



# The Activity Grower Academy...

*Innovative training and support to get more people active*

# The Activity Grower Academy

## *Innovative training and support to get more people active*

All across the country, we are all wanting to get more people physically active. The benefits of having a more active nation are well-documented, so to be successful it will require a more innovative and enterprising approach than is currently observed across much of the traditional workforce.

To help achieve this ambition we are now proposing to establish The Activity Grower Academy which will:



# 1. Existing workforce

Sadly, it is widely acknowledged that the traditional workforce within sport and physical activity may not be as customer-focused nor interested in inactive people as this challenge would require.

It appears that there is very little focus on areas such as:

- Community engagement
- Providing a great customer experience
- Helping participants to be accepted by their peers
- Running easy and unpressured sessions
- Providing structured and supported self-improvement
- Working with non-traditional partners

There has been a lot of talk about how we get people active, but, in reality, very little action has been taken, In particular, there has been a reluctance to ask some of the most difficult questions like "are we hiring the right people?" and "does our current workforce have the skills or the capacity to learn the skills needed to rise to this challenge?".



# Sport England's report from 2016

*Under the Skin* looked into how physical activity and sport fit in with young people's lives. They found that only 10% saw themselves as 'Sports Enthusiasts', whereas 56% clearly indicate that they are 'not competitive'. But it is also important to recognise that even within the latter group there are a range of personality types. They could not be more different in their views on how a session should be delivered to appeal to them. What they do have

in common, however, is that they would simply not be motivated by the approach a traditional sports coach or fitness instructor.

Technical skills are still important if you want to keep enjoying your rugby, parkour or cricket. So, we should keep running education programmes for coaches within those areas, but do not expect the number of people playing those sport or generally being active to grow, just because the 'converted' improve, say, their golf swing, backstroke or swing bowling.

Yes, there is evidence that good, quality coaching improves the likelihood that people will stay active for longer. However, too many coaches/instructors are guilty of focusing on the talented and dedicated participants and ignoring the shy, less sporty, participants in the back. And then they can't understand why those people don't come back and they are not investing in bringing these people into the session in the first place....

Inactive people want to enjoy themselves, have fun, and be part of a welcoming social and sporting experience. Yes, if possible, they want to develop their skills, but they want to do so in an engaging way; they don't want to be put under undue pressure from an over-ambitious and zealous coach.

So, in working with this audience we need to move away from the approach of our traditional sports coaches/fitness coaches where the focus is on pushing people to the limits of their abilities and holding up the most skilled or talented as role models. We should instead identify and develop a workforce who are able to engage with people of all abilities and aspirations, such that everyone feels their sporting endeavours is valid and just as important as anyone else's and who are willing and able to engage with their community.

**In this new world order, we might see our coaches and instructors  
more as Activity Growers.**

## 2. New providers

We are also experiencing an increasing number of cases where people are getting active away from traditional settings such as the leisure centre, gym or sports club in more familiar surroundings and with people they are more likely to associate with. These new providers often live in the communities they serve and/or have clear empathy with them and see physical as a way achieving broader goals, such as overcoming alcoholism or loneliness.

Examples of these innovative initiatives include:

- Social workers who are engaging with drug-users, involving them in fitness classes and, over time, weaning them off drugs.
- London-based Carer4Carers who are engaging with carers, getting them active, on their terms. The two key people at Carer4Carers are both carers themselves and therefore have a unique, in-depth understanding of their situation.
- Michelle Reilly was a social worker in Edinburgh and started Street Fit Scotland which exists to get socially disadvantaged groups active. She is very successful because she understands the barriers these people face to become active and is not prescriptive <https://www.streetfitscotland.org/>.
- Diversity - the UK is an incredibly diverse place, but the make-up of our coaches and fitness instructors does not reflect that, say. if we are to get some more Portuguese females to play football, then get some Portuguese speaking people involved as Community Connectors as they did at the Big Kid Foundation <https://www.bigkidfoundation.org>

We need to unearth these Community Connectors and encourage them to get their communities into sport and physical activity.

These organisations and people see physical activity as one part of their role, but not the only part. They can often reach some hard-to-reach groups because they live in their world and speak their language.

For this group, we see the role of the Academy as training to them to develop physical activity programmes that are relevant and engaging for their specific client groups.

