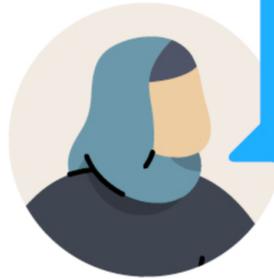


Spring 2021 - "It all Started with a game of Rounders in the park".

Rukhsana & M. begin a project to engage with mothers from the Highfields area. They engage the women with a safe place to socialize and talk about family, and they gather to play a friendly game of rounders. Women quickly flock to their session, which has no insurance, or qualified coaches. Eventually, one participant did get hurt, so Rukhsana approached Sarah at Leicester City to ask for help with the session, to provide a qualified coach.



"The project originally was to engage Moms about knife crime in youths. Many women in situations of domestic violence cannot do something like make a phone call. So we said "hey why don't we just meet in the park and people can come and see us if they want".

Rukhsana

"I had come out of a 21 year DV relationship when we started meeting up for rounders. This was pretty much my first adult friendship, I was in a situation of coercive control, so I couldn't see my family or friends. It felt like little safe space, someone was genuinely interested in me and doing something together. And we met many other women in the same circumstance. So we all started building up each others confidence, empowering one another because we understood each others challenges."

M. Project Volunteer



"To be honest, when I first saw the job advert, I already felt a barrier. But I was really encouraged and they helped me to see that they were authentic with their intentions. The fact it was 5 years made a difference too. If the role was only for one year, I wouldn't have applied. I would feel a sense of responsibility to the participants. What happens to them after its all over?"

Rukhsana

The 'Right Person' - Rukhsana Hussain

- Certified counsellor
- Founder of Outspoken a community organisation based in Highfields
- Has over 8 years experience engaging the community and working around social issues such as knife crime among youths, and anti-social behaviour
- Has extensive knowledge of Highfields and its community members

"Previously, we didnt have much visibility among South Asian audiences so we've had a difficult time reaching them. We also really struggled with representation within our organisation. We decided to change the job title, and also the nature of the contract to make it more appealing to someone from our target audience. Historically we would have hired based on qualifications, so this is a big change and ATF has played a key role in that. We wanted to break down the barriers to employment and empower the person who had the right attributes. So we really wanted to have someone who lives inside the community to be out having those conversations."

Sarah Jones, Leicester City in the Community, Community Development Manager



Target audiences chosen

- South Asian women
- First step to deciding who they needed for the job role.
- Desire to hire based on target audience needs rather than system preferences.

April, 2022 First consortium meetings

- Change the name of the program
- Changes to contract and job role of Project Manager to make it more appealing to someone from the target audience
- Dropped football from the wording
- Doesn't need to be full time hours
- Is flexible and can work around caring responsibilities
- Lack of qualifications not viewed as a barrier
- Communicated that candidate needed good knowledge of the local area/languages/culture etc.

"One thing that surprised me was that we struggled to recruit a coordinator, it took much longer than expected. We made some really simple mistakes really. In hindsight, I think we emphasised the word football too much. But you'll now notice that we don't refer to football and we changed the name to Active Women. Albeit simplistic, this was fundamental for both the recruitment of our now staff, but also participants for the program. Secondly we decided to be more flexible in our approach to recruitment in terms of flexible working; part time, term time only working and so fourth."

Alison



"This was a big opportunity for us to learn, build rapport and get a better understanding of why women don't access our programs."

Sarah

"What have I learned in this project? I think recruitment around a team is the absolute priority. Having the right people working in a place and alongside the community and myself to deliver the project is absolutely fundamental. Now I feel prepared to kind of stick to my guns with that one because I think the wrong person running a project can change everything."

Sarah



RECRUITMENT PROCESS

Community Centred Focus

Candidates applied who had strong football-based experience, but were turned down as they were not from Highfields or St. Matthews and did not represent those communities.

Held early public engagement meetings and took a participant generated name - Active Women soft start May, 2022.

Sarah approaches Rukhsana to apply for the coordinator role, however, Rukhsana grew up near the stadium and has memories of fear, violence, aggression tied to football.

Momentum and 'authentic credentials' helped to convince Rukhsana it was worth exploring the opportunity of the job role.

Began with engagement 'field trips' to Seagrave training grounds, tickets to matches during Ramadan, families were included. Primary objectives - build trust, be welcoming. Responses from those present - felt the club was genuine, sincere and authentic in its goals and had their best interests in mind.

"Everything felt like they were being truly authentic. They made sure there was space for prayer, and everything we needed for that. Also there were dates and water available for breaking the fast."

Fatimah

LCFC actively begins to try recruiting Rukhsana (recently qualified as a social worker) took Rukhsana to see a match, her first experience of seeing live football let her choose her ideal start date start in (August, 2022) and other aspects of the job Rukhsana saw alignment between her social work degree and the job role.

Active Women Full Launch, September 2022.

Length of Time - 6 months just to hire the 'right person.'

SHAPING THE PROGRAM

We knew that we needed to recruit someone from the area that we were delivering in because that's what the insight was telling us, and that's what women in St Matthews and Highfields were telling us. So the team we have today is reflective of what was asked for. We recruited based on those demands of having mental health accounted for, and having someone from within the community. That's the main point. Now the learnings from this consultation have been hugely beneficial to the project you see today, but also, from my perspective, it is hugely beneficial in terms of how we move forward with other projects in the future. For my part, I knew it would work, but I was really surprised at how well, it worked, and how fast the women came to trust us.

Alison