

CASE STUDY

Active Suffolk | Susannah Challis, Workforce Development Officer



Active Suffolk's 'Active Skills' programme in collaboration with Amac



Active Suffolk undertook a transformative initiative by securing over £170,000 in funding to enhance the skills of individuals working in the sport and physical activity sector. Having acquired this funding, they embarked on an 18-month 'Active Skills' project, which resulted in the successful delivery of 355 skills qualifications.

The project strategically targeted skills gaps within the sector, focusing on areas such as the prevention and management of long-term health conditions, strength and balance, behaviour change, mental health, and the promotion of physical activity.

Working with Amac

The collaboration with Amac proved instrumental in addressing the specific needs outlined in the Sport and Physical Activity Sector Skills Plan for Suffolk developed in 2021. This included comprehensive training in mental health awareness, behaviour change, encouraging physical activity, understanding health improvement, and chair-based exercise. The timing of this initiative was particularly important, aligning with the sector's urgent need for recovery from the substantial workforce losses incurred during the pandemic, both nationally and specifically within Suffolk.

The sector-wide commitment to investing in people's careers showcased a dedication to rebuilding a depleted workforce. The collaboration not only mitigated the immediate challenges but laid the foundation for a resilient workforce capable of positively impacting lives through the support of physical activity.



The partnership with Amac was characterised by its responsiveness, flexibility, and the delivery of an exceptional level of service. Participants praised the quality of training, citing its excellence and the convenience of self-paced learning. Amac's diligence in keeping Active Suffolk updated on course completions and accommodating individuals who required additional time further reinforced the positive experience of the collaboration.

“Working with Amac has been a dream! ... The feedback we received from course participants has been really positive and they have highlighted that the quality of training was excellent and the fact that it could be completed at their own pace was just what they wanted ... Overall, a really positive experience!”

Impact of training

The impact of the training extended beyond the acquisition of qualifications, leading to tangible changes within participating organisations. An example is the chair-based exercise course delivered by Amac to care assistants across three care homes. This upskilling initiative empowered care assistants to deliver chair-based exercise classes, positively influencing the mental and physical well-being of care home residents.

“The feedback from the care home residents on the impact the classes were having on their own mental health as well as physical strength and balance has been excellent. Having care assistants on the ground trained in this area has had a huge benefit on the residents and has prevented a number of falls across the 3 care homes involved in the training.”

Post-project evaluations revealed a resounding endorsement from participants, with 100% of respondents affirming the benefit of Amac's training to their roles.

Participants reported applying their newfound skills to support clients in making healthier lifestyle choices beyond formal classes, showcasing a direct link between the training and practical application in the workplace.

One notable success story emerged from a participant who, after attending multiple Amac courses, gained the confidence to prescribe safe and effective exercise. This led to the establishment of a successful Strength and Balance class, attracting new participants and contributing to the ongoing growth of the client base.



Active Suffolk's impact report featured a testimonial from an employer, underscoring the invaluable support provided by the Active Skills project in the recovery of Abbeycroft Leisure. The project not only bolstered the existing workforce but also facilitated opportunities for entry-level employees to gain knowledge, skills, and confidence rapidly. The employer emphasised the project's substantial impact on health and well-being services, allowing the business to respond to emerging demands and contribute to addressing health inequalities.

Moving forward

Active Suffolk acknowledged the significant contribution of the Active Skills project to Suffolk's recovery from the pandemic. The project played a vital role in cultivating a skilled and competent workforce equipped to tackle health inequalities and enhance the overall health and well-being of local communities.

“I just want to thank Amac for the support they have given to the Active Skills project in providing high quality training to the workforce in Suffolk ... [This] has also highlighted the importance of ongoing investment in workforce development in order to influence both the economic and health agenda in the county, specifically given the demographics and existing health inequalities that still exist in Suffolk. We must therefore continue to work together as a sector and with our training partners to support the professional development of the workforce by ensuring that funding is best utilised across the County.”