

LEVELLING THE FIELD PARTNERSHIP CASE STUDY 1: INTEGRATED DELIVERY

Project Name: *Steeper Steps*

Partnership Typology Type 1 - Integrated delivery: Two organisations working together delivering the project and sessions in partnership	
How the partnership operates / roles and responsibilities	About the project...
<p>The partnership consists of two organisations:</p> <p>1) Youth Action Northern Ireland (Lead organisation) Youth Action Northern Ireland was established in 1944 and works to improve the life chances of disadvantaged young people (10-25yrs). They work with young people to tackle issues most critical to them; support them to take control of their lives; enhance skills/qualifications & realise their potential. Their vision is young people are happy, healthy & hopeful.</p> <p>2) Far and Wild CIC Far and Wild is a not-for-profit agency working in the North West area of Ireland. Its client groups range from tourists, schools, community groups, young people at risk, people with accessibility needs or a disability and other disadvantaged or marginalised groups in society. It has expertise developing young women as leaders in response to a dearth of women represented in the ranks of outdoor activity instructors over decades.</p>	<p>Project aims / objectives: The project aims to enable vulnerable young women (16 - 25 yrs) to develop strategies and skills for keeping safe. Using sport creatively, the project seeks to enable women to use their increased confidence in their bodies and in their sporting abilities to increase their potential outside of sports. The project seeks to inspire women to achieve the ‘steeper steps’ they face in life to reach their full potential.</p> <p>Who the project works with: The project works with vulnerable young women (aged 16 - 25 yrs) living with the risk of violence in their everyday lives. They also work with young mothers, including those living in supported accommodation.</p> <p>Project delivery / activities: Young women access a 5-step ‘Steeper Steps’ programme which integrates sport with input around confidence building, emotional well-being and leadership. The programme uses different sports and outdoor activities including: 5k ‘walk & talk’ sessions, river walk, netball, mountain biking, rock climbing, stand up paddle boarding and an overnight camping trip. The women also take part in 10 well-being workshops, complete LIFEMAPS training and work towards ASDAN Youth Achievement Awards. Towards the end of the programme the women spend 2 days identifying future goals and also organise and participate in a celebration event. A Young Women’s Forum provides a mechanism to ensure the women’s continued and genuine participation in the project’s management.</p> <p>Intended outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young women have improved health and well-being • Young women have increased understanding of the role of gender in society • Young women have improved strategies for keeping safe and free from harm • Young women have increased leadership skills <p><i>“It’s about getting young women to think about the role and stereotypes they face – and inequalities that exist – and the opportunities that we have...Creating a space where we can focus on them and then a space where they can focus on these physical challenges, they can see that they have the courage within this physical space to do this and then translate this into their own lives and there is a versatility of skills that can cross over.” Lead worker, Lead partner Organisation</i></p>

How the partnership developed and changed:

The two partner organisations **already knew of each other** prior to applying for Levelling the Field funding. **They had previously worked together** on a number of occasions to deliver specific sessions and small pieces of work.

Clear roles and responsibilities of partners are outlined in a **partnership agreement**. The partners recognise that having the formality of an agreement is good but also are committed to reflecting and learning as they go along.

The roles of the 2 partner organisations have become more blended over time and the lead worker from YANI has become **much more involved in the delivery of the sessions** having become a trained paddle board and mountain bike instructor for F&W.

The lead worker from YANI has also been involved in recruiting new F&W instructors and has delivered **training to the F&W coaches around gender-based youth work**. The project now has 4 female coaches across all sports. This helps address issues identified around sexuality and identity amongst some of the young women.

The partnership is **building a model of best practice** which embeds the relationship between youth work, outdoor education and underpinned by gender equality practice and specifically targeting young women. This is being developed via continued reflective practice with the young women and partners resulting in a model that is grounded in practice and works for young women.

**Strengths of this partnership:**

A key strength of this partnership are the **shared values, vision and ethos** which both partner organisations have.

"They shared our values and principles around equality and psychology and gender and the environment and connecting all that – so we were easy bed fellows really". Project Lead, Partner Organisation

Linked to this, a **high level of familiarity, trust, honesty and respect between** the project staff from the two organisations delivering the project are key for this partnership. There is a genuine sense of a **shared effort and collaborative working**.

"it's about trusting that the other person knows what's the best action to take and so to have trust is really refreshing – the outdoor pursuits sector in general can be quite 'back biting'" Project Lead, Partner Organisation

Both partner organisations are based **geographically close together** which helps with planning, delivery and communications. The lead workers have well developed systems for **communication** both formally through regular review meetings and informally via WhatsApp, phone calls and email as needed.

The partners have **complementary skills and expertise and utilise these to best effect**. YANI's **knowledge of the needs of particular groups** greatly helps inform what the sessions might need to look like. F&W have the expertise **around outdoor pursuits, knowledge of the local environment and access to equipment**. The lead worker at F&W has also worked as a youth worker and has a good understanding of the needs and approaches that could work best for young people.

Benefits of working in this type of partnership:

• For partners

A key benefit for the two partner organisations was having the **opportunity to work on a developmental project** with a partner who shared the same strong values and ethos.

