



North London  
Mental Health  
Partnership

**healthwatch**  
Islington

# Review of the Boost Lift Project for vulnerable young people, aged 18 to 25



**LIFTGYM**



## Healthwatch Islington

Healthwatch Islington is an independent organisation led by volunteers from the local community. It is part of a national network of Healthwatch organisations that involve people of all ages and all sections of the community.

Our Mental Health Partnership team work with Islington's Mental Health Core team to connect NHS and community services to offer better outcomes for patients.

[www.healthwatchislington.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchislington.co.uk)

## Contents

<b>The Boost Lift Project</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Project Impact</b>	<b>5</b>

# The Boost Lift Project

The Mental Health Partnership team work with Healthwatch Islington and Islington's Mental Health Core team to connect NHS and community services to offer better outcomes for patients. The team approached Lift, a youth hub in Islington, to explore creative options to support vulnerable young people. From this, the idea of Boost was generated, a way to guide young people, experiencing mental health challenges to find positive outcomes through exercise and activity. A successful bid was submitted to Sport England and funding raised for a year.

The teams worked with 14 young people on this project. The cohort of young people have experienced various challenges around isolation, suicidal ideation, involvement with gangs, domestic abuse, as migrants and have experienced hardship in their lives. Some also had diagnoses of neurodiversity.

## Referral pathway

Most of the young people referred to Boost were supported by Islington's Mental Health Core team. The opportunity provided a way of addressing motivation through physical activity with a gym programme over ten weeks as well as links with a wellbeing coach. The project provided a way of supporting or discharging the patient. Referrals from the core team came from a consultant psychiatrist, young person's lead psychologist, advanced occupational therapist, population health nurse, social worker, peer coach, and key worker.

For the final term, there was additional capacity in the grant, so referrals were offered to GPs and social prescribing teams. Two referrals were received via this route.



**Personal trainer Adam with a Boost attendee**

## Preparing each participant

Once a referral form was received, the Mental Health Partnership team spoke to the young person to ascertain their availability, levels of fitness, confidence to join new activities and prepare them for the project.

The Partnership coordinator or key worker met the young person at Lift, introducing the team. Each participant attended a one hour, one to one induction session with Adam, the personal trainer. Adam chatted to the participant about key issues to do with their physical and mental wellbeing. Depending on the needs of each participant, adjustments were made to the surroundings, for example to the music, and to the blinds. Some participants wanted to boost their stamina, others wanted to hone their physical shape. Adam tailored each exercise plan accordingly. A couple of attendees were unable to take public transport due to previous trauma. In these cases, a taxi was arranged to and from Lift.



**Personal trainer Adam with a Boost attendee**

## Ongoing support

Most young people attended their weekly time slot at Lift for personal training for ten weeks and spent time with Chudi the wellbeing coach to discuss preferences socially and consider career options or plans going forward. Adam and Chudi responded with care if an attendee was late, stressed, or depressed. They ensured there was no pressure so attendees felt supported and able to confide in the team, who could refer back to the Core Team should there be concerns. The improvement was visible when the participants began to build physical confidence as well as become involved with other activities at Lift.

# Project impact



**“This is amazing. There's no pressure or judging. Often things are offered that don't happen but this happened. It takes time for me to get used to things so the number of sessions was just right. I am happy to try other gyms now and would like to give back, be involved in any way possible to enable this opportunity to continue for other people. I really appreciate how much Adam has supported me and helped with my fitness and also understood if I don't feel great.”**

Boost participant

## Other feedback from Boost participants

“Fantastic and motivational support from Adam.”

“I have been doing more walking and have more self-control and perseverance.”

“It was nice to learn new exercises that I can continue doing. The exercises have helped to strengthen my back”

“I felt really good after each session.”

## Feedback from clinician, Young Person's Psychology Lead

“My client spoke highly of your approach and the encouragement you provided, mentioning that it made a significant difference to her overall mood. We discussed how there's a noticeable correlation between physical activity levels and mood, and she felt a tangible improvement in her mental well-being after the session.

Not only has her mood changed, but her entire outlook on life has transformed in the past few sessions. The positive impact is not just confined to the client; it's also resonating with her family, which is truly remarkable.”

