



IN YOUR CORNER

Non-contact Boxing, fitness
and wellbeing programme
Supporting adults with poor
mental health
January – October 2020

This case study provides a summary of the **In Your Corner** programme activities, delivered by We Care NW Ltd in 2020 with the support of the Stockport Local Fund. It also highlights the benefits of non-contact boxing and more broadly, exercises and activities, for people who are experiencing poor mental health and wellbeing.

The aim of the In Your Corner programme was not just to support physical and mental wellbeing but also to reduce the feeling of social isolation and loneliness, experienced within Stockport's communities as well as to boost resilience, self-confidence and self-esteem.



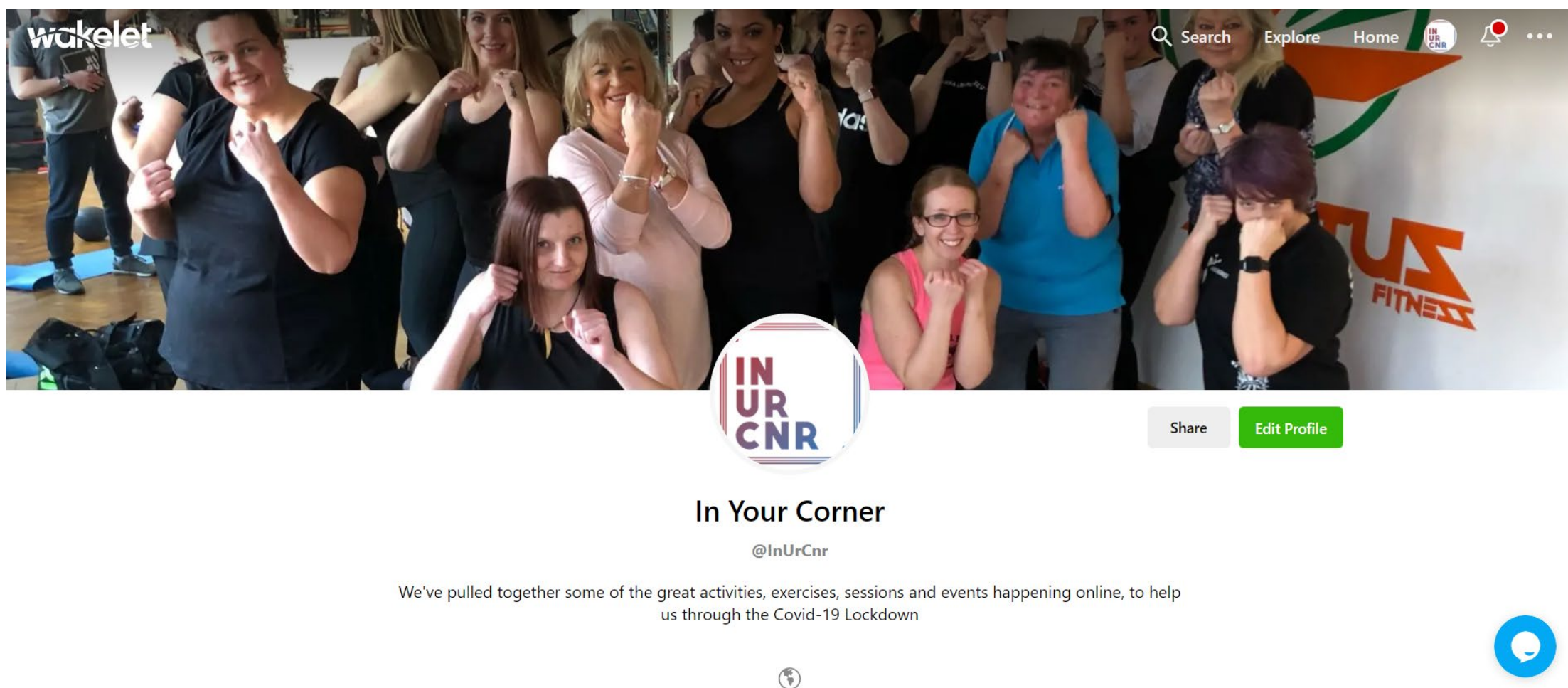
BACKGROUND

In 2019 and after much consultation with Stockport NHS, the local authority and a number of mental health organisations from the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector, We Care established a pilot non-contact boxing and wellbeing programme called “In Your Corner” (IYC) in Brinnington, initially taking the form of a men’s group.