For F&W, a benefit was having **increased access to and engagement with the young women**. This was achieved through the support of YANI’s lead worker who brings the right blend of **skills, personality and experience to build solid relationships with the target groups**. The project requires a high degree of **flexibility and adaptability**, as every group is different, and the youth work expertise is invaluable in enabling the project to judge this and respond accordingly.

Project staff, volunteer leaders and F&W female coaches **all work together in planning, delivering and evaluating the sessions** with the young women. This ensures that they all get to know the young women, that relationships are meaningful and they are aware of individuals vulnerabilities, personal barriers and strengths and can tailor the programme to best suit their needs.



• For Staff

Project staff (coaches) have benefitted through **gaining new skills and awareness** linked to working with vulnerable young women, around gender conscious youth work and the value of a person centred, inclusive approach:

“F&W ... are different to other outdoor activity providers...their approach and practice comes from a more... ‘connecting with the person and what they can get from their experience of being in nature?’ rather than ‘what can they show off or what’s the best trick?’... they see people as people...not as numbers ...the inclusiveness ...the idea that ‘anyone can do this’.” Coach in Partner Organisation

Coaches also had an increased awareness of **the value of women only activities in terms of improved well-being:**

“...what the feminine energy brings to activities like this is more nourishing ...having this time for reflection on yourself, through the yoga and gratitude activities...taking time to reflect on yourself and how you feel, it’s so important.”

Coach in Partner Organisation

A number of **personal benefits** were expressed by coaches relating to the value of encouraging reflection and openness and of combining youth work with outdoor activities;

“I loved the chance of processing and reflection that is being encouraged. The space for feeling achievement. It set my day of with such a good feeling!!” Coach

“I was reflecting...on how beneficial it has been to be ...part of the youth work sessions and not just activities as it really does mean the trust and positive relationships build and I feel that makes such a difference when it comes to the activity sessions. One individual today really began to open up about her life and we were able to have some great and meaningful conversations ...” Coach

• For Beneficiaries

The young women highlighted a range of benefits resulting from their engagement in the project. They talked about the **value of the women only space**, and the **opportunity to try out activities and sports** in a ‘safe’ environment.

“When males are there, they are very dominant...it’s hard for us to show what we are good at ...so having women only means we can do it in our own way...no pressure.” Project Participant

For one of the young mothers, the benefits were **having a break and some time to enjoy and reflect that was just for them;**

“It’s taken me away from being a mother...and given me another side of being an adult and having fun...I loved the fact it was taking us away from the wee ones and everything was provided for us ...And being with mothers, that was what made it special....” Project Participant

The young women felt the project served to **encourage them to try new things and to face their fears** to see what they are capable of;

“it’s definitely a step outside my comfort zone cos paddle boarding or the wall climbing... it was exhilarating – [and] so much fun...” Project Participant

Having female staff and coaches was considered of great importance and helped **promote positive role models:**

“having more female coaches is kind of taking the masculinity out of outdoor activities...and its very empowering. It promotes positive role models for women.” Project Participant

Young women also reported how they had increased their **confidence, resilience and improved social skills;**

“I have developed my social skills and my speaking abilities... it’s putting yourself out there and pushing yourself ...” Project Participant

Challenges of working in this type of partnership?

The partners generally felt there were **skilled at managing challenges** as they emerged and had a good system for ‘nipping them in the bud’.

External challenges identified related to the lack of political leadership in Northern Ireland and the **uncertainty around Brexit** and the related implications of this. This was also felt to be an opportunity to further highlight the need to take more responsibility as a society to help enable young people to make good choices and stay positive.

From a project delivery perspective, **seasonal changes** also present challenges to engagement around what’s acceptable (e.g. low engagement in activities when the weather is cold) and there was a need to challenge young women’s assumptions around this.



Key learning for the organisations as a result of working in this type of partnership

The project partners have a **clear commitment to learning and reflection** and build in time for peer reflection after each session.

The project has learnt about **flexibility and the need to adopt creative solutions** to meet the needs of different groups and individuals.

Learning has been developed around **connecting to the environment and the value of this in terms of maintaining well-being** and dealing with life challenges – and how this can be integrated more within other programmes.

Learning also around the **role and value of female coaches** to help women deal with some of the issues they are facing outside of the sessions.

Learning around the **practical needs that will enable participation**, such as access to safe space, transport, and food. For young mothers’ childcare provision and addressing ‘separation anxiety’ from their children was important.

Learning about the value and use of **positive male role models** who have sensitivity about the issues the women bring.

Key reflections or points to consider on this type of partnership:

This model has **proved very successful** for the 2 partner organisations and the young women accessing the project. Staff / coaches are also clearly benefitting in terms of their increased awareness, knowledge and skills in supporting women from vulnerable groups allowing them to become more than ‘just a coach’.

The success of the partnership relies heavily on the **well-established and firm connection** between the two lead workers at YANI and F&W who have an open and genuine relationship. Good use of youth work principles and a good understanding of gender-based working are also central to the project’s success. Partners have clear roles and are very open to learning from each other.

The training and support provided to F&W coaches will mean that gender-based working is embedded. However, without future funding for the youth worker role, it may be challenging to maintain the engagement of the young women. Longer term planning and next steps for the women are encouraged through LIFEMAPS training and work towards ASDAN Youth Achievement Awards.