### 3. Social entrepreneurs

The third segment we suggest is served by the Academy is social entrepreneurs. who want to, and can, make a real difference in their communities.

All of these enterprises were launched by people who had experienced or seen a specific need they want to solve and turned it into an opportunity. They all struggled in the beginning and less able and determined people perhaps would have given up, but they persevered and have built some incredibly innovative enterprises getting tens of thousands of inactive people active, regardless of their age, weight or disability.

But it is also our experience that there are many potential social entrepreneurs who, with some support and inspiration, could develop similar enterprises in their respective fields. These people do often do not fit within the 'system' and the policies coming down from the top and are rarely very good at selling their story up the line.

A key aspect of the Activity Grower Academy will be training and support for these social entrepreneurs on how they can improve their organisational effectiveness and upscale their activities.

**Some of these social entrepreneurs include:**



**Simply Cycling** <http://www.simply-cycling.org/>

Sue Blaylock had a disabled son who wanted to cycle, but she could not find a cycle that suited him. She had one built and that became the start of Simply Cycling, a social enterprise that now has 200 specially built cycles and who runs classes, holiday camps and other cycling activities for hundreds of disabled people around Manchester.



**Oomph Wellness** <https://oomph-wellness.org/>

Founded by Ben Allen they work with care homes to get the residents active, both at the care homes and on excursions.



**Our Parks** <https://www.ourparks.org.uk/>

Born Barikor had a vision; to use London's parks to get inactive people moving. He works with a number of London's Boroughs and their health bodies. He has also started working with universities across the country to get inactive students active. His use of social media is brilliant.



**Too Fat to Run?** <http://toofattorun.co.uk/>

Julie Creffield was 'fat and unfit' (her words) and is now engaging with thousands of overweight women, either one-2-one or via her extensive social media network. These women trust Julie, because 'she is one os'.

# The Activity Grower Academy

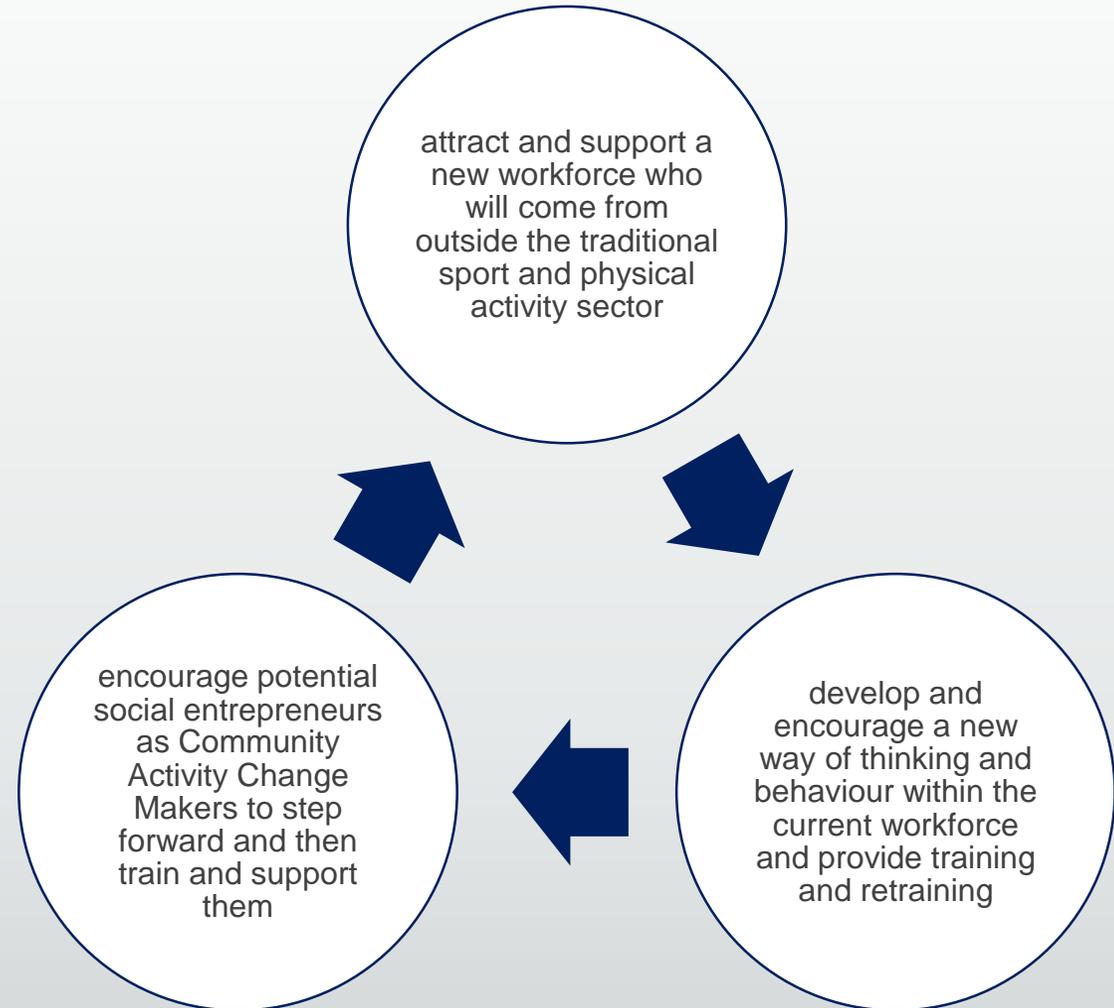
*where you can learn how best to get inactive people physically active*

