

# Mental Health Charter

## Case study



June 2017

1. **Project name:** Chelmsford Karate Club

2. **Organisation name:** Karate Union of Great Britain (KUGB)

3. **Target group:** Young people with disabilities

4. **Aims of project:**

- Motivate young people with disabilities to get physically active through Karate
- Develop young people's social interaction, concentration, behaviour and communication skills through structured training
- Promote Karate to the public as an inclusive sport that is open to all

5. **Project overview**

Chelmsford Karate Club offers weekly sessions for children and adults ranging from beginners to experienced participants. The Club offers a friendly and inclusive environment for people to take part in Karate. It is a family Club established in 1967 with over 160 male and female members ranging from 4 to 83 years old.

6. **Impact of project: Danny's story**

Danny (not his real name) started training with Chelmsford Karate Club a year ago aged 5. He is now 6 years old.

Danny had a diagnosis of Autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) and his parents were told that he should take part in sports. So, Danny joined his local Karate club. When Danny first started Karate, he was shy, had difficulty making eye contact but took time to listen and respond when he was being coached. Danny would often repeat the words of the Instructor loudly, to the surprise of the other children, and count out loud to himself during the exercises.

Danny's coaches have built a relationship with him to understand how he learns. Danny trains as part of the class and is fully included in all the activities. He is encouraged to perform all the training exercises to the best of his ability. He will be asked, alongside other class members, to say out loud the names of the techniques we perform in both English and Japanese. This develops both his understanding and functional speech and he will also be asked to announce his 'Kata' (set form) loudly before beginning to perform. Danny will then perform his Kata in a set sequence of moves that he must remember for examination. To date, he has learnt two Katas and is currently working on a new one for his next grade. These Katas increase in complexity in terms of different blocks,



strikes and combination. Danny will be asked to perform these Katas both alongside other students and individually.

Danny's Instructor or a Young Leader may work alongside him to support his learning and build his confidence. At the end of every class all the students will kneel, close their eyes and work on deep breathing. This is called 'Mokusu' and is a form of meditation to calm the body and mind. Danny is developing his behaviour skills by learning how to sit calmly and quietly, helping to reduce any repetitive movements such as body rocking. Overall, Danny has responded positively by becoming much more confident and able to concentrate for a longer period. Danny now listens to the Instructor and knows what he needs to do and focus on during the class.

In the past year, Danny has passed two formal grading examinations and was recently awarded his Red Belt, his second coloured belt. Through Karate, Danny is developing skills that transfer into his everyday life; he is learning to communicate with club members of all ages – both children and adults and he understands the protocol of how to ask for help politely and how to communicate when he understands. This, in turn, is developing his social interaction skills and self confidence that have seen very good improvement. Furthermore, Karate has given Danny a passion and hobby that he is keen to talk about and share his interest with family and friends.

Danny's interest and enthusiasm in Karate is evident when he arrives early for class and starts to practice immediately. He is developing his respect for others, interacting with fellow students and is always keen to help others as well as to be helped by them. As a result, his younger sister has now joined the class and recently passed her first grading.

Danny's Instructor Jane said, *"I am very proud of Danny and his achievement. In the KUGB we have been working to break down the barriers, reduce the stigma of mental health and get people active. As a result, Karate has benefited Danny tremendously, the development of his confidence, behaviour and social skills, in addition to his self-defence skills, are helping him both in his training and also in his everyday life including school."*

Danny's mother said *"The Instructors at the club have taken the time to ensure that my son, with his special needs, is included in the lesson and that he is not only looked after but pushed in a positive manner to achieve his best. My little boy loves this class and his teachers and he has learnt various skills that help him not only at Karate but with his social skills and listening skills which he struggles with."*

*"Danny is now practicing his Karate at home daily. Danny has a speech disorder and is not able to speak clearly as would be expected for a child of his age. However, his love for Karate has given us, as a family, a subject that we can speak about and encourage Danny to speak more at home. Danny loves to talk about Karate and how he has to practice more and explains to us all the techniques he has to learn and how the grading levels work. Danny is focused and wants to push himself to work through the levels. It is amazing how my son has changed and grown by participating in such sports like Karate that motivate him. This would not be possible without experienced teachers who have taken the time to address his needs and learn how to work with him."*

Case Study supplied by Jane Naylor-Jones, 5th Dan Black belt, Instructor at KUGB Chelmsford Karate Club



