

YOGA & MINDFULNESS

Junction 4 Skate Park CIC



INTRODUCTION

Yoga is widely recognised as a form of mind-body medicine – focusing on strength and mobility integrating mind, body and breath to boost physical and mental wellbeing.

Yet despite these benefits, it is rarely an activity which is provided in community sessions for young people. That's why StreetGames has been working in collaboration with Yoginis Yoga training to devise a pilot programme of yoga and mindfulness.

Building on initial pilots tested in Rochdale, Liverpool and Stockport, the programme has now been further developed to support and upskill youth workers and community coaches, so that they can facilitate the delivery of yoga and mindfulness schemes of work to young people in community settings.

Through investment from the Sport England Together Fund, the pilot has now been rolled out to 13 locally trusted organisations (LTOs) across the North West and Yorkshire who will be delivering two programmes of yoga and mindfulness sessions with young females from low-income communities in 2022, with the overarching aim - to enable them to access yoga and help improve overall well-being and resilience.

JUNCTION 4 SKATE PARK

One of the LTOs involved in the Pilot, is Junction 4 Skate Park – a community led skate park in Darwen, Lancashire. Michelle Ramsey, the lead project worker heard about the yoga pilot at a StreetGames Regional Network meeting and thought that it sounded 'really interesting'. Michelle shared that since the Pandemic, they'd seen a real drop in attendances at sessions, including the girls only sessions and were hearing from users and parents how the isolation of Lockdowns had affected young people and their motivation to be active and thought that yoga and mindfulness might help with this.

Following a successful application and award of £2,260, Michelle attended the pre-delivery training provided by StreetGames, which included: Gateway to Yoga training (part on-line, part face-to-face) and an online ACES and Trauma Informed Practice workshop.

THE YOGA & MINDFULNESS SESSIONS

Michelle linked with a local school to attract participants; working together with staff at the school to identify girls who they thought would most benefit from the yoga and mindfulness sessions – including those with low mental well-being, experience of bereavement and those that were not engaging with other extra-curricular activities.

In total twelve girls aged 13 years took part in the sessions – attending in two groups of six on Monday and Wednesday mornings.

The sessions took place in the lounge room at the Skate Park, with equipment (including mats, blankets and yoga/mindfulness journals) all provided through their Together Funding award.

The eight-week programme includes: six weeks of yoga and mindfulness sessions (one hour in duration) together with an initial introduction session and a final celebration/evaluation session. The format within the sessions included:



A group welcome / conversation



Centering



Warm up



Yoga poses



Relaxation



Feedback

Michelle shared that the resources and training had been really helpful in supporting the delivery of the sessions, together with her previous experience of delivering other sports and exercise sessions.

Michelle also shared how valuable the initial introduction session had been, as this enabled the group to come together, meet and hear more about the programme prior to the first yoga and mindfulness session. It also enabled the girls to share their feelings and motivations for attending – which included wanting to: *'reduce stress'*, *'improve sleep'*, *'feel more energetic'* and to have *'calmer energy'*.

The introduction session also helped to allay some initial concerns the girls had – with a number sharing that they were: *'anxious'*, *'nervous'*, *'scared'* and *'worried'* on arrival. However, by the end of the introduction session their feelings had changed to being: *'happy'*, *'calm'*, *'chilled'*, *'relaxed'* and *'excited'*.

For the final celebration and evaluation session, Michelle decided to deliver a two-hour final session in week seven, so that she could host this straight after the final yoga and mindfulness session, rather than asking the girls to come back in for this on the following week, which she felt worked well as the activities were still *'fresh in their minds'*.



FEEDBACK FROM PARTICIPANTS

The girls have been able to share their views via both an end of programme survey and informally at the end of each session – with really positive feedback being shared.

In an end of programme survey, the girls were asked to share what benefits they received from taking part in the activities, with the most common responses being that the sessions had enabled them:



71%

To try new activities



71%

To enjoy taking part in the activities



57%

To manage my mental health



57%

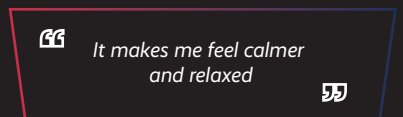
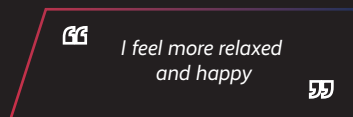
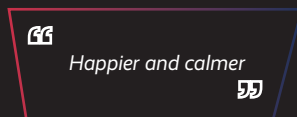
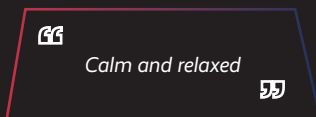
Given me the confidence to be active



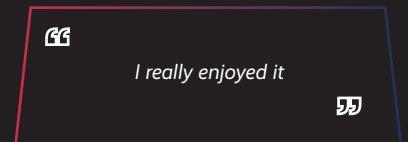
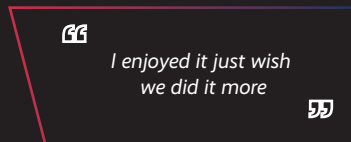
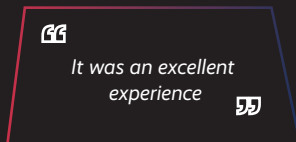
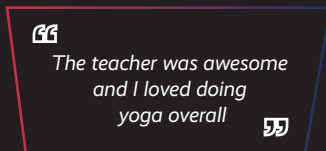
43%

Helped me to build new friendships

In particular, the girls shared how much they enjoyed the relaxation element of the sessions and shared how they felt when taking part in yoga and mindfulness, including feeling:



Their enjoyment for the sessions is summed up best via their final comments in the survey, which included sharing that:



NEXT STEPS

All of the girls said that they had increased their understanding of yoga and mindfulness from taking part and many of the girls shared with Michelle that they had been using their knowledge from the classes and the resources provided to practice yoga at home.

Over half (57%) said they would be likely to go to a yoga class in the future (29% were unsure) with many of them wanting to take part more often and/or for longer. The girls also shared how they felt that yoga could help them in their lives more broadly in relation to: 'anxiety', 'mental health' and 'strength'.

Michelle will be delivering a second pilot programme in September, which she also intends to deliver to teen girls, but also shared that she would be keen to expand on this and look at options for providing sessions to young people in Year 6, as she felt the sessions could provide this age group with some really useful exercises, tips and information for coping with what can be a challenging time as the young people transition onto high school and their teenage years.

Learning from this intervention together with the other 12 LTOs that are delivering the pilot programme will be captured via a series of learning events together with interviews and surveys led by StreetGames, which we hope to be able to use to further enhance and expand the programme.

Many thanks to Michelle Ramsey and all of the girls that took part in this pilot programme from Junction 4 Skate Park and also to Sport England for their investment via the Together Fund.