

## STUK CIC YEAR 1 EVALUATION

<b>Dates</b>	December 2022 to November 2023	
<b>Projects</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lift it away 6-week pilot</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Total beginners professional weightlifting workshop</li> </ul>
<b>Services provided in lieu</b>	Venue (leisure centre)	Costs paid by Hackney Council
	Professional consultation	Volunteered time
	Project manager	Volunteered time
	Board members	Volunteered time
	Researcher	Volunteered time
<b>Number of staff/ roles</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fitness/ weight trainers x 2</li> <li>Project manager</li> <li>Marketing officer</li> <li>Researcher/ Monitoring and evaluation lead</li> <li>Board members x 3</li> </ul>	
<b>Background</b>	<p><b>The Context</b></p> <p>STUK CIC is an organisation based in Hackney, London. The organisation focusses on the delivery of sports and wellness activities for underactive women across London. STUK's core aim is to address the emotional, psychological, and practical barriers to exercise and use a combination of exercise and wellness activities to improve overall emotional and physical wellbeing.</p> <p>The organisation was born through the work of community social worker, Reyss Wheeler. After spending several years working with women in communities across the capital, often utilising physical movement and therapeutic interventions in her work with women, families, and children in care, she was concerned that support for vulnerable people and those recovering from trauma often focussed solely on short-term talking therapies and gave little consideration to the direct relationship between the physical body and mind. Furthermore, she was troubled by the long waiting times for treatment and service dependency that could develop from the limited treatment clinical/ medicalised treatment range available to women and other vulnerable people who frequently faced financial and knowledge barriers.</p> <p>It was then that the idea to provide easy to access, community delivered support utilising movement, strength building, and cardio-vascular exercise alongside emotional and wellness interventions was born. The organisation was registered in December 2022 and the pilot project was developed with support from lived-experience experts, social scientists, fitness trainers and social care professionals from January 2023- May 2023. The pilot project delivery began in August 2023 and the second project was delivered in November 2023.</p>	

	<p><b>Year 1</b></p> <p>Overall, the organisation worked with 28 individual women from August to November. With an average cost of £35.40 per person.</p> <p>Women came from an array of ethnic backgrounds; with women of Asian and Black heritage accounting for 86% of participants. Fifty percent of women stated they did less than 1 hour per week of exercise whilst 25% undertook 1-1.5 hours of exercise per week.</p> <p>As part of the pre-course survey's participants reported low mood, a lack of time and finances and maintaining motivation as the most common barriers to them keeping active and living a healthy lifestyle. Many reported they wanted to join the program to build the confidence to exercise alone, gain knowledge on using weights/ form and technique, and meet others.</p> <p>Women found out about the activities through Eventbrite and direct marketing to grassroots groups who work with women and mothers. Overall, 80% of women stated that they had experienced a mental health issue within the past 12 months with the most common conditions being depression and or anxiety.</p> <p>Feedback from the women was highly positive, and women frequently reported the sessions being the highlight of their week and being sad when they came to an end. Many of the women requested to be kept updated on future programs.</p> <p>Nevertheless, there were clear areas for improvement. These areas include timings, duration of the program, utilising childcare, streaming the group, communication with the group, trainer feedback and venues.</p> <p>Overall, STUK CIC has achieved two out of four initial objectives. STUK had also aimed to work with a corporate or local authority partner to deliver an income generating program and assess longer-term feasibility. This did not happen due to limited resources the organisation could channel into business development. Additionally, we had hoped to utilise a nature retreat to introduce or reintroduce women to using the outdoors as part of their exercise and wellness activities, connecting them with nature for additional stimulus.</p>
<p><b>Project Evaluation – Lift it away 6-week pilot</b></p>	<p><b>Project objectives</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To work with inner city women and those impacted by violence, abuse, poor mental health, and other challenges to develop physical and mental strength through weightlifting and therapeutic talking interventions.</li> <li>2. To work with 15 women living in urban areas who are currently underactive (exercising 1.5 hours per week or less).</li> </ol>

3. To improve the confidence of women to use weights safely as part of their regular exercise schedule.

### Project outline

Delivering an entry level exercise class over 6 weeks focussed on teaching women how to use weights to build strength and regular exercise patterns.

### Demographics and data

- Overall, 19 women participated in Lift if Away from August to September. With 53% joining 3 or more sessions.
- 89% of women on the program were of Asian and Black heritage.
- 46% of women stated they undertook 1.5 hours exercise or less per week.
- 32% reported a physical condition or injury that impacted their ability to participate in regular exercise.
- 85% reported experiencing a mental health condition that impacted their ability to manage everyday activities in the 24 months.
- 61% had a household income of £40,000 or less per year with 39% stating that their annual household income was below £25,000.

### Project success

This was the first project completed as an organisation, without any paid for promotion, social media pages or a website, the sessions were booked to their capacity.

The uptake of the classes demonstrated that the event had wide appeal to women. The course attracted:

- a highly diverse group of women.
- women who had experience mental health difficulties.
- women who are new to exercise/ underactive.

We received positive informal and formal feedback from women. **The course was rate 4.5 out of 5. Women reported positive changes to their confidence and knowledge of weightlifting.** We were able to be responsive and adaptive to women's views and requests to shape the program around their desired outcomes. Most women opted to engage in both the physical exercise and wellness element of the session.