LEVELLING THE FIELD PARTNERSHIP CASE STUDY 2: REFERRAL PARTNERSHIP → INTEGRATED DELIVERY

Project Name: *Brighton Table Tennis Club*

Partnership Typology Type 1- Integrated Delivery: All partner organisations working together to deliver the project (and sessions) in partnership

*N.B. This partnership was originally coded and planned to be delivered as a **Type 2 – Referral Partnership** – i.e. one or two organisations being the referral path (and supporting organisation) into one organisation that delivers the majority of the sessions.*

How the partnership operates / roles and responsibilities

The partnership consists of three organisations.

- **Brighton Table Tennis club (BTTC)** – is the **lead** organisation. Established over twelve years ago, BTTC works with people from some of the most disadvantaged areas in Brighton & Hove. They work to support people of all ages to improve health, celebrate diversity and build a strong community.
- **Friends, Families and Travellers (FFT)** is a **partner** organisation. It's a national charity that works with all Gypsies, Travellers and Roma, regardless of ethnicity, nationality, culture or background. Its mission is to end racism and discrimination against the travelling communities and protect the right to pursue a nomadic way of life.
- **Brighton Women's Centre (BWC)** also a **partner** organisation has been supporting women in Brighton and Hove for 45 years. Their aim is to empower women and reduce inequality by promoting independence in a safe, women-only space. BWC delivers holistic, integrated services to women with multiple complex needs.

Originally, this project was planned as a referral partnership with the two partner organisations referring into BTT, who were to deliver the table tennis coaching and BOOST sessions. FFT and BWC were originally to provide support staff to attend the weekly sessions with the women and wrap around support where necessary. However, over time, the project has been delivered more in partnership with all three organisations delivering and supporting during the sessions.



About the project

Project aims / objectives:

Through a combination of table tennis, life skills coaching and educational activities, the project aims to improve the health, wellbeing and future life opportunities of some of the most vulnerable women in the city.

Who the project works with:

Women from the traveller and gypsy community, women who are marginalised, homeless, insecurely housed and / or involved in the criminal justice system.

Project delivery / activities:

- 1:1 and group coaching sessions (weekly) at Brighton Table Tennis Club – with other support and BOOST training offered where appropriate
- Group coaching sessions delivered by BTTC coaches (weekly) at HMP Downview



Intended outcomes:

- Increase social inclusion for women and girls
- Improve the confidence of women and girls to nurture leadership skills
- Increase opportunities for women to become education, employment and training ready
- Increase overall well-being of participants

Target numbers:

- Core target group – female players referred from FFT = 40, BWC = 40, from other BTTC networks not included in this project = 20. Total **100 female players**
- Frontline workers - BTTC coaches, volunteers and partner staff **x 4**.

How the partnership developed and changed:

The three partner organisations **already knew of each other** prior to bidding for the LtF funding and BTT and FFT were already delivering another project in partnership.

Initially the sessions were **delivered separately** to women from BWC and FFT, however it was recognised early on that there were benefits to **merging the sessions**.

“It was really organic... when we first started BWC were having separate sessions as were FFT, we figured out quite early [in the project] that these should merge into one and all the women just integrated really well” Partner organisation, key worker

In addition, over time the staff from the partner organisation have become **much more involved in the delivery of the sessions**, some have **upskilled themselves** and become trained coaches.

“I’m more hands on now I’ve gained more confidence, so I feel I can offer more on techniques” Partner organisation, key worker

Regardless of which women they’ve referred to the sessions the staff across all three organisations **can and do support and offer advice** to any of the women attending the sessions, which allows the women to benefit from a collective skills and knowledge base.

“we all know where we are coming from and what our organisations are for and what our limitations are... because we merge so well if someone has perhaps got a particular issue I may talk to [other partner] because I think he’s got more experience in that than me, or if one of the players has got a bit upset or is going through some difficulty we always have a chat to make sure they are safe, we all use our own expertise” Partner organisation, key worker

Strengths of this partnership:

From the outset, excellent **communication channels** between the three organisations at both senior management and delivery level were put in place and have proved beneficial. **Quarterly meetings** are held between SMT and more **informal discussions** are held weekly with the delivery staff.

Strong working relationships between the project staff from the three organisations delivering the project are key for this partnership. There is a genuine sense of a shared effort, **working collectively**, with a large degree of **respect and trust** for one another.

“I think the project staff make it work. That sense of teamwork that we are all working for the project and the same goals. Also, that trust that we all have between each other” Project Lead

The partners also really value and **recognise the strength in BTTC as being the lead organisation** and feel the expertise, clarity and structure provided really helps this project and partnership work.

“The partnership balance works really well ...I think it’s the dynamic really, the fact that there’s one lead partner, that helps out a lot, so not everyone is getting the information from CR, so its directed to [lead] and he will then have a meeting with us all to discuss it... he has given us loads of direction” Partner organisation, key worker

The ability to make **joint decisions** has enabled the partner organisations to be fully immersed in the project and feel valued members of the team.

