

Safer Places Winter Festival

herts
sports
partnership



Jess Baird & Alex Varran
December 2023

Introduction

Herts Sport and Physical Activity Partnership (HSP) supported Safer Places with a funding application to the Hertfordshire County Council small grant programme. The countywide fund was established to support local organisations and groups within the voluntary, community, faith, and social enterprise sector during the Winter months. The grant programme aimed to contribute towards the cost of hosting community events and celebrations between November 2023 and January 2024, helping to bring people together and reduce loneliness whilst combatting food poverty at the same time.

Project Background

Safer Places has over 40 years' experience in delivering holistic support services to adult and child survivors of Domestic Abuse across Hertfordshire. The team currently supports 50 women and their families in Broxbourne and take a non-judgemental and respectful approach to make sure they do all they can to ensure that everyone who needs the services can use them. Safer Places linked up with HSP to offer the women and families a bespoke festival that gave the women and the children something to look forward to in the lead up to Christmas.



Implementation

The Festive Fitness Festival happened at Laura Trott Leisure Centre in Cheshunt in December 2023, following the announcement of a successful grant application. Due to the large number of submissions, the panel had to prioritise those applications which could demonstrate maximum impact for the people in our communities who might otherwise feel lonely or isolated, and therefore offered the Festive Fitness Festival a partial award of £240, instead of the £500 that was originally applied for. The HSP officers reached out to Broxbourne Borough Council to see if they could offer any additional support, and they kindly gifted the sports hall / courts for four hours on a weekday afternoon free of charge. Following discussions with the Safer Places team, the HSP officers reached out to some local female instructors who delivered Zumba and Yoga, as well as the Netball Development Community Coach for Hertfordshire, who offered a recreational netball session. Women and children who flee from domestic abuse do not always have the opportunity to socialise with people in a safe and supportive environment, so these activities were chosen to fit all ages and abilities. Additionally, they were all delivered by local instructors who were able to share details about their local provision if the women were interested to continue. Safer Places organised the participants and registers for the activities as well as the festive feast that was enjoyed by all throughout the festival. Staff from both Safer Places and HSP attended the festival to provide a friendly face when participants arrived and for additional support throughout the afternoon.



"I didn't know what to expect, but I am really glad I signed up. The activities were new to me, but I had fun and hope to continue at a community session."

– Safer Places Participant

Physical activity / mental wellbeing outcomes

Participating in sport and physical activity on a regular basis has been proven to create positive change in our daily lives. Having a festival day that made the women and their children feel special and valued which developed them as individuals and boosted their self-confidence and self-worth. It enabled the women the opportunity to try activities via the Zumba, Yoga and Netball taster sessions and build rapport with each other, as well as the Safer Places team, whilst allowing the children to socialise with new people in a safe and friendly environment.

Learnings

- The need to be flexible was essential, as the circumstances of the target audience can change in an instant, for example one woman and her children confirmed their attendance at the festival in the morning, but by lunchtime her perpetrator had found them, so she had to collect her children from school and flee to another part of the country.
- Bad weather put some women off from attending as they did not want to walk or wait in the rain for public transport. One thing to consider in future is the possibility of including transport provision in the application to allow more people to attend.
- To ensure there was something for everyone, a space for free play was created at the start of the festival, allowing people to dip in and out of the activities. HSP Officers donated a huge box of arts and craft resources to the festival, meaning that children who didn't want to take part in the physical activity sessions could be creative in a different way. One child made a Santa's face out of pom poms on a paper plate, and she was proudly going to stick it on their apartment door at the refuge (photo above).

Sustainability

"I was chatting with Tracey at the end of the session and subsequently I have offered free classes to any of the clients from Safer Places that wish to come along to my classes. I do 11 a week in the Hoddesdon / Wormley area and they are welcome to attend any of them. Tracey and I chose a password to say when they come to the class so that I can identify them in a low key and private way..."

Partnerships

