



**MSP COACHING PLAN**  
**WOMEN'S TURNAROUND PROGRAMME, LIVERPOOL**

**MAY 2018**



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# INTRODUCTION

## THE IDEA

Part of MSP's wider coaching delivery plan was to use local insight to identify under represented groups in the community and to work with local delivery partners to recruit and develop frontline coaches to provide meaningful activity experiences to engage these groups.

To achieve this, MSP identified two key objectives:

- To increase the opportunities for individuals facing specific challenging personal circumstances and complex needs to participate in physical activities or sport.
- To test how to develop a workforce (i.e coaches, instructors or activators) which is able to deliver physical activity or sport to individuals with challenging personal circumstance and complex needs in order to better understand the attributes, skills, knowledge and understanding required to engage this group.

### INACTIVE POPULATION: 'WOMEN WITH COMPLEX NEEDS'

The intervention looked specifically at women offenders to better understand how best to recruit, develop and deploy a workforce to deliver activities that meet the needs of individuals who face very difficult and challenging personal circumstances.

Women receiving support through Person Shaped Support (PSS) at the Turnaround Centre in Liverpool can be characterised as women with complex needs and make up a range of women affected dealing with a wide range of issues, in various way - these include those that:

- Have suffered domestic violence
- Suffer or are recovering from substance misuse
- Are in or have been through the criminal justice system
- Have partners who are or have been in prison
- Have alcohol related issues
- Are employed or Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET)

## BARRIERS AND MOTIVATIONS

In the context of physical activity, 23.4% of all females in Liverpool participate in 1 x 30 minutes of activity which is significantly lower than the figure for England of 31.2%. When examining the number of females who do no sport in Liverpool this is 73.2% compared with the figure for England which is 59.6% (Active People Survey 9, Sport England, 2015). The data on participation can be contrasted with the data available on levels of inactivity in Liverpool amongst females. 44% of females are identified as inactive – an increase of 10% since 2012 with a further 19% insufficiently active (Active People Interactive, Sport England, 2016, NHS Merseyside Lifestyles Survey 2012/13, NHS Merseyside, 2014)

Within the context of PSS, the majority of service users will - due to the very 'chaotic' nature of their lives, fall within those who are inactive. Initial consultation with the women at the Turnaround Centre has identified that there is a desire from the service users to have the opportunity to participate in some physical activities as part of a wider offer of support focused on health and well-being.

Based on research published by Women in Sport and also Sport England's insight, a woman's relationship with physical activity and sport is highly complex. Personal, social and environmental factors - combined with previous experiences and perceptions, create recognised barriers and challenges with regard to participation (Understanding Women's Lives: Re-Designing and Re-Positioning Sport and Physical Activity to Engage Women, Women in Sport, 2015, Go Where Women Are: Insight on Engaging Women and Girls in Sport & Exercise, Sport England). In the case of the PSS service users, we would argue that the complexity is significantly magnified, due to the type of complex needs outlined above.

Consideration of the current gender imbalance in coaching is also important within the context of PSS. Research by sports coach UK notes that "coaching is predominately a male activity", with less than 30% of the coaching workforce female (The Coaching Panel 2015: A Report on coaches and coaching in the UK, sports coach UK, May 2015: 7). Reviewing the information on the coaching workforce in Merseyside, from our data management system, indicates that 26% of coaches are female (Coaching Merseyside, May 2016). Due to the very nature of the service users it may not be appropriate to deploy a male coach for PSS service users, due to the type of experiences which they may have had.

## PROJECT



### WOMEN'S TURNAROUND PROJECT, LIVERPOOL

Women's Turnaround Project is run by PSS in Liverpool. The programme aims to support women offenders with complex needs. Lynn Robertson is a councillor for the Women's Turnaround Project and is also an ABA qualified coach. Recognising early on during her counselling sessions that many of the women weren't benefitting from these meetings, Lynn instead decided to utilise her background in boxing to offer the Women's Turnaround service users coached boxing sessions once a week.

