

So Active Project: Briefing Note 2 – November 2020

1. Purpose

To update SBC colleagues, project partners and stakeholders on the progress of the So Active Project as part of beginning recovery in revitalising health and increasing community resilience.

2. Background

The aim of the So Active Project is to deliver a programme of physical activities online, outdoors and in community centres to help support the physical and mental health of residents targeting key workers, older people, children and young people, and adults. Further aligning with the new co-operative neighbourhood arrangements for neighbourhood areas and aligning engagement and further project development opportunities.

3. So Active

Reducing health inequalities and improving the health and wellbeing of Stevenage residents is central to the vision of the Healthy Stevenage Strategy 2018-2022, and highlighted in Housing for Older People in Stevenage (Draft), Stevenage Re-Imagined: A Ten-Year Arts and Heritage (Cultural) Strategy (2018-2028) and the Sports Facility Assessment and Strategy 2014 – 2031.

The objectives of the So Active project are:

- To encourage a renewed understanding of **safe spaces and safe places** across the town.
- To provide co-operative **digital literacy support** for 100 older residents.
- To increase **physical activity** levels of 100 older people.
- To support renewed **access to parks & open spaces** for all residents.
- To increase the **physical activity levels** of 100 adults.
- To provide an enhanced physical activity offer targeting 50 people from the **BAME community**.
- To support 100 Stevenage Borough Council staff to achieve good **physical and mental health**.
- To increase **physical activity levels** of 50 children and young people.

4. Progress to date (as at 13th November 2020)

The delivery of online fitness sessions targeting Stevenage Borough Council staff began on 24th July with a total of 15 weekly sessions being delivered with 32 registered staff and 214 views of the recorded live sessions via the private Facebook group. After collecting feedback from staff via a short survey, the project team agreed to change the day and time to Wednesday mornings at 8am offering increased access via zoom to encourage increased participation. The project is now part of the wider staff mental health and wellbeing campaign development working with other business units.

The online delivery of ChairFit targeting older residents began on 5th August with a total of 13 sessions being delivered in our independent living scheme with a throughput total of 63. After collecting case studies from participants 900 new So Active-Chair Fit flyers and Digital Literacy

booklets

have been ordered for inclusion into the distribution of activity packs. The activity packs are being distributed by Healthy Stevenage Partners – Stevenage Football Club Foundation and our Specialist Support Services team to older residents.

The Azonto Fitness sessions began on 7th August in St Nicolas Park and moved to Shephall Community Centre in the autumn with a total of 11 sessions being delivered to date with a throughput total of 76. The FitKidz session began on 20th August at Fairlands Valley Park and also moved to Shephall Community Centre in the autumn with a throughput of 125. Due to the second national lock down, both Azonto Fitness and FitKidz have been suspended and will be relaunched in the New Year.

The communications team have continued to publish project articles on the staff intranet to motivate colleagues to attend weekly sessions. Together with the fitness instructors, a total of 37 posts including a press release had been shared across social media with good level of engagement from the public.

After meeting with commercial manager to explore sponsorship and project sustainability a number of case studies were collected from participants. A small sample of testimonials quickly revealed the impact sessions have had during the pandemic;

“An increase in motivation and support. With the help from the class trainers. It’s good to see other people via Zoom also relieves the social isolation. It is early days but beginning to get more mobility again.” – Pauline Hill on **ChairFit**

“Teddie has met new children of similar age through socialising and has increased his activity levels again since lockdown. He is on inhalers for asthma and the physical activity he participates in helps him to improve his breathing and increase lung strength on top of improving his overall fitness and strength.” – Parent on **FitKidz**

“Nice that we have this to help us when working from home, would like wider variety. Great engaging ...plus the tunes are awesome.” – Staff on **SBC Fitness Sessions**

“My weight has reduced by some 4kg in the last 4 months, my initial breathlessness on exercising has greatly reduced. Following a check-up with my Cardiologist I have recently been able to stop taking beta-blockers as, despite my on-going heart disease, my physical condition is much improved.” – Roger Weston on **ChairFit**



5. Next Steps

- Project evaluation with support from University of Hertfordshire.
- New Year press release with new promotional materials.
- Continued dialogue with commercial manager on project advertising sponsorship.
- Update stakeholders periodically on development of project.
- Continued engagement activities with targeted groups in Stevenage.

Special thanks to:

Paula Mills (Business Support Team Leader), Ryan Ansell (Community Development Officer), Robbie Bratchell (Corporate Events Officer), Crystal Trusell (Communications & Marketing Officer), Kwaku Agyemang (Azonto Fitness), Kayleigh Holt (KayleighFit), Chris Bull (FitKidz) & Irene Gibson (Chair Fit)

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