“In terms of operational delivery and decisions around the project, the partners and staff directly involved in running the sessions are involved in decision making” Partner organisation, Lead

Benefits of working in this type of partnership:		
• For partners	• For Staff	• For Beneficiaries
<p>The women’s organisations talked about the benefit of being able to offer something new and different to their client groups, allowing some women for the first time to be exposed to physical activity.</p> <p><i>“This is first time we’ve been able to engage such socially excluded women in a sporting activity ... this has been great to be able to provide something very different for the women in terms of improving their wellbeing”</i> Partner organisation (Lead)</p> <p>BTTC explained how crucial the partners had been in engaging and accessing these vulnerable women.</p> <p><i>“What BWC and FFT have brought is expertise in their field and the referral network which is key ... these are quite hard to reach individuals and it’s taken time but with [named staff] here encouraging them, there are regularly 12-18 players”</i> Lead organisation</p> <p>Another major benefit was seeing how well women from different communities integrated in a way they perhaps never would before and how this was positively impacting on the BTTC culture more widely.</p> <p><i>“It can be quite hard in a traveller community for women to integrate into wider society, but the TT club is so welcoming and such a safe space that it just created the perfect environment for that integration”.</i> Partner organisation, Key worker</p>	<p>Staff felt they were learning a lot about one another’s organisations and their client groups as well as new ways of working, including new approaches and strategies to use in certain situations, benefiting their working practices. They are all widening their networks through working so closely with each another and learning about other local organisations that has enabled greater signposting and opportunities for their clients.</p> <p><i>“it’s really good to learn new practices and learn about other events and sessions that are going on [that benefit their client groups]...I think partnerships are definitely the way forward when applying for projects”</i> Partner Organisation, Key Worker</p> <p>Involvement in the project had also benefited workers on a personal level, as well as developing new skills in table tennis, they were gaining so much from their involvement and the relationships they were developing with the women.</p> <p><i>“I get the most out of the relationships with the women and I feel I have grown so much as a person over the last year, because I didn’t realise I could help people, I love the fact that people come to me and want to talk and I can help and so I get so much back because I’ve learned so much about them and their lives”</i> Partner organisation, Key worker</p>	<p>The women were able to highlight a whole range of benefits. Several talked about building confidence and self-esteem, the project had enabled them to meet new people and feel less isolated.</p> <p><i>“It has given me confidence and I’m making new friendships... it’s the highlight of my week I can kind of forget about the things that worry me. It’s a really good release and I’m also getting much better at table tennis”</i> Beneficiary</p> <p>Others also highlighted the health benefits through being more active.</p> <p><i>“It’s amazing! Great, friendly and happy atmosphere enabling me to learn new skills and stay mobile, as I’m disabled and have learning difficulties... I feel totally included in the activities”</i> Beneficiary</p> <p>One beneficiary explained how she’d been involved in LtF whilst in Downview prison, she’d enjoyed playing table tennis so much and felt she’d developed such a good relationship with the team that she wanted to carry on attending LtF upon release. She now travels from Portsmouth every Tuesday to play and has undertaken her coaching qualification. She’s hoping this will lead her onto...</p> <p><i>“New opportunities and a new start”.</i> Beneficiary</p>

Challenges of working in this type of partnership

A couple of challenges were highlighted and they were mentioned by the senior managers / leads across the three organisations, opposed to key workers and beneficiaries who were unable to identify any challenges to the partnership.

Although a **partnership agreement** had been set up at the outset, it was felt with hindsight they should have made this a **more formal document** – in terms of being clearer about each partner’s roles and responsibilities, documenting what was expected in relation to number of hours / commitment to the project, holding each partner more to account for these, along with implementing staged payments related to targets. The Lead organisation would have liked some **advice on developing** this at the outset or examples to work from, as this was a new concept for them, being a small yet rapidly growing organisation. Going forward they will ensure they make **partnership agreements more robust**. It was noted this hasn’t had a detrimental effect on the partnership or relationships, rather it’s been more of an internal **‘learning curve’**.

“we were fairly naïve at the outset and our partnership agreement was fairly loose, from speaking to others at the event we realised some had really tight agreements, with some only paying when key milestones were met”

Lead organisation

One of the partners also talked about a challenge for them internally, when considering being part of the partnership. As a women’s organisation they had to carefully **consider how the sessions would operate outside of their venue** - ensuring the sessions were run in a safe, suitable venue and environment for the women was essential.

Key learning for the organisations as a result of working in this type of partnership

The partner organisations highlighted how much they’d **learnt about sport and physical activity** from involvement in this project and they both intended to continue using sport in other projects and partnerships going forward.

“This has been a real stepping-stone for us thinking about sport and activity which historically for the cohort we support don’t naturally reach out to, so it’s been great to think about how we can do more of that with other partners” Partner organisation (Lead)

B TTC highlighted many things they’ve learnt particularly about **working with different communities**, which will be really useful for continuing to ensure integration across all their work. In response to this and to support their work going forward they are considering piloting a new community coaching qualification. The club is in discussions with UK Coaching and CIMSPA about developing an accredited, experiential course focusing on community integration and helping all sports clubs, not just table tennis clubs to develop the skills to use sport for integration.

In terms of the future all three partners, key workers and beneficiaries **would like to see this project continue** and have already applied for further funding for that to happen. The partners are in regular dialogue about this and also other projects they are working that benefit their client groups, so it there **is a genuine desire for the relationships and the partnership to continue developing** over time, even post the LtF funding.

“We are now more entrenched ... we are developing a shared passion for social cohesion... we will definitely maintain our links” Lead

Key reflections or points to consider on this type of partnership:

This model has **proved very successful** for stakeholders and beneficiaries alike. It has become a project delivered **in real partnership** and has allowed so much learning across the project for the organisations and staff, whilst **enabling the integration of communities through using sport**.