All across the country, we are all wanting to get more people physically active. To be successful it will require a more innovative and enterprising approach than is currently observed across much of the traditional workforce.

To help achieve this ambition we are now proposing to establish The Activity Grower Academy which will focus on:

- Community engagement:
- Providing a great customer experience
- Helping participants to be accepted by their peers
- Running easy and unpressured sessions
- Providing structured and supported self-improvement
- Working with non-traditional partners

**This is what we believe should be the objectives of the Activity Grower Academy.**





The most common feedback we get from our workshops is that they are "thought-provoking".

## Learning for the real world

We work on the notion that in order to stimulate sports and community bodies and providers to change we must introduce new thoughts, tools and to-dos:

First, we must provide people with thoughts and inspiration on how they can make a real difference and become more innovative and efficient. We have found that story-telling is a fantastic way of doing that. With our unparalleled track record in working with community sports providers, we have experienced from almost all settings which we are able to share. We have found face-to-face encounters are, by far, the best way of sharing best practice examples.

Then, when we have inspired people we can give them the tools to help them to start making the required changes. Those tools can be given via webinars, guides and e-newsletters and we are aware that those tools have to be relevant to the specific situation and organisation.

Finally, we have to give people the to-dos, ie the action points and templates required to get started. So, whether the club/group/body wants to start engaging better with its community and run a Community Launch or raise their profile across their community, we have a guide for exactly that.

Everyone is time-poor so the Academy will focus on providing engaging and relevant learning in bite-size chunks for available for people at their convenience.

Remember, the Academy is for anyone who is keen to get people more active, whether they are already involved in sport and physical activity, so accessibility to the material is crucial. So, all the Academy material will jargon-free, packed with case-studies and simple action plans.

## Re 1. Develop and encourage a new way of thinking and behaviour within the current workforce

We will develop a fundamental workshop for people already involved in the sector who are interested in engaging with inactive people. That will give them an introduction to a person-centred approach to getting inactive people active.

**The five key strands of the Academy's work will include:**

- 1 Community engagement
- 2 Providing a great customer experience
- 3 Helping participants to be accepted by their peers
- 4 Running easy and unpressured sessions
- 5 Providing structured and supported self-improvement

**It will focus on developing people skills, understanding communities and customer and creating a welcoming and relevant environment and experience for different groups and types of personalities.**

**Subsequent webinars, videos, podcasts and guides will each cover one of these topics and the video case-studies will highlight examples where coaches and instructors have been able to engage with inactive people by adopting a person-centred approach.**

**A comprehensive social media campaign, will seek to engage with those people within the traditional workforce who are keen to acquire some of these new skills.**

## Re. 2. Attract and support a new workforce who will come from outside the traditional sport and physical activity sector

By engaging with the thousands of Community Connectors we can reach groups and people who traditional providers of sport and physical activity do not reach.

They can include housing, faith, social organisations, social prescribers. health and patient organisations, men's sheds and community organisations from carers to allotment holders to name but a few.

