



Sport For Change

Funding Evaluation



Perth Parrots
Initiative

Contents



| | |
|--|-------------|
| Foreword | 2 |
| Introduction | 3 |
| Coaching Insight | 4-5 |
| Participants Demographics | 6 |
| Participants Experience | 7-10 |



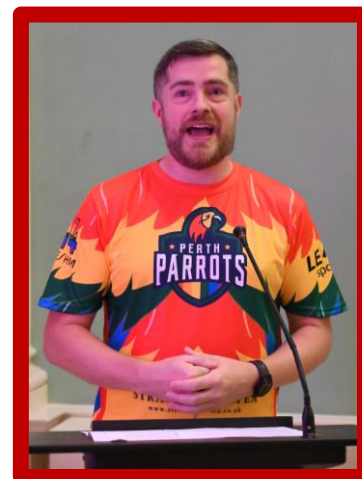
Parrots Fitness
Partner Organisation



Gold PACES
Accredited Club



“Our Parrots Fitness sessions were initially established to allow our members to focus on their personal fitness in a more structured and supported manner, in addition to our weekly floorball sessions. These sessions offer further opportunity for the LGBTIQ+ community and allies to come together and participate in physical activity in a safe and supportive environment. I am incredibly proud to see these sessions grow and develop thanks to financial support from the Sport For Change fund and our enduring partnership with Scotland All-Strong”



Frazer Robertson
Perth Parrots – Club President



“All Strong are an inclusive charity supporting mental health and wellbeing through a variety of formats. We have been delighted to partner with Perth Parrots and provide regular fitness and strength training sessions, and it has been fantastic to see the progress of participants in terms of both physical ability, as well as confidence and self-belief. All Strong looks forward to continuing and supporting the partnership along with the fitness journeys of the participants.”



Andrew Douglas
Scotland All-Strong Director





In spring 2022, the Perth Parrots Floorball Club Coaching Team sought to establish an informal weekly fitness session which would complement the clubs weekly floorball session. The fitness sessions sought to:

- Improve league players fitness, stamina and resilience. (*Performance*)
- Enable individuals to assess their own strengths and identify areas for future focus. (*Performance*)
- Provide additional opportunities for the LGBTIQ+ community and allies to engage physical activity. (*Community*)
- Reduce social isolation and allow for greater integration of the LGBTIQ+ community and allies. (*Community*)

The weekly sessions were offered at no fee to participants and hosted outdoors on the North Inch in Perth. The pilot spanned April to October 2022 and was well received by club and community members alike. As the clocks changed and the weather worsened the sessions were forced to cease for the winter.

The club sought to formally establish the '**Parrots Fitness**' sessions in April 2023 and developed sub branding and promotion. The club worked to identify funding to allow the sessions to move indoors and avoid a winter hiatus. The club secured funding from '**Sport For Change**' to allow sessions to move indoors and continue weekly training working in partnership with **Scotland All Strong**, Perth Gym.





The Perth Parrots provide an opportunity for anybody to engage in sport. We have welcomed people with decades of experience of playing team sports, decades of experience of playing individual sports, no experience of playing any sport whatsoever, and everything in between. We offer a safe space for a diverse range of people with an even broader range of sporting abilities, but everybody is welcome and encouraged to try their best and enjoy what they are doing in the company of like-minded people.



Rhuaraidh Fleming
Perth Parrots Head Coach

Upon entering the Scottish Floorball League, it quickly became apparent that the squad's general fitness was not of a level to enable us to be competitive in games. This was one of the motivations behind the introduction of the Parrots Fitness initiative. We started as a free, weekly outdoor session using nothing but a stopwatch, training cones and a portable speaker for some music! A regular cohort of attendees quickly formed with approximately a third of that cohort not part of our league squad and with no interest in playing competitively - they just wanted to get fitter/stronger and to do so in a safe and welcoming environment with people like them.

These sessions focused on cardiovascular fitness, out of necessity. We didn't have the equipment to do much else and, even if we did, we didn't have anywhere to store it. However, sessions were well attended; attendees committed to the exercises and gave their maximum effort and every single regular participant saw their fitness levels improve when we conducted measured exercises (e.g. timed sprints over set distances, bleep test etc).