On the flip side, perhaps this is a **less sustainable model**, even though women from across the partners will continue to attend and staff within BTT have been upskilled in terms of working with marginalised women. Without future funding, key



workers from the partner organisations will not be present at sessions, so there is a fear that there may be a decline in new women coming

through (not through lack of referrals but because **the women have such strong relationships with the workers, they may not feel confident attending sessions without them**). There will also be less expertise on site during sessions if certain issues / challenges arise.

LEVELLING THE FIELD PARTNERSHIP CASE STUDY 3: PROJECT MANAGEMENT RELATIONSHIP

Project Name: *Being Active, Changing Futures*

Partnership Typology 3 - Project Management relationship:

A project management organisation overseeing the project which is then being delivered by one (or more) partner organisations on the ground

How the partnership operates / roles and responsibilities

The partnership consists of **three organisations**;

- **Yorkshire Sport Foundation** (YSF) is a County Sports Partnership and regional charity that operates to connect, influence and provide sport and physical activity across the geography of South and West Yorkshire.
- **YWCA Yorkshire** (YWCA) is a registered charity working with young women, children and families. Through a range of accommodation and support services, they seek to empower individuals to live independent, happy and fulfilled lives.
- **Together Women Project** (TWP) is an independent charity which is influential in ensuring that women offenders in Yorkshire and Humberside have access to gender responsive services delivered in women-only environments.

Yorkshire Sport Foundation is the lead organisation – they act in a management capacity, overseeing the project administration, providing consultancy advice and training with two delivery organisations – **TWP** working across two sites (Leeds and Bradford) and **YWCA** (based in Doncaster).

The two women’s organisations operate and deliver the project in different ways. TWP has recruited two community champions (one in each delivery area). Whilst, YWCA’s project workers deliver the programme within their day to day roles.



About the project

Project aims / objectives:

Using a range of sports and physical activities this project aims to give women the strength, motivation, aspiration and resilience to be the **agents for change in their own lives** and in the wider community. The project empowers women to take part, lead, volunteer and mentor others.

Who the project works with:

The project works with **women facing complex issues** in their lives including; young women at transition from care, women in 'troubled families', those who have experienced Domestic Abuse, women in housing need or unemployed and offenders. A high percentage of women across all these groups have mental health issues and are often isolated and physically inactive.

Project delivery / activities:

- Training delivered to project workers, community champions and women
- Sport and physical activity sessions delivered to women – these are participant led and encouraged to be weekly
- Confidence and resilience ‘away day’ events are held twice a year, involving staff from all three partner organisations as well as the beneficiaries



Intended outcomes:

- Increase the number of women who choose to lead healthier and active lives
- Increased medium and long term life aspirations
- Women will be more resilient and gain the capacity to cope with everyday life

Target numbers:

Overall engagement of women accessing support and activities = 200

- Via YWCA = 40
- Via TWP community champions (across 2 sites) = 160

How the partnership developed and changed:

The three partner organisations **did not know each other** prior to bidding for the LtF funding. YSF actively researched credible organisations working in the women’s sector, across the Yorkshire region.

“We knew we were never going to be the delivery partner of this project... we are the project manager, we don’t have access to the women we wanted to reach so we did a lot of research with the big players around that patch”. Lead organisation

The partnership was **built on solid foundations** in that all three organisations had a similar ethos and vision. A **strong partnership agreement** was drawn up at the outset making clear what each organisations’ roles and responsibilities would be.

Regular communication, using various channels has proved vital. There is frequent dialogue by phone and email between YSF and the delivery teams (managers and workers).

Visits are made by YSF to the delivery sites to **help coach and support** and quarterly steering group meetings have been really successful, involving all three partners. These meetings provide opportunities to discuss any issues and share learning across the different sites and organisations.

Strengths of this partnership:

This partnership allows **each organisation to work to its own strength**, whilst also sharing expertise and learning from each other.

“You have expertise from different organisations coming together so can perhaps deliver a more enhanced and wholesome service that brings all the different elements to it”. Partner organisation (Lead)

It enables the **delivery organisations to effectively involve ‘hard to reach’ women** through excellent engagement and building trusting relationships over time. They are able to work with their own client groups **flexibly and in ways that work best for them**.

“We can work it around the individual a bit more... The added benefit is the working relationship we have with our clients, sometimes it can be quite difficult to build a relationship... but by doing activities together, you become more of an equal and not seen as much as a worker” Partner organisation (worker)

YSF concentrate on managing the contract (including the admin and financial elements), sourcing and providing training and consultancy support to the other partners.

“For this project I would say we try to take away much of the paperwork and stress of the project to enable the delivery agents to get on and do what they do best which is deliver brilliant services to women” Project Lead

Challenges of working in this type of partnership:

Few challenges have been identified as a result of working in this partnership and that’s mainly due to having **strong relationships** across all three partners and regular communication.

One partner suggested in multiple partnerships **‘costs’ are always higher** which can prevent as much money being spent on front line delivery, but equally valued the strengths each organisation brought.