These sessions for many women, formed part of their time at PSS as a term of their parole. Creating fun, enjoyable and high quality coached boxing classes were designed to help attendees: release tension (cathartic), experience greater control, improve self-esteem and increase confidence through these guided sessions at the Rotunda Boxing Gym. These sessions have grown week on week and is even attended by parole officers and centre staff from PSS.



## PLANNING

The roadmap, on page 10 outlines the original concept for the MSP coaching plan. The model was originally designed to act as a blueprint that would be used to guide a project from conception to completion. However, knowing the potential difficulty of working with the groups identified in the coaching plan, we were aware that this beginning to end style plan could prove problematic and potentially unattainable.

With that being the case, the aforementioned journey map was created using a modular approach. This would ultimately afford MSP the freedom to manage the project in a more agile way based upon the partner and their service users, without the loss of direction or result.

## METHOD

The initial coaching delivery plan aimed to achieve four outcomes:

- 1. To develop a detailed understanding of the challenge, issues and barriers which prevent or limit participation for service users.**
- 2. To establish the attributes, skills, knowledge and understanding required to engage the service users.**
- 3. To test a model for recruiting and developing a workforce to best meet the needs of the service users.**
- 4. To identify specific issues which arise from delivering activity to service users.**

Initial contact was made with PSS to explore the possibility of collaborating on a workforce development project by linking in with their Women's Turnaround Project. Given that this project was already underway, the opportunity to deliver on outcomes 3 and 4 was not possible with a boxing coach already in place.

Outcomes 3 & 4 are predominately focused on testing a workforce model from the ground up i.e. identify and recruit an activator, develop and deploy with appropriate skills needed to engage target group. Since it wasn't possible to test this process with PSS, we sought to focus on outcomes 1 and 2 in order to gain a deep understanding of the issues that affect 'vulnerable women'. Through this we sought to understand what the 'key ingredients' an activator requires in terms of skills and attributes in order to effectively engage this under-represented group.

This was achieved via two methods. Firstly, secondary data was collected via desktop research to understand the motivations and barriers of vulnerable women in relation to physical activity and sport. Additionally, information was also gathered to understand the need for an intervention for vulnerable women. Secondly, primary information was captured via a video interview with Lynn, the councillor for PSS, to gather insights into what skills and characteristics she believes are integral to engaging this hard to reach group successfully. Additionally, a short focus group was conducted along with brief video interviews with some service users to gain personal insight into what the Women's Turnaround sessions mean to them and how Lynn helps them as an activator.