These initial IYC sessions utilised a training syllabus from the nationally recognised recreational ‘Boxing Awards’ programme and participants enjoyed non-contact boxing lessons and boxing practice in a progressive awards programme.

This approach provided participants with an additional sense of achievement and boosted self esteem on passing each stage of the Boxing Awards and a total of 12 participants achieved the Preliminary Award, 10 of whom went on to achieve the Standard Award.





During lockdown, We Care delivered the IYC sessions online with Zestus Fitness, over a total of 11 weeks. Sessions were attended by adult males, females and families and in addition, Stepping Hill's occupational therapy staff also connected to the sessions for the benefit of the inpatients on their mental health wards.

We Care also produced a digital activity guide for Stockport's mental health network, using the 'Wakelet' platform, signposting service providers and users to a broad range of online activities, including sport and physical activity as well as arts, culture and media, with the aim of providing wellbeing support during lockdown.

The IYC sessions resumed at Zestus Fitness gym in July 2020 and on conclusion of this latest block, 14 weekly sessions have been delivered to a mixed group of males and females, with a combined 89 visits from 24 unique participants.

We're back in the Gym!



Our weekly In Your Corner sessions return with a wellbeing workout, a bit of chat and a good laugh!

From Wednesday 29th July, 11am Zestus Fitness, Stockport town centre

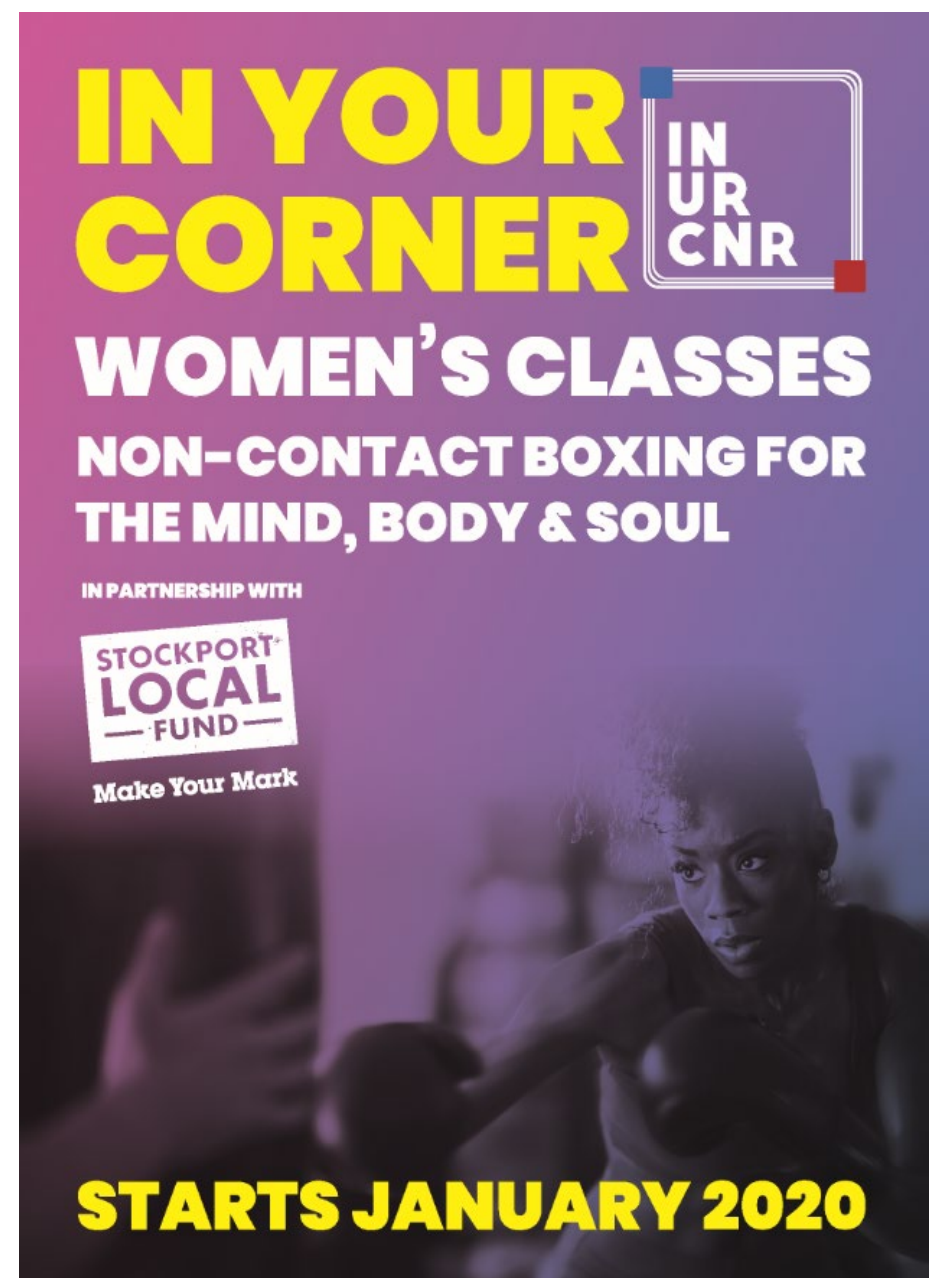
Please message us for more information



KEY INFORMATION

During 2020, We Care has delivered In Your Corner programmes in the form of a Men's Group, Women's Group, a Mixed Group and an Online Group. Across these activities, we have seen:

- 45 individual sessions delivered
- A combined total of 82 male and female participants
- A combined total of 284 participant visits to sessions during 2020



Classes were promoted to would-be participants via local Mental Health service provider networks as well as In Your Corner social media channels



In addition to scheduled group sessions, We Care delivered a number of 1-2-1 non-contact boxing sessions to support mental health service users, working with organisations such as H3 Homelessness and Stockport Without Abuse.

REFERRAL PARTNERS