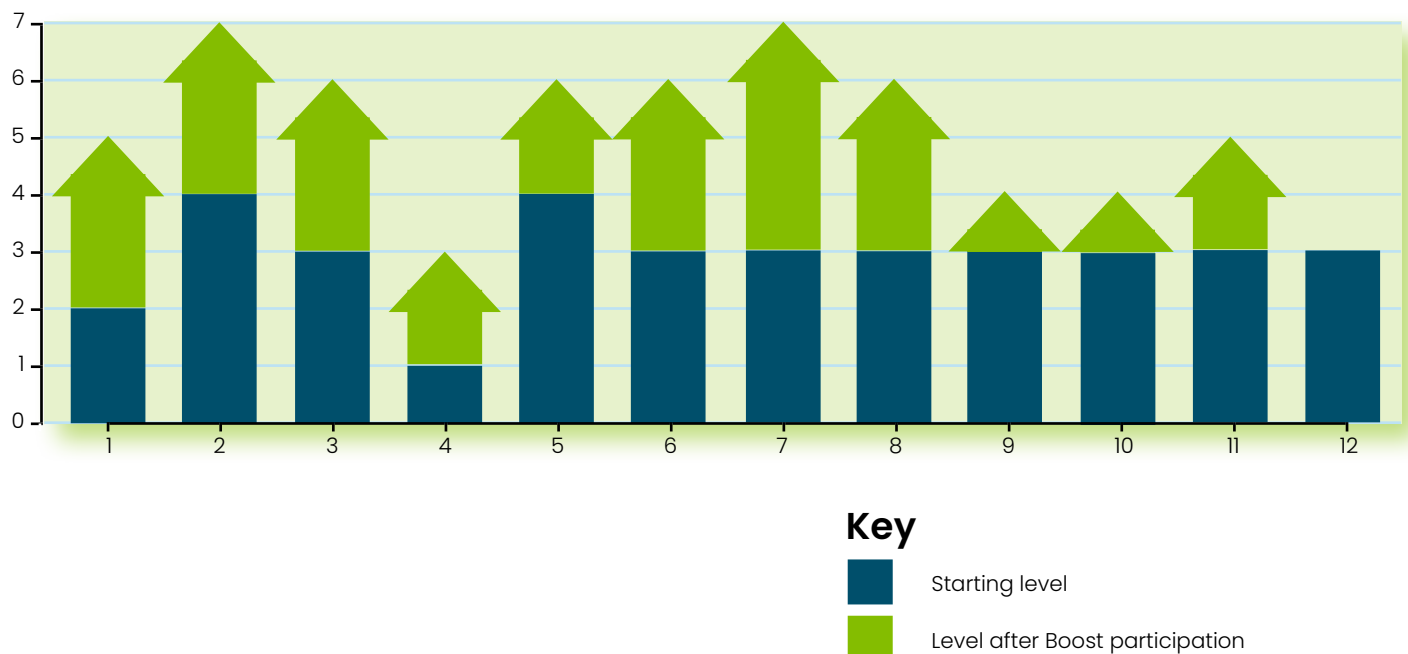
## Project numbers and completion

Out of the 14 participants:

- ▶ Seven completed ten weeks with an induction session (participants 1 to 7)
- ▶ Three people started in the last term and attended six sessions (8 to 10)
- ▶ One person attended induction and was given tailored exercises at home due to issues coming to Lift (participant 11)
- ▶ One only attended the induction and did not attend any exercise sessions (12)
- ▶ We did not collect monitoring data from two participants. One did not attend any sessions or the induction. The second helped us pilot the programme before monitoring tools were developed.

## Impact on fitness

Chart showing improvement in each Boost participants' fitness levels (self-assessed on a scale of 1-7)