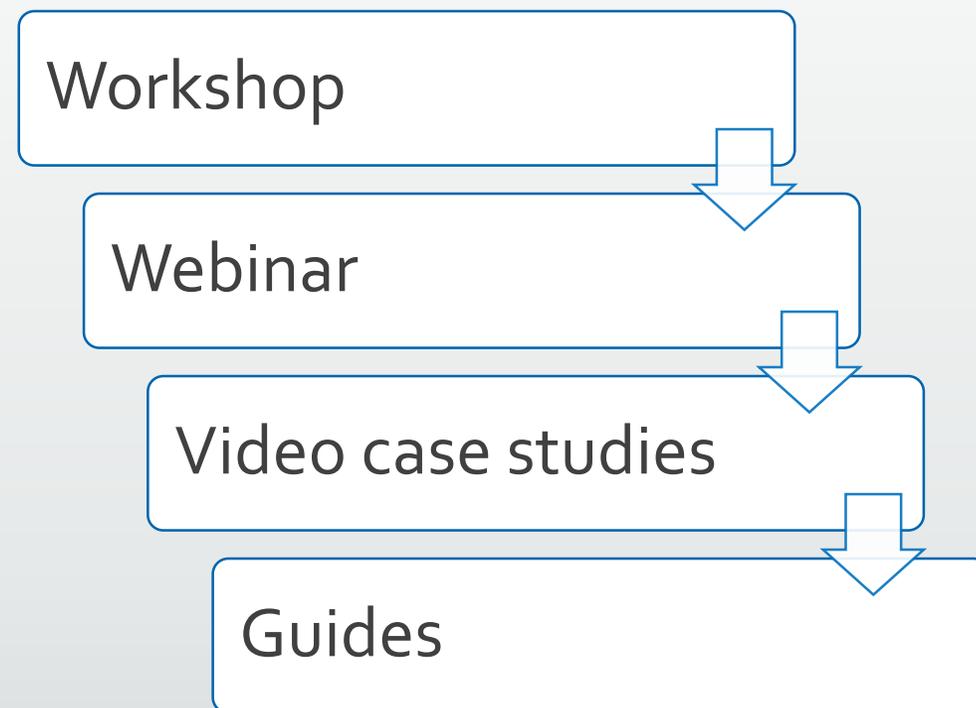
Most of these do not see themselves as providers of sport and physical activity in the traditional sense but many of them provide these services as part of their general work with their stakeholders.

Working with a number of partners the Academy will run a social media campaign trying to engage with these partners.

That campaign will encourage these Connectors to attend workshops where we will introduce them to the basic principles of engaging with inactive people to encourage them to take the first baby steps to become physically active. Again, we are aware that these people are rarely interested in sport for sport's sake, but in how physical activity can help change people's lives.

These workshops will be followed up by webinars, guides and video case-studies covering specific elements of how non-sport bodies can extend their work to physical activity.

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### Re 3. Encourage potential Community Activity Change Makers to step forward and then train and support them

SMN has over the years helped a number of social enterprises involved with sport and physical activity to develop their organisation into efficient, effective, innovative and financially sustainable enterprises.

We have developed a model which focuses on developing Community Sports Change Makers

Introducing Community Sports Change Makers:  
*An enterprise which changes people's lives through sport, in a vibrant, visible and viable way*

The model helps community sports organisations to understand how by having the right vision and by improving on all their eight strands as a Community Sports Enterprise ('CSE'), they can also deliver on five change areas. These go hand in hand: "You can't make changes to people's lives if you are not a sustainable enterprise, because you won't be around for long".