We Care chose not to publicly promote the sessions but rather, to collaborate with NHS Primary and Secondary Care as well as mental health organisations from the VCSE sector, to identify and refer people who are currently being provided with mental health based support and who it was thought would benefit from involvement on the programme.

Referrals have come from a range of organisations, including:

- Pennine Care NHS Foundation Trust:
 - Community Mental Health Unit
 - Stepping Hill Hospital Mental Health Unit
- Stockport Homes
- Jigsaw Homes
- Viaduct Care
- SPARC
- Pure Innovations
- The Prevention Alliance (Age UK, Nacro, Talk Listen Change)
- Mencap
- H3 Homelessness
- Stockport Without Abuse



IMPACT

We Care conducted a survey on conclusion of the Mixed Group sessions to gauge the impact of the In Your Corner programme on participants. Of those surveyed:

- 63% of respondents cited that anxiety and confidence were barriers that often restrict their participation in sport and physical activity.
- 89% agreed that the non-contact boxing sessions had improved their general state of mental health, 33% of which strongly agreed.
- 78% feel more confident and are now more motivated to take part in sport, physical activity/exercise, having experience a boost to their self-confidence and self esteem
- 56% strongly agreed that they had made new friends through attending the sessions
- 89% felt that they had been supported by others when taking part at the sessions and hope to continue attending in the future
- 66% feel there are not enough (physical) activities in Stockport that meet their needs



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**NON-CONTACT
BOXING**
FOR THE MIND & THE BODY

PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK

“I feel welcomed by the group and trainers. It feels like I am part of team. It also improves my confidence and self-esteem”

“Meeting like-minded people...and proving to myself that I can do something that takes me totally out of my comfort zone”

“It has helped keep me going and given me somewhere to use up my nervous energy”

“The sense of community, being able to chat to the other lads there about whatever has been going on that week and having friendly faces like Nige & Steve who motivate you”

“Being able to exercise in a supportive environment”

“The feeling of community”

“I’d just like to say how life changing In Your Corner has been for me. After years of getting myself stuck in a rut, dealing with my depression and suicidal thoughts with drink and drugs, IYC was a real turning point for me as I was trying to turn my life around.

