

Barriers to Participation – Aged 50+

Key Facts

- Only one in twelve Harlow residents aged over 55 take part in sport or physical activity three times a week, nearly one in three people aged 16-34 participate this often
- By the early 2020's half of all adults are expected to be aged over 50
- Around 70 % of people aged 50-64 in the UK are overweight or obese with rates of obesity in older adults in England accelerating almost as quickly as the rate for children over the last ten years
- Three quarters of people in Harlow aged over 55 will have taken part in no sport or physical activity in the previous month
- Among people over 65, 12 % cannot manage walking outside on their own

Main Barriers

- Can't compete at desired level
- Fear of injury - mainly amongst older groups
- Self consciousness - worries about not looking the part
- Lack of money – especially for gym membership
- Lack of companion

How can these barriers be addressed?

- Be aware that people aged 50-64 often miss out on health messages because they see themselves as too young for active ageing campaigns and too old for those aimed at the general population
- Use larger fonts and sizes in promotional material
- Use imagery of older people in publicity and avoid stereotyping the activities
- You may want to use language which refers to active living or physical activity rather than sport or exercise
- Provide information to alleviate fears such as fear of injury
- Avoid use of old or older, instead describe activities around the level of activity
- Activities for people aged 50-65 may need to be in the evening rather than daytime, these people are probably still working

Case Study

Amateur Rowing Association – Learn to Row

Learn to Row courses attract people of all ages but many are proving particularly popular with people aged over 50. The Doncaster Rowing Club has been driven by the passion of Monica Sutton, who began rowing in her mid 50s, and as a result the club now has almost 20 50-something female rowers and a growing number of men. Up to 4.7 million adults use rowing machines in gyms, and rowing is often regarded as one of the best forms of exercise; low impact yet developing muscular strength and flexibility as well as being a great cardiovascular activity. People can learn to row at any age and for rowing clubs, running a Learn to Row course has obvious benefits. It attracts new members to the club, has the potential to be quite profitable and creates new links with the local community. For participants, learning to row can give them a new social life, fitness and improved confidence.

Sources and Further Information

Active People Survey - <http://www.webreport.se/apd/login.aspx>

British Heart Foundation '30 a day' Campaign -

<http://www.bhf.org.uk/publications.aspx>

British Heart Foundation 'Get Active' Campaign -

http://www.bhf.org.uk/keeping_your_heart_healthy/staying_active/get_active_for_your_heart.aspx

Sport England Promoting Sport Toolkit www.sportengland.org/promotingsport

Sport England 'Understanding participation in sport: What determines participation among recently retired people?' -

http://www.sportengland.org/recently_retired_exec_summary_final_pdf.pdf

Sports Equality East 'Promoting Equality in Sport and Physical Activity' -

<http://www.sportengland.org/equality-proofing-a4-v1b.pdf>

What Works for Women - <http://www.whatworksforwomen.org.uk>