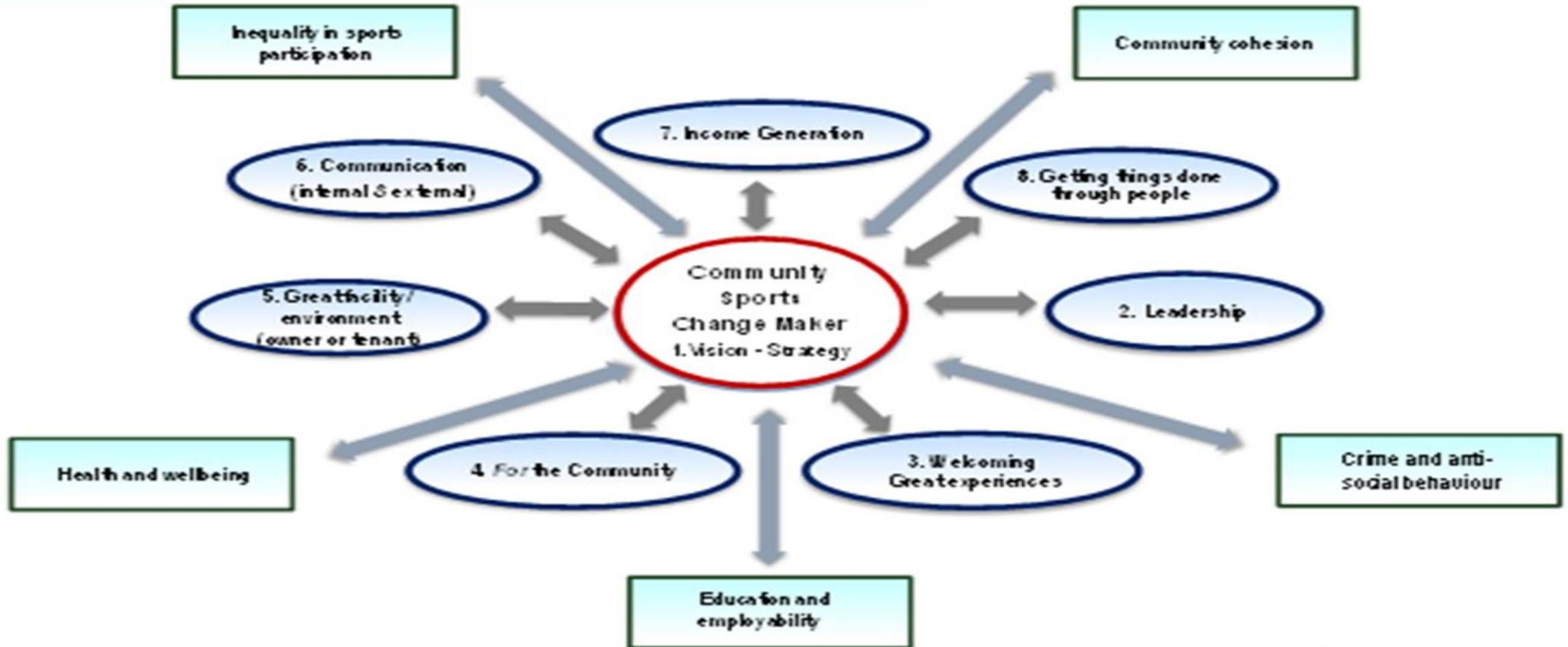
We are already delivering workshops, webinars and guides for these enterprises and it is certainly our experience that has a very high proportion of current and potential Enterprises and Change Makers and that collectively they could make an even bigger impact if supported and upskilled.

These social entrepreneurs will also have the opportunity of taking part in SMN Sports Enterprise Network where they can share ideas and experiences.



# From Community Sports Enterprise to Community Sports Change Maker

SMN<sup>o</sup>2018



## Who is behind the Activity Grower Academy

### The Academy is a collaboration between Sports Marketing Network and Proper Active



**Dannielle Roberts**, principal and founder of Proper Active

Dannielle Roberts is a social researcher and behavioural scientist with extensive experience of a diverse range of complex behavioural challenges across multiple sectors.

She worked for 4 years within Sport England's Research and Insight Team, leading a range of projects which have advanced our understanding of key audiences for the sport and physical activity sector. These include the above mentioned "Under the Skin" report into the personality types of young people and how they engage with sport, as well as the 2017 Mapping Disability series of reports. She holds an MSc in Behavioural Decision Science and completed primary research into understanding what those new to sport and physical activity are worried about when they take part. She is also a qualified sports coach and has extensive experience coaching new and non-sporty participants.



**Svend Elkjaer**, principal and founder of SMN

SMN has over the last twelve years trained and supported a large number of sports bodies, community sports enterprises and community sports clubs across the UK and Denmark

Based on his experiences as a senior executive in the media and events industry and as a volunteer in a community rugby club in 2005 he launched an organisation where community sports providers could share best practice on how to become vibrant, visible and viable...hence the Sports Marketing Network. Since then more than 4000 community sports providers from across the have participated in one of our Grow Your Club workshops, benefitted from 1:2:1 consultancy and mentoring, attended one of our conferences, participated in one of our webinars or read one of our Guides, so we have developed an unparalleled knowledge and understanding of the opportunities and challenges for the enterprise and innovation aspects of community sport and physical activity.



Thank You

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