A further challenge highlighted was **‘matrix management’** because of the layers of management and reporting from delivery organisation to YSF and from YSF to Comic Relief. However, it was noted that although it presents a challenge;

“it’s not unsurmountable, it’s all about communication”. Partner organisation (Lead)

YSF also explained, at first they had concerns about the two different delivery models as initially the YWCA model seemed more successful (having established paid key workers), because the TWP approach took longer to come to fruition, but that’s actually flipped now and the TWP way of working is proving very successful (in terms of their numbers).

“There was a small amount of anxiety in the beginning thinking have we done this right – should we have operated the same model with both, but the reality is that the different delivery models is actually quite important because both organisation can operate as they find most easy”. Project Lead

Benefits of working in this type of partnership:

• For partners

All three partners noted a **range of benefits** for their organisations and themselves. The experience of working in such a unique partnership has been very positive and has allowed them all to **learn from one another** (ranging from different processes and use of policies, through to practice). They have all been **exposed to new ways of working** and have a **deeper understanding and appreciation of their partners' key areas of work** i.e. working with women and girls or working in the field of sport and physical activity. Involvement in the project has provided **opportunities to network** (via the learning event) which has proved beneficial to this project, as **links were made** with British Fencing (Maslaha project) resulting in fencing training being delivered to staff working across the organisations, allowing a new sport to be offered.

“From the event we have connected with British Fencing and have sent some of our leaders on fencing training and now that’s being offered as part of our delivery” Lead organisation

• For Staff

YWCA workers highlighted how they are able to use the project to **enhance their work** with their families and are able to ‘trial and error’ what works for them. They are using the opportunity to undertake activities together **building and gaining the women’s trust and sharing their experiences**, which in turn is giving the women confidence to go and try new activities on their own and with their families. The staff also recognised the **health benefits** on themselves and their families.

“Definitely seeing the benefits myself. It’s making me become more active and it’s easier to spread that message [to the service users] ... because if you’re feeling it people can then believe it”. Partner organisation (key worker)

TWP champions, explained that through a coaching course delivered by YSF they’ve **developed new techniques** to support their working practice.

“It’s taught us how to coach and how to make it more fun for people, it taught us to use activities that can involve everyone so you’re not waiting around for one person. So, it’s learning new techniques and how to adapt and adjust” Partner organisation (key worker)

• For Beneficiaries

Beneficiaries have been **exposed or introduced to a range of sports and physical activities** they may never have experienced or being able to try in the past, mainly due to the multiple barriers they face. As a result of this project, the women have developed a greater understanding and have felt the **benefits to them** both physically and mentally. Many have gained more **confidence and self-esteem**, enhancing their lives in a number of ways.

Some of the women have attended training and **obtained new qualifications**, which is having a huge positive impact on them and **their futures**. For others, it has provided a real focus, even **preventing re-offending**.



“There was a time that I wouldn’t even step out of the house, but it’s helped me to get motivated. I can honestly say it’s one of the best things I’ve done and I’m now out of bother” Beneficiary

Involvement in the programme has allowed the women **to meet new people** from different geographic regions, often with very different backgrounds, but through a **shared experience** of taking part in sport / physical activities they have united and formed new friendships.

“If we tried to put these women together outside of this project, half of them wouldn’t get on, they honestly wouldn’t even speak to one another” Partner organisation (key worker)

Changes in the organisation a result of working in this type of partnership

YSF have found the **steering group approach** a really useful **communication mechanism** and will continue to adopt this where appropriate in other projects going forward.

“Using the steering group approach has been really beneficial – empowering people to make their own decisions about their own communities – this project has used that way of working and has added to our learning about this approach”. Project Lead

They also have found the **Partnership Agreements** a better tool than an SLA which they’d generally draw up when entering a partnership.

“I would be looking to use it in the future [PA]. We normally use an SLA but it feels very much like ‘we want you to do this’ whereas a partnership agreement is as a collective ‘we are going to achieve this’... it puts it more in a positive light rather than a dictatorship model”. Project Lead

YWCA have **introduced sport and physical activity** into another ‘wellbeing programme’ and have started recording physical activity within their monitoring processes across the organisation.

“We never had this included before – our CE has been really impressed with the positive impact, we have really embraced it as a service”. Project Lead

All partners have recognised the strengths of **working with partners that are specialists** in a certain field and how to gain new skills and knowledge from them and they will take this learning into new partnerships.

“They [YSF] are qualified and really knowledgeable [in sport] and they have skills that we obviously need to learn, which we are trying to do” Partner organisation, key worker

Key learning for the organisations as a result of working in this type of partnership

For **YSF** the learning has been about **understanding the multiple complex needs** of the women they are engaging with and learning how they **need to remain flexible** and adapt to their requirements. Appreciating what may be a small step for one person may be a huge step for another.

“We are constantly learning particularly about the complex issues of this client group. We would like to take that forward to other partners in our sector and look at how we can change the way we deliver physical activity to women and girls”. Partner organisation (key worker)

YWCA and **TWP** both have learnt a lot about **the power of sport and physical activity** and the endless benefits it can provide (mentally, socially and physically).

“In the beginning I didn’t think that sport was anyway linked to mental health but through this project I have seen that it is... it’s helped get different people together, sport does have that element” Partner organisation (key worker)

In both organisations, staff and **women have been upskilled** meaning they will be able to continue providing or accessing sport and activity **beyond the life of the project**. They both intend to continue to embed physical activity into their work going forward and look at ways to include it across their organisations more widely. Through the use of sport and activities workers at YWCA have been able to **identify and quantify other skills** and attributes the women have that may not have been displayed or identified through their previous support work.

