

## Slade Gardens Sport and Physical Activity [SPA] Club

Report on pilot project, May – July 2017

By Abs Tripp, DASL Intosport Worker



### Summary

I designed, coordinated and led the project as part of my work programme for Lambeth Intosport and Lambeth Get Out Get Active [GOGA].

Over the ten weeks of the pilot project the club has offered an inclusive, relaxed, sociable atmosphere with a variety of sport and physical activities for people to try. Eighteen disabled people have attended over the ten sessions and activities have included: yoga and mindfulness, warm up stretches, exercises on outdoor gym bars, volleyball, walking and cycling. Here's what one person said about the club;



“Before this I wasn’t doing anything. Now I have started walking to work, I’ve lost weight, those dead muscles are alive. I have really enjoyed coming, and exercising with a group is so much more motivating, it’s fun. I’d never have used the gym bars, without Lincoln showing us as a group.”

Now I’d like to share my thoughts on the successes of the pilot project:

“Everyone has bonded, volunteers, participants and staff, and you can see how this gives people the confidence to try or to run an activity they may not normally do. Seeing people cycle when they haven’t for years is so uplifting, you can see their faces light up and their confidence grow and then when they progress from the Gardens to the road, they get a real sense of achievement. The group are so welcoming to new people and to people who may not be able to speak or read; for example; everyone has learnt to finger spell their name and they helped another person to do this who cannot read or write and two volunteers have had fingerspelling conversations with our DeafBlind participant. Watching one volunteer lead a session on the gym bars, was brilliant, the first time, hesitant and then the second time, really getting people into it. The dedication and support of the participants, volunteers and staff has been fantastic; we have all learned so much and gained so much confidence together.”

**About Slade Gardens** [www.sladegardens.org.uk/index.htm](http://www.sladegardens.org.uk/index.htm)

Slade Gardens is a small park in a densely populated area on the border of south Stockwell and north Brixton. It includes an adventure playground, play area for under fives, adult exercise equipment and a dog walking area. It is managed by Friends of Slade Gardens in partnership with Lambeth Council as part of the Cooperative Parks Programme.

It is close to We Are 336, Lambeth’s Disability Community Hub, where DASL is based. It was chosen as the venue for this pilot project after I had led a series of lunchtime walks, starting from We are 336, to the park and noticed the potential for use for a wider range of activities. It offers wide paths for novice cyclists, outdoor gym bars and two large flat green spaces for games and yoga.

I discovered that some disabled people involved in the lunchtime walks live near to the park but never used it. Nearby, there are also several supported housing projects and two large residential care homes with which I had been making contact to see if I could support the residents to access more opportunities to do sport and physical activity.



**People Involved**

Eighteen disabled people have taken part in the programme, aged from 16yrs to 96yrs, eleven female and seven male. They have different disabilities and impairments - physical, mental and cognitive - and one is DeafBlind.

| People   |    | Attended 5 or more sessions |
|--|----|-----------------------------|
| Disabled participants (2 also volunteer)       | 18 | 9                           |
| Regular volunteers (1 has a visual impairment) | 3  | 3                           |
| Other (one off) volunteers                     | 5  |                             |
| Staff  | 2  | 2                           |

## Session Format

People chose what they wanted to do. Over the ten sessions we had eight yoga sessions and ten cycling sessions together with some informal volleyball and workouts on the gym bars. Some people did a bit of everything, some just cycled, some just did yoga but everyone chatted.

## Feedback

This was gathered using a questionnaire and a group discussion at the last session of the pilot project. Two volunteers completed the questionnaire by email beforehand and eight participants completed the questionnaire either alone or with help from a volunteer.



Drawn by participants in their questionnaires



## From Participants

- ☺ “Really enjoyed meeting new people, trying new exercises and getting a bit more active.”
- ☺ “All the lovely exercise. Meeting new people.”
- ☺ “Safe adventure.”
- ☺ “Being able to try yoga. I’ve wanted to try it for a long time but was anxious about finding a place that could adapt the exercises for me.”
- ☺ “The leg bikes, yoga and meeting new people.”
- ☺ “Side by side cycling.”
  
- ☹ “Sometimes I couldn’t make it and that made me upset as I’m really enjoying it.”

## From Volunteers and Staff

- ☺ “What I’ve liked the most is taking Daniel on the two by two bicycle. I find him an inspiration.”
- ☺ “Meeting people, I like to be helping out, helping people. I like cycling, keep fit and being outside, get all the fresh air.”
- ☺ “Cycling with Dan, Alice, Frances and others - and seeing their enjoyment.”
- ☺ “I like to get out and meet people. I’d be happy to volunteer if there’s not money to pay for my time, and give people cycling lessons.”
  