It gave me an outlet and a way to deal with whatever negative emotions I face that week and has massively helped me on my recovery from addiction and mental well-being and wellness, so thank you!”



SERVICE PROVIDER TESTIMONIALS

“The In Your Corner boxing class has been an asset to the community. I met with Steve when he was setting up the group as he was looking for input from mental health professionals so to make the class as inclusive as possible. Steve attended a meeting with everyone from our team and the set up was already amazing - by networking he was able to make the group as accessible as possible.

Having seen the great things boxing had done for my own son, I am a big advocate of the sport. I regularly refer my service users to the group and every one that has attended has said how implicit it has been in their recovery. The group is so friendly, Steve is really approachable and passionate - I feel I can trust him with the people I work with and would love to see the group continue. Even through Covid the group has continued online and now people are so happy they can attend again. Not only does it build their confidence, they get fit, get awards and meet new friends.

The change in the individuals as they venture on their roads to recovery from sometimes very serious mental ill health is astounding and I feel the boxing group has a lot to do with this.

Lauren Rowe

Community Mental Health Unit

Pennine Care NHS Foundation Trust

It has been amazing having the boxing classes to refer clients into, particularly during lockdown. As a team we struggle to signpost clients to activities as sadly so many places decided to shut.

Having the boxing has reduced isolation for our service users and given some structure for the week and we have had amazing feedback on how they enjoy it. I think it really helps that the group is in a great location and most importantly, everyone is friendly and understands that it is very difficult when you have mental health to just come to the gym.

Geraldine O'Malley

Community Mental Health Unit

Pennine Care NHS Foundation Trust



“We have previously worked with Steve in his capacity providing community-based boxing sessions focusing on mental health and so when he reached out to us regarding online sessions during lockdown we were keen to engage. We are a step-down rehabilitation unit and therefore, during lockdown our service users leave was restricted even more so than the general public and this directly impacted both their involvement in physical exercise and their mental wellbeing in general.

“Engaging in the weekly sessions allowed the service users to get moving, increasing their strength and working on their coordination and range of movement. Additionally, they were able to build upon their confidence as they could request to turn off the video if they wished but they were still able to access the social aspects as they could see other participants videos. Service users engaged weekly looking forward to the sessions and some boxed for the first time. The sessions were pitched in such a way that they were accessible to both beginners and those that had experience.

“As lockdown begins to ease we are keen to continue to work with Steve and help our service users to access further sessions in the community; Links and sources of support that they will be able to utilise and maintain once they are discharged from our service. Steve and the team clearly have a great understanding of the importance of occupations in maintain wellbeing and the links between physical and mental health which is shown through their great work.”

Victoria Andre

***Occupational Therapist, Rehabilitation and High Support Directorate
Pennine Care NHS Foundation Trust***



I would like to thank Stockport MBC and the Neighbourhood Inclusion team in particular, for their support of the In Your Corner programme in 2020.

The Stockport Local Fund award allowed me to develop a desire I had, that of providing a boxing related workout to support people with poor mental health, into a regular weekly session, delivered to different user groups and in different forms – groups, 1-2-1 and online.

Whilst providing significant disruption to our daily lives, I believe that Covid-19 has shone a light on the increased risk of social isolation and loneliness faced by members of our communities and the resulting decline in health and wellbeing that many face. It has also highlighted the need to be nimble and to provide a digital response to engaging and supporting local residents.

I believe there is much that can be done to address these risks across the borough, through collaboration between the VCSE network, healthcare and the public and private sectors, particular in the areas of sport, physical activity, health and wellbeing.

Following the success of In Your Corner, I am keen to build on the partnerships developed with Stockport's mental health network as well as Primary and Secondary Care, to develop more activities for people experiencing poor mental health, through a new planned initiative, BOOST.

Steve Flynn

Director

We Care NW Ltd

BOOST
STOCKPORT