The inconvenience of having to put Parrots Fitness on hiatus for 5 months, which covered the bulk of the floorball league season, because of daylight and weather issues was frustrating but the relationship we secured with All Strong was revelatory. The partnership not only assures access to weekly indoor fitness sessions but to a different type of fitness session than was previously provided. Whereas before we could only work on cardiovascular exercises, our members are now improving their strength and conditioning.



Whereas before excess cardiovascular work could have caused or aggravated injuries, members are able to use Fitness sessions as a source of rehabilitation from injury. The explicit focus on strength and conditioning has also allowed us to recalibrate the focus of drills at our weekly floorball training sessions so we can introduce more challenging, cardiovascular based drills without needing to be concerned that we will be asking too much of people, because they will not be overloading on cardio work later in the week.

Our members who attend Fitness sessions, of whom there are more regular members than before and it remains an approximately one third share who do not wish to play competitively - are demonstrably stronger and fitter as a result. There is a friendly degree of boasting as individuals lift heavier weights than before, or produce more reps than before. It is a positive atmosphere that encourages people to try their best and the results are there for them to see, almost immediately.

I have felt the benefit of these sessions myself, feeling stronger and more confident and believing that, as a result of my work at these sessions, I can run for longer, recover faster and shoot harder than I could before, therefore continuing to set a positive example for all other club members. I would like to see all of our members making use of this resource, such has been the benefit for those who do use it. The opportunity the relationship between Parrots Fitness and All Strong provides is almost immeasurable. Removing all thoughts of league squad and competitiveness, the level of good feeling among our members is palpable.

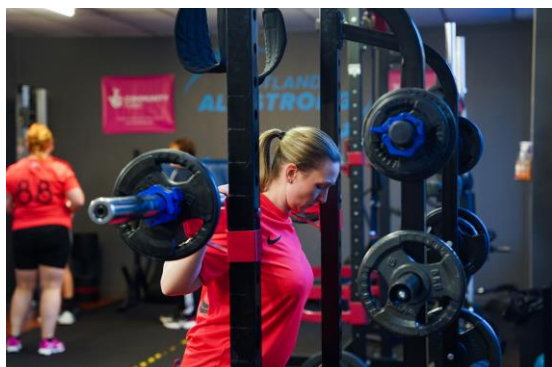
Previous feedback regarding our training sessions has been that regardless of how bad their working day may have been, or what else is going on in their lives, they have then had floorball to look forward to and then reflect on as having enhanced their mood. Through partnership with All Strong we have been able to offer that to people two times per week... with the benefit of both sessions being inside and not restricted by weather and the changing of the seasons! That, in itself, is reward from a coaching perspective. Seeing people enjoying what they are doing and wanting to come back for more week after week, month after month. Long may it continue, thrive and grow.