- ☹ “The session where we lost the side-by-side and everything seemed to go wrong.” [It rained and the side by side had been moved to a different garage without our knowledge and it took a few weeks to re-negotiate access to it].

## Comments from the Group Discussion

- ☺ “It’s the first time I’ve done yoga, it’s really helped stretch me out.”
- ☺ “It gives you confidence. Good to try it [cycling on the road] with Peter and the group.”
- ☺ “Before this I wasn’t doing anything. Now I have started walking to work, I’ve lost weight, those dead muscles are alive. I have really enjoyed coming, and exercising with a group is so much more motivating, it’s fun. I’d never have used the gym bars, without Lincoln showing us as a group.”

## Funding and Supporters

The club is funded through Intosport and Get Out, Get Active. I have had invaluable support from the following organisations and volunteers:

| Organisation   | Support for pilot  | Ongoing support offered  |
|--|--|--|
| <b>Brixton Cycles</b><br>(workers co-operative)  | One volunteer who is a cycle mechanic, use of accessible toilet and drinking water.  | One volunteer who is a cycle mechanic, use of accessible toilet and drinking water.  |
| <b>Cycle Training UK</b><br>(CTUK)   | Free use of side by side cycle   | Free use of side by side cycle   |
| <b>Lambeth Council</b>   | Promoting and funding activities via GOGA  | Promoting and funding activities via GOGA  |
| <b>Lambeth Vocational Services</b><br>(South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust) | One volunteer to bring new people and help pack up.  | One volunteer to bring new people and help pack up.  |
| <b>SW9 Housing</b><br>(supported housing)  | Promoting to residents, use of accessible toilet and drinking water plus potential indoor space for yoga or exercise if needed at Helmi House on Robsart Street. | Promoting to residents, use of accessible toilet and drinking water plus potential indoor space for yoga or exercise if needed at Helmi House on Robsart Street. |
| <b>We Are 336</b><br>(centre for disability charities)                                 | One volunteer in his own time, promoting to the centre’s users.  | One volunteer in his own time, promoting to the centre’s users.  |
| <b>Wheels for Wellbeing</b><br>(disability cycling charity)                            | Bikes and a cycling instructor, promote to participants.   | One volunteer cycling instructor in his own time, promote to participants.   |
| <b>WSP</b><br>(Engineering consulting firm)  | One volunteer 15 hours from work time and using flexitime to make up hours.  | One volunteer 15 hours from work time and using flexitime to make up hours.  |

## **Impact on People in Slade Gardens**

“It makes the park feel a lot less hostile.” said a volunteer, who has lived locally for many years. People wave and comment how ‘cool’ the bikes are, as participants cycle around the gardens. Being active in the gardens attracts interest from other park users. Examples include:

- A mother with a toddler asked if she could join the yoga.
- Two social studies students talked to us and asked what a red and white cane means. We explained the person using it is DeafBlind.
- A family with a young disabled daughter asked for advice about what cycle to buy her and where to try one.
- A woman asked to try a recumbent tricycle as she thinks it might be good for her mother.
- A local resident out with her family commented about one of our disabled participants, “It’s great to see him cycling and out chatting to people, I’m one of his neighbours, we chat, he’s really funny.”

## **The Overall Impact**

Based on what we have delivered in ten weeks and the feedback from those involved, we feel that the pilot has been a great success and has demonstrated that we can deliver a range of outcomes relevant to our Intosport and GOGA projects:

- The value of community partnerships, in this case bringing together resources from nine organisations. It has taken a lot of my time to develop this but has created important relationships which we can build on further.
- Provided opportunities for disabled people to exercise, volunteer and mentor and given them the interest and increased confidence to want to take these up on a more regular basis.
- Opened up new exercise possibilities, for example showing people how to use the outdoor gym bars and do yoga.
- Demonstrated how local parks and green spaces can be made more inclusive of disabled people.
- Shown the mutual benefits of disabled people enjoying sport and physical activity alongside non-disabled people, e.g. learning how to fingerspell and making new friends. Our WSP volunteer took particular value from being able to observe a DeafBlind person using the type of road infrastructure they designed.

## **Next steps**

We will be delivering another 10 week programme starting in August. We are discussing with colleagues from Lambeth Council’s Community Sports Team and the GOGA delivery partners, London Sport, Inclusion London, GLL Better and Disability Sports Coach how to develop the scheme and the potential to roll it out to other outdoor and indoor venues to create more opportunities for disabled people to access SPA in their local communities.

## Photos from the Slade Gardens sessions – adults at play!



The start of the 'sun salutation' in yoga



Handcycling



Side by side social cycling



Mindfulness meditation in yoga



Relaxing after a cycle ride



Learning finger spelling together