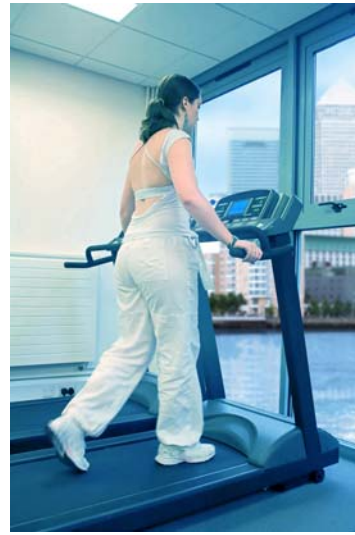


Case Study



Project

Underground Young Women's Healthy Living project

Organisation

The Rock Trust

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About the Organisation

The Rock Trust was formed in 1991 to try to address the accommodation needs of homeless young people aged 16-25 years in Edinburgh. With a grant from the New Opportunities Fund, a Healthy Living Centre 'The Underground' was set up in the basement of the Trusts headquarters.

Project overview

The Underground Young Women's Healthy Living project was set up to work specifically with young women in the Healthy Living Centre. In the past it was difficult to engage women and the barriers seemed to be around male dominated groups, women intimidated by the environment of a sports centre and a lack of self confidence and body image issues.

The project employs two physical activity guides to develop this work with young women into 10 week activity blocks culminating in an activity based residential weekend.

The project recruits participants directly through homeless accommodation.

The main aims of the project are to:

- Improve physical health;
- Engage young women in physical activity;
- Manage mental health more effectively; and
- Address the needs of women who may like to find employment in the leisure sector.

What has it achieved?

The project has engaged with 149 young women in the first two years. There are usually a group of between 20 and 25 that start the ten week programme with typically around 15 completing. The first programme worked well and had 35 starters with 25 of these completing the programme.

What was innovative and what worked well?

The young women from the centre were involved in the recruitment process for the physical activity guides. This resulted in two post-holders that have complementary skills. One has a support and development background with a strong interest in sport, whilst the other is a sports professional who wants to work in the community. The project deliberately chose a female and a male activity leader. Many of the women who attend the centre feel intimidated by men and so the project wants to focus on trust issues as not being related to gender.

In the first few months of the project the physical activity guides ran a number of focus groups with young women. Participants were given the chance to rate different activities, from this the activity guides were able to develop a programme that participants wanted to take part in.

As many of the women have children a crèche is provided. One of the activities that proved popular is working in the allotment. This is an activity that women can engage in with their children and there is a reward in terms of the produce which is grown. Other popular activities include streetdance, boxercise and trampolining.

The programme demonstrates clear benefits for those who complete it. The difficulty for many is the chaotic lifestyles they lead. Issues such as housing, health and finance can emerge rapidly and take priority. To begin to address this, the activity guides are working on more individualised programmes for some people and developing a buddy system. In this way people who find it hard to follow the ten week programme can become engaged around their lifestyle.

The future....

The project will apply for further funding for one full time activity guide. But there is an option to run the project alongside the men's programme and to achieve economies of scale by integrating the work of the activity guides.