# ROAD MAP

TASKS PHASES	1. SCOPE	2. ENGAGE	3. DEVELOP	4. IMPLEMENT	5. REVIEW
<b>ACTIVITIES</b>	<p><b>Secondary Research</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Desktop research into end users:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'Life in their shoes'</li> <li>• Rationale for intervention</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>Partner buy-in</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Macmillan &amp; Cancer, Sefton Council</li> <li>• Wheels Extreme, Youth Service</li> <li>• CRC Turnaround Project, Person Shaped Support (PSS)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Primary Research</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Stakeholder Engagement Survey</b> - To gather information and insights on service users</li> <li>• <b>Focus Group(s)</b> - Consultation sessions with end users</li> <li>• <b>Reflective Diary</b> - Understand an activators development journey</li> </ul> <p><b>Video Capture</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Video interviews</b> (Service User &amp; Coach perspective)</li> <li>• General <b>action footage</b> of the sessions (Service user)</li> <li>• Audio Interviews</li> <li>• Photographs for <b>case studies</b></li> </ul>	<p><b>Pen Portraits of 'The Coach'</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Channel insights generated from research to create profiles or '<b>Pen Portraits</b>':                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Skills</li> <li>* Attributes</li> <li>* Knowledge &amp; Understanding</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>Workforce Model</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish a <b>working model</b> for recruiting, developing and delivering workforce</li> </ul> <p><b>Personal Development Plans</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tailored plans to identify <b>training development requirements</b> in order for workforce to become activators</li> </ul>	<p><b>ID &amp; recruit</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A coach or deliverer</li> </ul> <p><b>Develop</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Up skill or support deliverer with training</li> </ul> <p><b>Deploy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An activator delivers an activity session</li> </ul> <p><b>PA/Sport INTERVENTION</b></p> <p><b>Mentoring</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide ongoing support and assistance for the duration of the delivery</li> </ul> <p><b>Video Capture [reflective]</b></p>	<p><b>Data Analysis</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analyse data</li> </ul> <p><b>Evaluation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Produce summary report</li> </ul>
<b>IMPACT</b>	<p><b>Process Evaluation</b> - Documenting process supplement with pictures (research frameworks or templates)</p>				
<b>OUTPUTS</b>		<p><b>Briefing Paper</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• including a Development Plan &amp; workforce options</li> </ul> <p><b>Video content</b>   <b>Surveys</b></p> <p><b>Focus Group</b>   <b>Reflective Diary</b></p>	<p><b>Transfer Package</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• including a PDP, documentation of what needs to be in place and actioned in order to 'activate' the service user</li> </ul>	<p><b>Video content [Process]</b></p>	<p><b>'The Journey'</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• including Coach Narrative through video diaries</li> </ul> <p><b>Sport England Report</b></p>
<b>OUTCOMES</b>	<p><b>END USER perspective</b></p> <p>Gained a detailed understanding of challenges, issues &amp; barriers detailing what prevents or limits participation</p>		<p><b>WORKFORCE perspective</b></p> <p>A 'Workforce Model' established for recruiting, developing and deploying workforce</p>	<p><b>WORKFORCE perspective</b></p> <p>A 'Workforce Model' piloted and activity is delivered to the service users</p>	<p><b>WORKFORCE perspective</b></p> <p>key learnings and recommendations</p> <p><b>END USER perspective</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual level impact: Activity levels / wellbeing levels</li> </ul>

# FINDINGS

# COACH 'PEN PORTRAIT'



## TRUSTWORTHY

- The vulnerable nature of these women means that this is necessary pre-requisite for any engagement with these women

*"It's a massive trust issue. They've got to learn to be able to trust me"*

## MOTIVATIONAL

- Important to develop their emotional wellbeing/self-esteem as well as their self-efficacy through the classes

*"[Lynn] makes me feel like I'm worth something..."*

## SAFETY

- Creating a safe environment for these women is key

*"When I started I couldn't move my arm"*

## EMPATHETIC

- Activator is: Understanding, non-judgemental and encouraging

*"Lynn makes me feel valued, she sees me"*

## FUN

- Creating a fun environment can help act as a distraction from issues faced their lives

*"She knows what she is doing"*

## COACH 'PEN PORTRAIT'

The success of the Women's Turnaround Project in Liverpool is dependent not only on the overall structure of the programme but on the skills of the activator/coach. The evidence for this is summarised briefly on the page 12. The factors that make this programme a success were not purely derived from formal training/qualifications but often more importantly, the soft skills and key personal characteristics displayed by Lynn.

### TRUSTWORTHY

Being trustworthy was identified as a significant characteristic for a coach or an activator aiming to engage women with complex issues or chaotic lives. Context is crucial in order to understand why this is a key 'activator' attribute. Service users of the Women's Turnaround centre have sought out this location as a safe place where the centre itself is a 'women only building'. The Women's Turnaround Project itself is run for women offenders who have been affected by a range of issues, ranging from: domestic violence, substance misuse, alcohol related issues to crimes committed that have seen them through the criminal justice system. Taking women outside of their 'safe place' from the Turnaround Centre to an unfamiliar location with the boxing gym is a challenging first step for many.

Lynn goes on to explain that, as the councillor for PSS it's important for her to gain the trust of these women. For the reasons and issues outlined above - many of these women find it difficult to trust other people. For some, this trust is gained through initial 1 to 1 counselling sessions with Lynn and for others they have been invited to the classes by these same women that were counselled because Lynn's gained their trust and in turn they've endorsed her classes to friends. Trust is a significant characteristic that is underpinned by a number of other characteristics and factors that make up an ideal 'activator' to work with vulnerable women managing complex issues.