Feedback from participants included women sharing that the sessions were "the highlight of the week", that the course "really helped with my mental and physical health" and "I really look forward to these sessions, especially on a bad week". Other feedback from participants included:

*"The course, the instructors, the organiser, and the organisation are amazing! I can't thank them enough. It's an empowering space and it's great to get out and about to get an escape from the goings-on of day-to-day life. I would be grateful to have future funded courses like this!"*

*"Really useful programme for women to feel more comfortable and confident to work out, know how to use equipment if they do not have much experience or have some fear /shyness about what to do at a gym. If actual weightlifting (sport) was taught, I would have been more interested."*

*"This training has given me confidence to use gym more and enjoy the local facilities available and join such classes in future. Big appreciation to the funders and supporters."*

*"I enjoyed meeting other women in the community I live in and talking to them - at most classes no one speaks but we were encouraged to connect with each other"*

The trainer reported enjoying the delivery of the sessions and was impressed by how diverse the group was *"I don't know how you brought all these women together, so many companies are trying to achieve this. I have had a lot of fun delivering these sessions, it's a shame there aren't more, there's so much more we could do, that we could teach to keep these women active, to reduce the health problem people from our [Black] community face".*

### **Project limitations**

Many women were not able to commit to all 6 sessions which meant that there were gaps in their knowledge of how to lift weights correctly and use the exercises for their wellbeing.

Despite the offer of quality childcare, and many women registering for this, it was underutilised.

Women were at different levels in their fitness journey, and it was difficult to accommodate this in the group as unlike with general exercise classes, there were periods of 'teaching/ training' occurring which needed to be undertaken to ensure women with the least knowledge could perform the exercise correctly and utilise the knowledge in future independent exercise safely.

One of the most common barriers women shared was a lack of motivation, given this, the program needs to support women to maintain motivation in-between sessions, in its current format, there is no communication between women and the organisation between sessions.

<p><b>Project Evaluation – Total beginners professional weightlifting session</b></p>	<p><b>Project objectives</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To provide a taster session on Olympic weight lifting</li> <li>2. To teach women strength building exercises using weights</li> <li>3. To provide women with an affordable, new, and positive exercise experience</li> <li>4. To build an appetite for weightlifting amongst a new group of women who are traditionally excluded from the sport/ exercise.</li> </ol> <p><b>Project outline</b></p> <p>Delivering an Olympic/ professional weightlifting class for women at an ‘absolute beginner’ level.</p> <p>Project was charged at £6 per person.</p> <p><b>Demographics and data</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A total of 10 women attended this class (50% Black, 30% Asian and 20% White). The ages of attendees ranged from 29 years old to 61 years old.</li> <li>• 33% shared that they were unemployed, whilst 67% were working full-time. Half of attendees had an annual household income below £10,000 and 33% had a household income over £65,000.</li> <li>• Mental health conditions that impacted the ability to manage everyday tasks over the past 24 months were reported by 50% of attendees and 20% reported a physical condition impacting their ability to exercise.</li> <li>• Tiredness and time constraints were the most cited barriers to keeping an active and healthy lifestyle.</li> <li>• The most common goal women wanted to achieve was a better understanding of how to use weights as part of regular exercise and motivation to maintain this after the workshop.</li> </ul> <p><b>Project success</b></p> <p>The project met full capacity. Women reported enjoying the quality of teaching and experience delivered and being highly encouraged by the music.</p> <p><b>The workshop was rated 4.25 out of 5 overall, with all women agreeing or strongly agreeing that it was delivered at a pace they could keep up with. All women strongly agreed that the workshop was good value for money.</b></p> <p>Feedback from participants included:</p>
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	<p><i>"The session greatly improved my confidence and is something I never thought I would think about doing."</i></p> <p><i>"This encouraged people from different backgrounds and age group to try professional weightlifting in a safe environment. It would be much ideal if having a regular course instead of a one-off event."</i></p> <p>The trainer provided the following feedback <i>"I was surprised how much these women wanted to try the more technical and difficult Olympic weightlifting moves, I thought we would focus on strength building mostly but they were really interested and gave it a go. There's a lot of room to do a follow up workshop here, they're really interested in doing more"</i>.</p> <p><b>Project limitations</b></p> <p>Overall, this workshop was highly successful. Women with no previous knowledge of the organisation booked on to the session and paid for this. The turnout rate was 71%.</p> <p>Women reported marginal changes in their confidence weightlifting, with more significant changes to their knowledge of weightlifting. This is most likely due to the nature of a single workshop not allowing for repetition/ practice over time.</p> <p>Women would like more individual feedback on form which may limit teaching time in future, however this may improve women's confidence levels by the end of the session.</p>
<p><b>What is next?</b>  <b>Areas of improvement and organisational development</b></p>	<p>Based on feedback from participants, trainers and the organisations board the following areas of development have been identified:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Developing the design of the <i>Lift it Away</i> program. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o 3-week workshop program with 2-hour sessions</li> <li>o Long term training program where women can drop in and train with support.</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Developing pre and ongoing communication between women and the organisation and amongst the women.</li> <li>- Sourcing venues with mirrors and suitable flooring (this is particularly hard to find in affordable weightlifting gyms and leisure centres are limited with the weights, bars, flooring, and apparatus they can provide for lifting)</li> <li>- Ensuring each person gets 1:2:1/ 1:2:2 time with the trainer in each session.</li> <li>- Further developing the relationships of the women within the group so that the social element provides them with additional support and motivation to return regularly and gain the most.</li> <li>- Consider a potential pricing structure for one off events/ workshops.</li> <li>- Develop a progression route for long term activities and workshops.</li> <li>- Developing short nature retreat in Lake or Peak district</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Develop a website where information can be held/ the organisation can be found and contacted.</li> <li>- Further develop the commercial package/ offer to businesses for income generation to support the funding of community work.</li> <li>- Source grant funding to facilitate project delivery and organisational capacity building.</li> </ul>
<b>Evidence</b>	Participant feedback (in document) Trainer feedback (in document) <u>Images and videos</u> (digital file)
<b>Sign off</b>	Reyss Wheeler (Director)
<b>Date</b>	18/11/2023
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