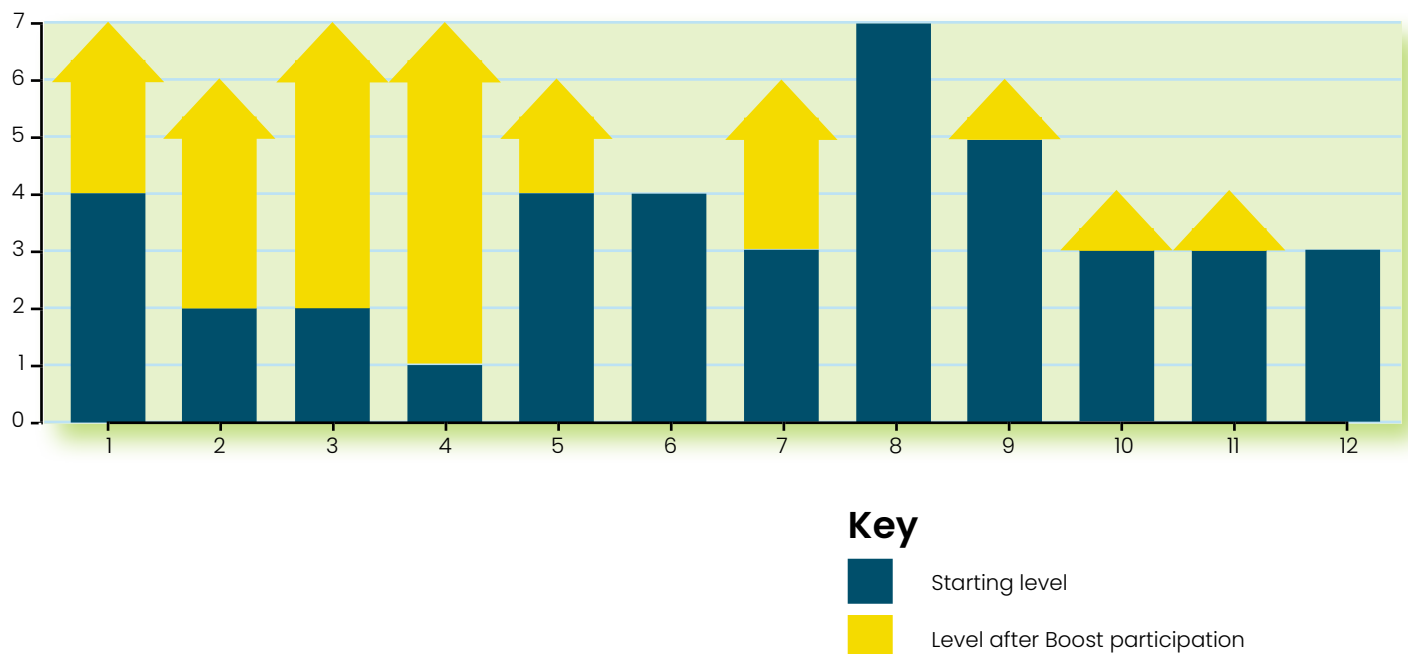


"It's gone really well. It has improved my mental and physical health. This has helped my body image and how I view exercise as helping you feel well."

- Boost participant

## Impact on motivation and confidence

Chart showing improvement in Boost participants' levels of motivation and confidence to participate in new activities/volunteering or training and other sports (self-assessed on a scale of 1-7)



Some participants engaged well with other opportunities at Lift and outside. Some participants were not interested in this support, or were already engaged with support (see participants 6 and 8).

"I'm definitely more confident to engage with activities - gym, boxing and cooking at Lift. I go regularly now. Cooking is the only thing I know and I hope maybe I can work in the kitchen at Lift. It's changed a lot for me. Helped me push to go to Lift. Really grateful - routine to build socialising."

- Boost participant

## Programme completion

On completion, the Partnership coordinator met each participant at Lift and gave them a progress report from Adam, the personal trainer, follow up from the wellbeing coach and a certificate of progress. The teams involved with their care were updated about their involvement with the scheme via notes made on their patient record.

## Participants who completed the project:

- ▶ Nine of the attendees are motivated to attend regular activity
- ▶ All the engaged attendees feel physically fitter
- ▶ Attendees are more aware of fun and opportunities (employment, skills, social) and more confident to engage with them
- ▶ Six attendees who were under the care of Islington's Mental Health Core team have been discharged
- ▶ All the participants have had support around nutrition, various exercise options, wellbeing links, volunteering and training

On a partnership level, the success of integrating support between statutory and community expertise is highly positive. This project demonstrates person-centred care where trust in Partnership and Lift teams impacts on the young people. The coaches at Lift are seen as role models who genuinely increase motivation and confidence for young people who have experienced adversity.

We hope to secure further funding to offer this amazing opportunity to support more young people across Islington. A new project would be open to Core Team patients and to other youth centres, particularly those engaged with minoritised groups, where after school and youth opportunities have been reduced. We want to offer alternatives to young people who are struggling with identity, alienation, mental health issues and trauma to build confidence and motivation through exercise and links with positive activities.



**Personal trainer Adam with a Boost attendee**





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