Participants Demographics

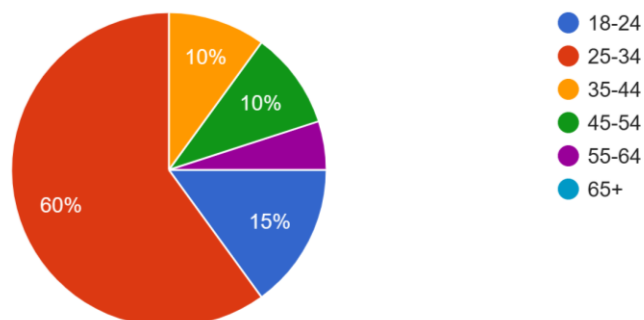


6

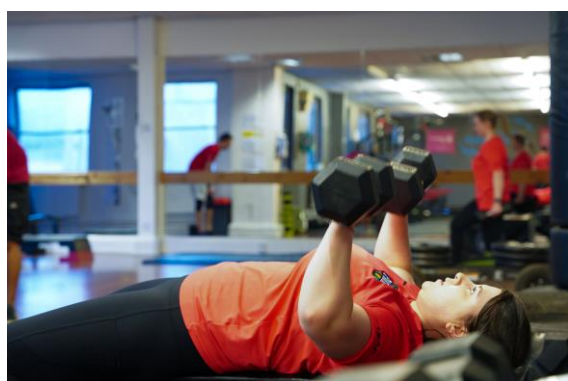
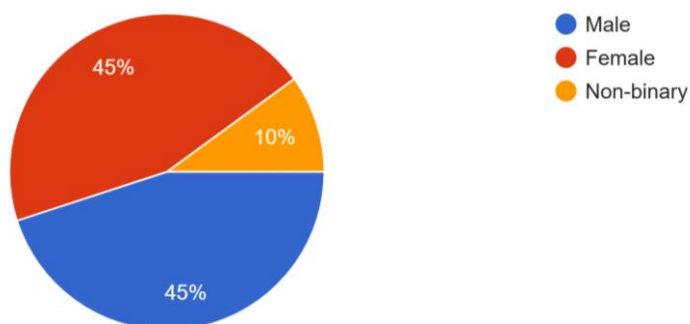
20 participants from a total of 32 opted to respond to our short survey.



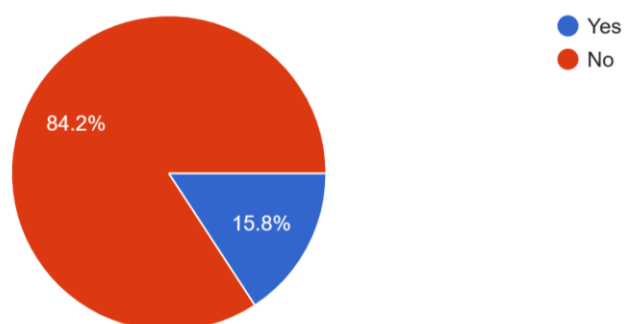
Age?



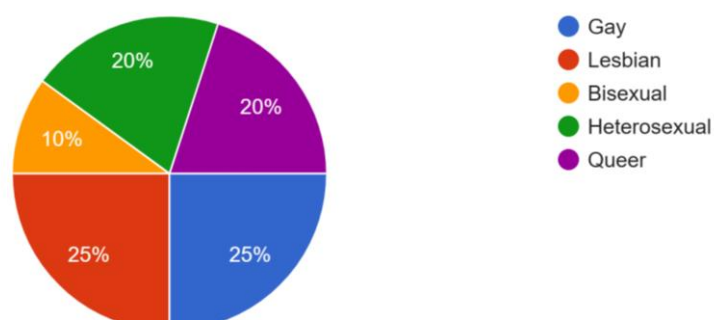
Gender?



Do you consider yourself to be transgender?



Sexual Orientation?





Q. How has your personal physical health benefited from accessing these sessions? *A small selection of responses now follows:*

I don't have a conventional "gym body" and find the thought of going to a gym boring. Having these tailored sessions exclusively for our club's use has been fantastic though. It's a small commitment but the benefits from one hour per week are visible. I'm stronger than I have been in years and have developed muscles that I didn't know, or had forgotten, I had!

I have been able to add variety to the form of exercise I do each week by attending the sessions, with beneficial guidance from the All Strong Gym's trainers on how to work with the machines in a safe and productive way. I'm able to decide by myself what areas to work on in each session, and if I have had days where I'm not feeling as physically capable as usually, there's been plenty of options to still work on my fitness.

The sessions at All Strong have allowed me to focus on my strength and conditioning and importantly pushed me gently out of my comfort zone, away from the cardiovascular elements which I have always found easy, and instead build my confidence to do weights etc without fear of judgement.

It has allowed me to access a variety of strength and cardio equipment that has helped me regain my fitness as I've returned from injury.

Having access to this time in the gym on a weekly basis, with people I feel very comfortable and safe with and the opportunity to get advice from the All Strong team, has been a massive part of helping me get back into floorball after several months out recovering from surgery. I feel it's really lessened my chance of injury and improve my overall fitness and strength much faster than I'd have been able to on my own or through floorball training alone.