“From them doing the activities I’m now able to pull out their strengths... when they show leadership skills for example, so when you’re helping them to do their CV, they’ll say I haven’t got any leadership skills, I left school and don’t have any qualifications, but I can say I’ve seen you doing x,y and z ... it gives you a forum to point it out” Partner organisation (key worker)

Key reflections or points to consider on this type of partnership

This model appears to work for partnerships with **multiple partners delivering distinct elements**. Allowing a lead organisation to undertake the management, administration and co-ordination (preventing ‘too many cooks’ scenarios). It enables the delivery partners to focus on their niche client group. **This model upskills both staff and women**, therefore, it has **potential for longer term benefits and sustainability** beyond the life of the funding.

‘I’m hoping that our role [YSF] will be, that by the end of the process they [TWP / YWCA] will not need our support in the future. Otherwise it will always be the sport sector doing something to another sector which isn’t sustainable” Project Lead

LEVELLING THE FIELD PARTNERSHIP CASE STUDY 4: PROJECT MANAGEMENT RELATIONSHIP

Project Name: *Project 51*

Partnership Typology 3 - Project Management relationship: A project management organisation overseeing the project which is then being delivered by one (or more) partner organisations on the ground	
How the partnership operates / roles and responsibilities	About the project...
<p>Project 51 is a partnership between Sported and Women in Sport (WiS).</p> <p>Sported is a free to join membership organisation that supports 2675 community and youth and sport organisations across the UK, aiming to build capacity and sustainability. All Sported members use the power of sport and physical activity to prevent and counter issues impacting young people today including youth violence, community cohesion and mental health.</p> <p>Women in Sport is a research charity founded in 1984, with the goal of giving every woman and girl in the UK the opportunity to experience the transformational rewards of sport. Their main mission is around creating equality for women and girls in sport around 3 main areas: increasing women’s participation in sport; transforming the sports sector to make it fairer; and normalising sport for women and girls.</p>	<p>About the project...</p> <p>Project aims / objectives: Project 51 aims to help girls in the most socially deprived areas of the UK fulfil their potential and use sport to overcome the impact of negative gender stereotypes. It aims to tackle these stereotypes at the grassroots by helping community groups to improve their knowledge and understanding of how to engage girls and young women, aged 11-18, in sport and physical activity.</p> <p>Who the project works with: The main beneficiaries are girls 11-18 yrs living in a deprived area of the UK engaging with a Sported group. The delivery model also relies on group leaders/coaches running Sported groups, Sported volunteer mentors and Sported Regional and Country managers.</p> <p>Project delivery / activities: WiS delivers ‘train the trainer’ training to Sported volunteer mentors who then deliver training to sported members, rather than partner organisations delivering directly to beneficiaries. The project provides support and expertise and knowledge and skills to go and deliver this to our groups.</p> <p>Intended outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Girls attending the community sports and youth groups are less restricted in their aspirations by gender stereotypes • Girls attending the sports activities within the community sports and youth groups have increased confidence • Girls attending the sports activities within the community sports and youth groups have increased confidence • Community Sports and youth groups have increased knowledge and understanding of how to engage girls in Sport/physical activity <p>Target numbers: Girls 11-18 yrs living in a deprived area of the UK engaging with a Sported group (20 per group). 9 peer influencers across the project (3 per area). Leaders/coaches running Sported groups (72 based on 2 per group) Sported Regional and Country Managers (12) Sported Volunteer mentors (36)</p>

How the partnership developed and changed:

Sported and WIS had worked together before and realised it was a good fit. Sported has a 70/30 split in favour of men amongst their clubs and so had identified a need to do targeted work with women and girls. WiS provided specific insight and research expertise around women and girls and Sported provided access to the groups and members via their community clubs.

“We understood each other organisations and had a similar mindset about what we were trying to achieve.”

The partners created a proposal as to how they could work together and then applied to ‘Levelling the field’.

“Being able to bring together our expertise was perfect at that time”

**Strengths of this partnership:**

The two partner organisations have an alignment of values and mission, with both CEOs being very much behind the project and are supportive and driving it forward.

“it’s key knowing where you want to get to and all partners being on board with that. All partners will have their own things they want to get out of it but having that central vision for the project is really really key.”

The partners also bring complementary skills and expertise. WIS bring insight and expertise around women, girls and sport which really adds value. WiS also have skills around M&E;

“it was really nice to have someone to lead and support in that area [M&E] – we have been able to learn a lot from what they do.”

Sported have an established and effective delivery mechanism through their membership and bring access to **target communities** through this. Both partners also share an office and feel it helps being in the **same location**.


The partnership has well established communication systems with regular whole project team meetings 4 times a year and weekly check-ins so issues and challenges are flagged. They also have a system for **shared documents** so anything that’s updated is shared immediately.

A key strength is the levels of trust and honesty between partners meaning that problems seldom escalates as they are able to be open and honest about it from the start and deal with it together.

*“I feel like there is a **good sense of trust** – we both believe that the other organisation is doing everything they can do to make it work. That’s really important...”*

There is also *flexibility, supportive challenge and an openness* to learning from each other.

