



My return to the Martial Art of Taekwondo-do by Jo Barrett

When I was younger, I took part in a variety of sporting activities, but none had such an impact on my life as when I joined the martial art of Taekwondo-do, aged 14 after a friend introduced me.

As well as training with the Cowley Taekwondo-do School, during the 1980's I achieved my Black Belt and won Championship titles in the Welsh Open Championship for 3 years running (including Welsh Grand Champion in the first year); the English Open Championship for 2 years; and the British Open Championship.

After having my daughter I found it difficult to get back to a competition standard, so I began to help with the running of classes, starting as a secretary of the school and then becoming an assistant instructor.

I returned to full-time education when my daughter started school, but found it difficult to study for my degree and train, so regrettably I had to give up Taekwondo-do. After several years away, I did not feel fit enough to return, so decided to join a gym to work my way back slowly. It was during this time I discovered that my knees swelled up during physical activity. I had to face the devastating reality that I would probably never return to competitive martial arts.

I stayed away for over 15 years and never expected to ever be able to return to the Art. However, when Natasha Mighty (Active Women Activator) invited me to attend taster sports sessions, I never expected it to lead to my return to Taekwondo-do. I was quite reluctant at first, but eventually accepted her invitation. It was hard work, and sometimes painful, but I began to regain my love for sports, although I still thought Taekwondo-do was well out of my reach.

When I told Natasha how I felt about Taekwondo-do, she convinced me that returning at some level would have a positive impact on me. On reflection, I thought back to how Taekwondo-do had not just been about the sport, or even the self-defence, but that it had also been 'a way of life' for me from a young age. As well as promoting physical and mental strength and fitness, Taekwondo-do also helped to build self-esteem, confidence, and develop self-discipline and spiritual harmony. Above all it was a lot of fun. I had not realised until then just how much I had achieved an overall balance in my life during the years I did Taekwondo-do.

Natasha contacted the Oxford Taekwondo-do School on my behalf, and they contacted me, and I was back training the following week.

Having experienced stress related anxiety and hypertension following a difficult period at work, then redundancy; it was exactly what I needed at the time! After only a few weeks of training, I found I was getting less joint pain, was much more flexible, had more energy, felt mentally motivated, had regained my confidence and was more positive about my future.

I continue to train in the sport and receive instruction from a Senior Master to gain an up to date instructors certificate.

Based on my experience I can certainly say that Taekwondo-do is a fantastic sport for women to get involved in no matter what size or shape they are or their level of fitness. It is also a great activity to take part in with the children for some quality family bonding time.



Natasha (Active Women), Jo & Naseera (Rose Hill Children's Centre)

Appendix six: Exercise on referral scheme in city leisure centres.

Aim of the scheme: To provide equitable and affordable access to exercise for all eligible patients registered within Oxfordshire.

Exercise on referral is a joint scheme between Oxford City Council, our leisure provider Fusion-Lifestyle, the Oxfordshire Sports Partnership and our neighbouring District Councils.

The scheme is based on National guidance from the following organisations:

- British Heart Foundation; for further [information](#) on their guidance
- British Association for Cardiovascular Prevention and Rehabilitation (BACPR); for further [information](#) on their guidance
- [National Quality Assurance Framework](#) for exercise on referral

Provision in the city is currently available at:

- Barton Leisure Centre
- Blackbird Leys Leisure Centre
- Ferry Leisure Centre
- Temple Cowley Pools.

All leisure provider staff who deliver the scheme are [Register of Exercise Professionals](#) registered to at least level III in exercise on referral.

Referred patients receive:

- Reduced price access to leisure facilities
- Risk assessment and personalised programme with a suitably qualified exercise professional
- Monitoring and assessment throughout and exit interview on completion of programme.
- Signposting to additional health and well-being activities.

Working with our partners planned scheme improvements include:

- Improved engagement with health practitioners.
- Comprehensive review of the Oxfordshire provider and health practitioner guide
- Visibility of the scheme to those most in need.

Appendix Seven: Targeted Free Swimming Lesson case study

Targeted Free Swimming Lesson

Oxford City Council

In partnership with Fusion-Lifestyle 

Oxford City Council, in partnership with Fusion-lifestyle, deliver free swimming lessons to children aged 5 to 17 living in the city and whose parent/ guardian is in receipt of eligible benefits.

Council funding is used to deliver free swimming lessons, targeting children in areas of high deprivation and low rates of physical activity e.g. Barton, Blackbird Leys and Rose Hill. These targeted sessions take place both in and out of school time, with schools encouraged to incorporate the programme into their curriculum.

Participating in sport and the importance of swimming as a life skill, especially living in a city on a river, has wide reaching benefits:

- Contributes to a high quality of life, and physical activity through sport improves mental wellbeing and physical health and thereby life expectancy
- Curbing childhood obesity
- Contributes to skills development and efficiency

Young people who have attended the sessions have developed swimming abilities from stage 1 to stage 4.

One young person who attended one block of sessions has overcome her fear of water, built confidence and has gone from swim stage 1 to stage 4 and has prompted the young person to continue swimming lessons on a paid concessionary basis.

The scheme enhances the current 50 hours of free swimming also funded by the Council and complements the current learn to swim programme in the city pools.

Parental/ guardian feedback received includes:

“She really has improved; she used to be frightened of the water. Now she loves it.”

“She wasn’t the best in her class {at school}; I knew other parents were taking their children to other classes so I thought I better do the same. These free lessons definitely helped her confidence in the water and improve at school”.

“I would absolutely recommend the swimming programs to others”.



For more information: [Oxford City Council - Free Swimming Lessons for Children](#)

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