**“It's all down to trust, these women have never trusted anybody, they've lost massive trust in everything. For them to trust someone and to enjoy it [the sessions] is huge and I keep saying that I'm so proud of it.”**

Lynn Robertson, **Councillor**

Inherently linked to trust is being authentic as an activator. This theme was identified through the focus group with the women and that being genuine as a person when engaging these women can help to gain their trust.

**“She is just real.”**

Anonymous, **Women's Turnaround Project participant**

**“Just the way she is, she’s just like a unique person, she’s just dead nice, she’s an individual - you know what I mean? She makes everyone feel special, she’s strong minded so she’s like an inspiration to us because you look at her and think she’s strong and she can do this, which sort of makes us believe that we can do it, do you know what I mean...?”**

**Anonymous, Women’s Turnaround Project participant**

## SAFETY

Less of an attribute, characteristic or skill but safety is a key factor in engaging vulnerable women, which can be a significant barrier to participation. Given the complex nature of their day-to-day lives, creating a feeling of safety for an activity session gives assurance to these women that they can relax and participate with the knowledge that they’re safe or at least there are measures in place that ensures they are safe such as making the boxing closed, ‘women-only’ sessions at the gym.

Lynn put in place numerous protocols, one of which, was that everyone would meet at an agreed location and walk down to the boxing gym together. As well as encouraging friendships, which in turn would foster trust, the women knew what to expect during and leading up the classes to help put their mind at ease. With the Women’s Turnaround centre just around the corner, the women understood that this was a safe place to be. These measures not only allowed women to feel safe enough to engage in these sessions but for some - gave them the confidence to go and seek other opportunities out.

**“It’s a massive trust issue. They’ve got to learn to be able to trust me, they’ve got to know that I’m here to help them and make sure that they are safe, that they will enjoy it, that they will get something from it.”**

**Lynn Robertson, Councillor**

**“Three of my girls have not only started coming to my gym, they’ve started going to a different gym, so that is [a] massive confidence for them and they’ll say they would never have done it if they didn’t to the boxing.”**

**Lynn Robertson, Councillor**

 **MOTIVATIONAL**

Being a motivated individual helped Lynn become a relatable figure of inspiration to the vulnerable women. With Lynn's background and experience being a councillor, she recognised that building up their: confidence, self-esteem and self-worth was an important part of their re-habilitation process. To not only overcome their initial apprehensions to try something new but to develop the resilience needed for them to feel empowered to take control of their lives in spite of their circumstances and provide them with the skills to go on a maintain an active lifestyle.

**“ It builds the women’s confidence and self-esteem. It makes them feel like they have worth. I cannot stop what is going on in their lives or at home. If it is domestic abuse I cannot stop that but I can teach them self-defence, I can teach them to stand up for themselves. ”**

**Lynn Robertson, Councillor**

In essence, for these women they can't realistically begin to think about maintaining an active lifestyle in sport and physical activity until they re-discover some of their confidence and self-worth that have been lost through their own personal circumstances.

**“ It’s given me a new sense of direction... it’s given me the ability to control myself in all aspects of my life inside and outside the gym. ”**

**Anonymous, Women’s Turnaround Project participant**

**“ I wouldn’t be here [if not for Lynn]. She believes in us all and helps us show are true potential. She’s help us maintain control and discipline which we can use in every aspect of our lives. Thank you Lynn [sic]. ”**

**Anonymous, Women’s Turnaround Project participant**

**“ They take my mind off my worries and help me think clearly. They help the anxiety... I feel uplifted after the session. ”**

**Anonymous, Women’s Turnaround Project participant**

 **FUN**

Creating an environment that is fun is reported by both Lynn and the women to bring better engagement during the sessions. Lynn's informal and casual approach ensures the women are relaxed and able to enjoy themselves. How the sessions are run itself, can also help foster a fun environment as Lynn highlights the importance of her personally curated music playlist in motivating and uplifting the women during the boxing sessions.