“You can get a bit stuck working in your own organisations – so people challenging you and ways of working can be really helpful, asking ;‘why do you do it like that?’

Benefits of working in this type of partnership:		
• For partners	• For Staff	• For Beneficiaries / Sported Groups
<p>Having worked together before, the partners had confidence that this was the right way of working.</p> <p><i>“We really value the relationship we have...and enjoy working with them and have a feeling that we are quite similar in terms of organisational culture and that they fit really well for us” Project Lead, Lead partner</i></p> <p>Through the partnership, partners have gained experience and insights around supporting teenage girls from low socio-economic groups.</p> <p><i>“There is a whole host of learning for us around working with teenage girls and the challenges of this...” Project Lead, Partner</i></p> <p>The partnership has also led to shared networking and the transfer learning to other projects and other partnership opportunities.</p> <p><i>“We get to know each other’s partners which may lead to and other opportunities to work together.” Project Lead, Partner</i></p>	<p>For Staff</p> <p>Volunteer mentors and sported Regional Managers have increased their capacity through development of new knowledge and skills around engaging women and girls. The training and resources provided by WiS have helped the mentors deliver the training to sported members.</p> <p>Sported groups have benefitted from the local knowledge from local trainers and learnt how to better engage with girls through improved understanding of girls needs and wants.</p> <p><i>“This is a new way of thinking and working for many of our members...” Staff member, Lead partner</i></p> <p>There has also been learning about sport as a tool for engagement and the key principles for greater engagement on the wider issues affecting girls.</p>  <p><i>“So it might become an environment where they share other things that are on their minds e.g. girls finding someone they can talk to about issues...So that sport is a vehicle for that greater engagement and not the only reason for them showing up and taking part.” Staff member, Lead partner</i></p>	<p>For Beneficiaries / Sported Groups</p> <p>Mentors and groups have learnt the value of consulting with girls and women about their needs and preferences;</p> <p><i>“Some of our clubs and groups don’t even talk to the young people and then wonder why they drop out...”</i></p> <p>Sported group leaders have valued the access to research and knowledge and mentoring support;</p> <p><i>“The training provided a good background in sports science and research that helps inform what we are doing. Getting mentoring and support from other women is also really valuable.” Coach, Sported group</i></p> <p>Some of the young women engaged in the activities have reported benefits in terms of: improved levels of aspiration as a result of being less constrained by gender stereotypes; increased resilience, motivation and confidence; increased self-efficacy, influencing, leadership skills.</p> <p>Some of the young women engaged in the project have become ‘Young influencers’ who are doing different things that work for them in their areas. Examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities to attend and speak at different sporting events. • Set up their own sporting activities and coaching sessions. • Set up women and girl engagement events. • Produced strong imagery around girls taking part in different sports.

Challenges of working in this type of partnership

Sported mentors are very diverse and so the training has had to be tailored to the needs of different mentors e.g. some have never sat in a 3 hr training session and others have lots of experience.

Working with community groups can be more challenging than working with other more formal constituted sport groups. Groups also have different needs (e.g. English as a second language) and so there has been a need to make the training accessible to different groups.

How different groups take the training on board is different and how research messages are tailored so they're still relevant to different audiences yet still valid.

Key learning for the organisations as a result of working in this type of partnership

The partner organisations highlighted how much they'd **learnt more about women and sport** from delivery of Project 51. The consultation with the girls was seen as really valuable and led to a series of learning points around barriers to engagement;

"a football group where girls didn't turn up every month and they found out it was to do with period poverty and they didn't want to play when they didn't have access to sanitary products so they provided these in the changing rooms." Staff member, Lead Partner

*"there are **barriers to women and girls doing sport** – there is also another layer barriers that come from being disadvantaged which come from lack of confidence or not knowing how clubs work or how sport works or not having the right kit or not being fit or having any positivity around healthy eating or drinking water ...we have learnt a lot about this... and it means we reach more women and girls." Staff member, Lead Partner*

Working in partnership has also served to challenge some of the assumptions held around working with girls.

"Working with WIS has challenged our thinking around assumptions about the girls in our groups e.g. that girls in our groups don't want to take part in sport in the winter – that is an absolute assumption – we need to ask them what they want and consult with them. The methodical way WIS work makes us think about consultation first and then what next - in terms of a means of engaging different groups." Staff member, Lead Partner

There has also been learning around M&E and how best to get feedback from the girls in the groups:

"surveying the girls...wasn't that simple at all – so now we work with the volunteer mentors on getting consent early on and planning for how they would get the girls to fill in the surveys." Staff member, Lead Partner

There has been learning around who the key **young influencers** are for girls who want to be more physically active, learning about the benefits of using real life role models rather than elite athletes.

There has also been learning about partnership working and the benefits of marrying specific subject expertise with access to target groups.

Key reflections or points to consider on this type of partnership:

Capacity building and sustainability is a key focus of all Sported work to enable the groups to continue to deliver.

"We (Partner organisations) are not there to deliver but to support and empower members to deliver. That's always been the ethos."

The project has found there to be a huge appetite amongst Sported members, and mentors, to continue this work.

The project had provided a Model that will be used for new programmes and one that can be adapted to work across other areas of inclusion – such as disability, BAME, LGBTQ.