular diets/weight loss - both of these are a regular occurrence in a few other gyms I've been to. The very fact that this gym is actually proactively inclusive of trans/GNC (gender non-conforming) people sets it apart from ALL gyms in Oxford, as best you can get in this city is being an afterthought if not actively excluded”

“The whole ethos of the gym is so welcoming and inclusive. There is no judgement, not competitiveness, and no mirrors! This hasn't been my experience in other gyms”



We've been privileged enough to see first-hand the impact the gym and sessions has on our members, but rather than take our word for it, here's theirs:

"It's definitely improved my fitness, but I think the biggest impact is in my overall confidence. Trusting my body's ability more, and feeling more outgoing generally"

"I was a depressed, anxious little person before I joined The Project PT, and now I think of myself as happier and stronger than I ever thought possible."

"I AM SO MUCH FITTER AND STRONGER. I FEEL PART OF A WIDER COMMUNITY OF LIKE MINDED PEOPLE. I AM A GYM PERSON! I'M FAR LESS STRESSED AT WORK AND LIFE, SLEEP MUCH BETTER, NO MORE ACHES AND PAINS FROM SITTING AT MY DESK FOR TOO MANY HOURS"

"Has given me so much confidence in my training/ understanding of my body and physical activity. It has given me a new community to be a part of and something I cannot imagine my life without - before I joined Project PT, I felt like going to the gym was just one of those slightly annoying life chores"

"It's given me a safe place to go and work out, it's given me a community when I have very few in person interactions day to day, it's the only exercise I've kept up with for over a year now."

"Winter is usually pretty tough, but joining Project has safeguarded my sanity so far, and helped me enormously in building strength, yes, but also discipline, humility, and self-confidence. I love that everyone is equally valued and congratulated, whatever weights they are working with."

"It has really helped with my confidence and not just in the gym. I feel stronger and generally much better overall. I hate to be that person but I genuinely look forward to going to the gym now which I never thought was possible. So thank you all so much for creating such a wonderful space to exercise with such a fab team"

"I feel much more a member of the local community and I've lived here for 7 years! It's great recognising faces in the area and being able to make connections even if small. The coaches are also really knowledgeable and always helpful, I'm so much more confident with things I thought I knew like a squat or a lunge!"

"I AM DOING THINGS I NEVER THOUGHT I COULD DO. LIFTING WEIGHTS, BEING IN A GROUP TO EXERCISE, HAVING FUN EXERCISING. I AM STRONGER AT HOME, I LIFT UP THE HOOVER NOW INSTEAD OF DRAGGING IT, I CARRY MYSELF BETTER UP THE STAIRS, I FEEL HAPPIER. I HAD DEPRESSION AND ANXIETY ALL THE TIME BEFORE. IT IS REALLY HELPING ME TO FEEL POSITIVE. ALL THE COACHES ARE BRILLIANT."

"I'm fitter, stronger and happier. I feel part of a community. And because it's a local gym with many local members, I feel more part of my local community as well."

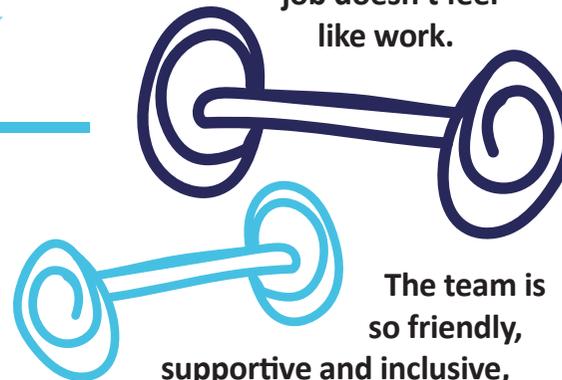
Staff comments

THERE ARE SEVERAL THINGS I ENJOY ABOUT WORKING AT THE PROJECT PT. THE FRIENDLINESS, AND GENUINE CONNECTION, WITH THE OTHER TEAM MEMBERS IS BRILLIANT. THE WORK WE DO WITH VULNERABLE YOUNG PEOPLE BRINGS ME A HUGE SENSE OF PURPOSE. AND THE WAY MANAGEMENT NURTURE US TO BE OUR BEST SELVES, BUT IN A WAY THAT ALSO MAKES YOU FEEL PROUD OF HOW WELL YOU'RE DOING CURRENTLY CREATES A BEAUTIFUL SPACE FOR GROWTH.

People, the projects, the flexibility and the freedom to work, the gym itself, the space to grow and learn new things. Being able to lead and contribute to create a positive impact in other people's lives. Being able to become better and have a great balance between work and personal life.

Most of the time it doesn't feel like work! It's very fun but also meaningful, as part of the gym team its great seeing people become stronger and more confident and also working for a company that carries out a lot of social impact work.

I work in a gym that is different to all large commercial gyms. We also run social impact projects for the wider community. My job doesn't feel like work.



The team is so friendly, supportive and inclusive, allowing me to be my authentic self at work. Management truly want the best for each member of staff and make sure you are enjoying what you are doing and continuously looking for ways to help and support you to grow.

Integrity is an incredibly important value for me and it's one of the values that encouraged me to apply to work at The Project PT. I was also drawn in by the inclusivity culture as I am someone who has often found myself feeling like the odd-one-out in situations, this work place helps me feel part of the team.



Conclusion

We are really proud of the work we have done over the year at The Project PT, but as ever, we hope to have an even bigger impact next year.

Our aim for 2024 is to complete 5000 hours of community social impact work and to engage with even more people to have a positive impact.

As 2024 kicks off, we will already have projects underway, with young people coming into the gym from January to do work experience and Lift Youth will continue to run to give young people a safe space to learn valuable skills and build strength.

Many of the projects we ran in 2023 will continue next year, including Lift Youth, Momentum, Move Together, Violence Reduction Outreach projects and the Summer Sessions.

In addition to this we also hope to create new projects to reach more people in the wider community. The Social Impact Team are currently exploring new funding opportunities to expand our projects in Blackbird Leys, Barton, Cowley and Didcot. The team are also looking at creating their own revenue streams to support more people, without relying on government, council and charity funding. The aim is to gain more autonomy over where The Project PT can run projects, to help the communities who need it most.

In terms of our membership, as well as growing our Magdalen Road membership base, we are currently looking for an **additional site in Oxfordshire so that we can empower even more individuals through movement and expand the wonderful The Project PT community.**