

PROJECT 51: AFRICAN FRENCH SPEAKING COMMUNITY SUPPORT (AFSCS) CASE STUDY



What were the biggest challenges facing the organisation initially?

AFSCS provides a range of user-led services to the African French speaking community around Smethwick in the Midlands, supporting and empowering local people to integrate and become active citizens.

Regular sporting sessions were run for young people, such as; table tennis, football and basketball but this offer wasn't being taken up by most girls. A large proportion of the girls accessing AFSCS are from Muslim backgrounds, with an interest in taking part in sessions with other girls. AFSCS wanted to challenge the view that sport is only for boys and show that being fit and active is for everyone.

What approach did they take?

They signed up to be a part of Project 51, a joint programme between Sported and Women in Sport to tackle gender stereotyping within sport at the grassroots level. The programme helps community groups in socially deprived areas of the UK, to improve their knowledge and understanding of how to engage girls and young women, aged 11-18, in sport and physical activity.

Following initial training and development sessions with Sported and Women in Sport, AFSCS ran two focus groups with young, local girls to find out what activities they were interested in. Overwhelmingly, the girls wanted to play netball.

With support from Sported, AFSCS got agreement from England Netball to run some test sessions with the girls. They provided a professional coach to run the sessions and the girls who turned up were very happy.

What were the initial outcomes?

The initial outcomes were very positive, with eight girls turning up to the first session. Over time, that number has increased with between 14 and 28 girls now turning up regularly for a two hour session. The girls enjoy the opportunity to play a team sport together. Some of the girls who joined initially have since gone on to university, but new girls are continuing to join. Due to the initial success, their Sported Regional Manager supported them to put in a funding application to Sport England to run regular sessions. They were also able to negotiate with England Netball more sessions for the girls so that they continued to run during the summer.



What was the impact on the girls?



“You can see an increase in confidence in the girls who have now been coming for a while; when they come here they are making new friends, being part of a team, learning new skills and interacting with the other girls and their coach. Their parents are also having more confidence and trust in them too...some of the girls have now started coming on their own, instead of with their parents, so they are becoming more independent. The culture of being isolated is being broken down as girls are spending less time at home and becoming more involved in community activities. This can in turn influence their parents to become less isolated and more active”.

What did success look like?

AFSCS have been able to respond to the needs of the girls by identifying and providing a sport which they are interested in. Being successful in securing funding means that they can continue to deliver this activity for the next three years. Their plan for the future is to develop some formal teams, according to age and ability, with a view to competing locally. Even if they are unable to set up their own teams, they are confident they can divert them towards other teams within the West Bromwich area, where the sport is already well developed.



“Being involved has been fantastic. Thanks to Project 51, we have come up to the point where we don't need to encourage, to motivate to be active. We would like to see those young girls who are committed, coming regularly and being part of a team and start competing maybe next year”.