



Case study

**Roshni Ghar – physical
activity for South Asian
women**

Project at a glance

- Roshni Ghar have created a bustling community hub providing culturally appropriate, responsive services for South Asian women experiencing mental health problems.
- Roshni Ghar offers person-centred support to their clients through a variety of services including physical activity.
- They designed and delivered physical activity opportunities directly with the participants.

The challenge

Roshni Ghar was always more than a mental health charity. The charity's community hub in Keighley, West Yorkshire is host to a diverse range of events bringing South Asian women together to learn, connect and support each other.

“We're always looking for new ways to help clients by giving them insight into the triggers [for mental health problems], finding coping mechanism that work for them and seeking support to prevent crisis,” says Perveen Mahmood, one of the charity's support workers.

“We provide women information and support on staying well both mentally and physically while promoting self-care.”

Roshni Ghar's response

“Our experience of working with clients tells us that poor physical health impacts mental health,” explains Perveen. “And we wanted to explore new ways of supporting women with long-term poor physical health conditions.”

Roshni Ghar worked in partnership with the [Get Out Get Active Programme in Bradford](#), who funded culturally sensitive seated exercise classes, alongside swimming and sauna sessions.

These sessions soon became popular very quickly, increasing from one to three sessions a week. Since lockdown, the charity has delivered the sessions virtually

Positive co-design played a huge part in designing the sessions successfully.

“The women told us exactly what they wanted to do and how they wanted to do it,” Perveen Mahmood

“They didn’t want to try something energetic like Zumba. It needed to be an activity that was relaxing and accessible. So, we decided to try seated exercise”.

Roshni Ghar also provided WhatsApp groups where the ladies were able to talk to one another and take part in physical activity in their own home. “It’s about getting people comfortable with the technology so they’re able to use it on their own,” she says. “That really helps improve confidence too.”

The results

Women responded positively to the sessions and now there's a waiting list for the classes. It's just one of a suite of wellbeing sessions Roshni Ghar offers, including healthy cookery sessions, arts and crafts for wellbeing and staying safe through the pandemic.

Perveen says that using WhatsApp meant she could reach out personally to members and encourage them to attend.

“WhatsApp has been good for motivating members and reminding them of the sessions,” she says.

“Because we have a WhatsApp group, we can send a voice reminder to let people know the sessions are on. I can also follow up personally if people do not respond. They might not be feeling confident and need encouragement, or just not feel good on that day.”



Learning

- **Co-design counts**

“We got feedback on what our women wanted to do and how they wanted to do it from the start,” says Perveen. This boosts buy-in and ensures people feel involved in the project.

- **Running or starting activities from the community centre**

Roshni Ghar provided the physical activity service upstairs at the centre. “It was important the women were able to try something new where they felt comfortable to do so,” says Perveen. The swimming sessions were very popular, and the addition of a support worker meeting the ladies at Roshni Ghar and walking to the swimming pool with them really helped build confidence.

- **Use tech to connect**

Perveen found WhatsApp to be a powerful tool to motivate and involve members. She could check-in appropriately and find out how they were feeling, then offer personal encouragement.

- **Show, don't tell**

Because not all the women were fluent in English, Perveen used simple visual demonstrations to show them what they needed to do in the sessions. This helped break down the language barrier and overcome any sound problems on the women's computers.



Relevant support available

Mental Health Awareness for Sport & Physical Activity+ eLearning

Mental Health and Physical Activity Toolkit: Involving people with lived experience of mental health problems in the design and delivery of your work

Mind's Influence & Participation toolkit – involving people experiencing mental health problems in projects and services