Q. How has your personal mental health benefited from accessing these sessions? *A small selection of responses now follows:*

It's really nice to be in the gym in a safe and supportive group, with no anxiety around whether the space and the people in it are trans-friendly. The opportunity to chat to my friends and both get and give encouragement is really good for my overall mental health, and I also find the meditation at the end really valuable. I always head home feeling much less stressed and in a much better mood than when I arrived. I also think it really benefits my sleep which is a massive help for me.

The sessions offer an extremely welcoming atmosphere with no pressure on what I look like when doing my exercises, but instead the atmosphere is uplifting and encouraging without crossing over boundaries. These sessions are first gym sessions I've attended without feeling a pressure to "out-perform" any of my peers, so I think they've been immensely good for my mental health.



The thought of going to a gym is as intimidating as it is boring, due to my physique. Those inhibitions don't exist because of the company at these sessions. Despite the passage of time, we're all still recovering from the pandemic so this excuse to go out, see people and do things again is unquantifiably positive.

Having a weekly session to look forward to and friends to share it with is hugely important to me.

Working out together and supporting and encouraging each other cannot be understated and gives me a much needed boost to my mental health every week. I particularly like the mindfulness sessions at the end. I am the type who would usually scoff at such a session by Andy and the team as All Strong do a great job at just allowing us to relax and unwind.

Having a relaxed and welcoming space to access gym equipment has made going to the gym an enjoyable experience. Going to a busier gym can be such a daunting experience - particularly if you aren't at typical gym goer. The environment at All Strong makes you feel like you belong in that space.



Q. Why is the LGBTIQ+ inclusive space, provided by Parrots Fitness, important to you? *A small selection of responses now follows:*

I have gained so much both physically and mentally from attending these sessions, but the highlight is seeing others attend who never would have considered it previously. Some of the journeys that I have seen others take has been truly life changing for them - and it is all down to having access to these inclusive and safe spaces!

As a member of the LGBTIQ+ community, it's extremely rare to experience a gym session surrounded by fellow people from the same community in such a wholesome way as Parrots Fitness does it. You can come as you are, be welcomed with open arms and leave feeling stronger both physically and mentally given knowing you can be part of such a fantastic community like the Parrots.

The space offered by All Strong allows those who might not be comfortable in a traditional gym environment to take part in gym activities in a safe and welcoming space.

I often find it hard to express just how important the LGBTIQ+ inclusive space our club has created, is to our community. We have grown in number, impact and confidence, establishing a strong network of support where everyone can participate in sport, having shaken off the many shackles which often prevent access. The Parrots Fitness sessions are another important element offered as a club which helps widen our impact.

It's a place and time where I can improve myself and see friends do the same. Not for anyone else but for ourselves/themselves. It provides a space and time for personal improvement and for individual wellbeing. It provides an opportunity that wouldn't exist for so many of them without the Parrots. It's heartening, encouraging and essential.

It's so freeing to be my full self in a way that I can't be at work or at any other type of fitness activity I have tried in the past.



Q. Why is the LGBTIQ+ inclusive space, provided by Parrots Fitness, important to you? *A small selection of responses now follows:*

Gyms in general tend to be a tricky space to navigate as a trans person for various reasons. Obviously, gendered changing spaces, showers, and toilets can create really uncomfortable situations for us, not to mention being completely ignorant of the existence of non-binary people. I know that for myself I always worry that if I was to face any hassle, I have no idea if the gym staff will be inclined or trained to back me up or if they will treat me as the problem. It's also just the constant anxiety and awareness of my trans-ness when working out in a space with strangers, and feeling like I don't fit in to that very cisgender and extremely toxically masculine space at all. I also found at previous points in my life that I would not enjoy the gym as much because the typical people there were usually all quite similar in body type, and I found it often made me feel quite dysphoric. The fact that All Strong is an explicitly LGBTQIA+ inclusive space takes away those worries and therefore removes a huge barrier to access. I love going to a gym that actively caters to such a varied community of users. I feel that the partnership between Perth Parrots and All Strong works so well due to the shared ethos of inclusivity and working to bring people in to sport and exercise who may otherwise feel it's not for them.