**“I’ve picked music wisely, so it’s all down to the music I play as well which if you like a song that’s playing in the background, you automatically without realising, you dance...”**

Lynn Robertson, **Councillor**

**“We’ll always play the ‘Rocky’ soundtrack, this soundtrack will always get everyone jumping! I turn around and in the corner of me eye I can see the odd person shadow boxing, which is fantastic...”**

Lynn Robertson, **Councillor**

In terms of motivation to attend the sessions, it seems the that the physical benefits (reported by 30% of the women) from attending these boxing sessions were less important than some of the more socially orientated motivations such as: relieve stress, build confidence and socialising/meeting new people (reported by 50% of the women). For many of these women, the boxing sessions provide a more functional purpose.

**“Yes, sessions are fun, makes me more productive to do exercise.”**

Anonymous, **Women’s Turnaround Project participant**

**“It has helped me find new direction and release built up stress. Feel more confident and self-sufficient, believe I can achieve every goal I set.”**

Anonymous, **Women’s Turnaround Project participant**

 **EMPATHETIC**

Lynn's formal training as a counsellor provides her with the skills to engage vulnerable women who typically struggle with low confidence, self-esteem and self-worth. Being non-judgemental in her approach in engaging these women is vital, as is her ability to read people's body language to gauge their mood or mental state. Having the ability to place yourself in someone else's shoes increases the chances that these vulnerable women will trust you - which has already been established as a significant activator characteristic.

**“She’s unique and she believes in everyone and she’s got empathy for every single person here, she put’s herself in our situation rather than judging us...”**

**Anonymous, Women’s Turnaround Project participant**

**“I feel like I can just be myself here. No one judges anyone, everyone’s kinda got their own past and everyone is kinda here for a reason, whether or not what it is they’re suffering with or anything but everyone’s been through the mill a little bit. You just come here and you get together, you might just have a bad day you might come in and sometimes just getting advice off someone who knows what you’re going through is better than some stranger just sitting there telling you how you could be feeling...[sic]”**

**Anonymous, Women’s Turnaround Project participant**



## SUMMARY



The original objective of MSP's coaching delivery plan was to increase the opportunities for individuals facing specific challenging personal circumstances and complex needs to participate in physical activities or sport. This was to be achieved by testing how to develop a workforce which would be able to deliver physical activity or sport to individuals with challenging personal circumstance and complex needs in order to better understand the attributes, skills, knowledge and understanding required, in order to engage this group.

By the very nature of their chaotic lives, the vulnerable service users of the Women's Turnaround centre can be challenging to engage with sport and activity. The daily priorities of these women differ vastly to those of mainstream society. With many dealing with a range of issues from (but not limited to): going through the criminal justice system to domestic violence, right through to those suffering from alcohol/substance misuse - maintaining an active lifestyle will be of low priority for many.

Lynn has experienced great success in engaging this hard to reach group in sustained high quality boxing sessions. This success can be attributed to a combination of factors that enable Lynn to design an environment that makes the women feel safe to take part in.

Based on our research, we believe that any activator looking to work with this type of hard to reach group will experience greater engagement if they have the characteristics or skills to foster an environment that is fun and safe for vulnerable women. Going to these sessions also seems to be a form of escapism for many of these women. The opportunity for these women to meet with their peers (who are also managing difficulties in their lives), is a strong pull for this project in terms of the social aspect and togetherness that comes from guided group boxing sessions.

People skills are also crucial and an activator that is: motivational, empathetic and trust-worthy is more likely to encourage this type of inactive group to take part in sport or activity - given the complexity of their backgrounds. As well as using these sessions as a form of release from their daily lives, many of the women report that attending these sessions improves various aspects of their mental health and well-being. In this regard, 'sports for sports sake' isn't the primary motivation for participation, but instead the boxing provides a vehicle and a very functional means for the service users to develop a greater sense of control and self-worth, through improved confidence and self-esteem.

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