

Sarah Robertson is a youth worker by vocation but currently the managing director of a youth and community organisation based in Barking.

Her organisation uses sport - particularly football and boxing - as a tool of engagement. Sarah is a qualified sports coach and boxing tutor. Weightlifting became part of her fitness experience when her son wanted to join a gym. Due to his shyness, Sarah went along too and for the past year has been lifting weights with her son.

Like many women, Sarah admitted “the weightlifting space can be very intimidating and is very much male orientated. However, being involved in football and boxing for many years I have learned to overcome this intimidation and being a very strong character I am not bothered by the male presence.”

She adds, “I have noticed since using the weightlifting space some other females have come over and joined me. Attending the gym regularly has led to me making friends with male weight lifters and often see them quietly competing with me on the lifts. I think by engaging with the males in the weight lifting space this has changed male attitudes towards women lifting weights.”

Women in Sport research shows how people around us act as influencers when it comes to our relationships with sport and physical activity. This was exactly the case for Sarah who advised, “taking a friend will help to distract you from any one who may be watching or intimidating.”

Sarah now gets to enjoy the feeling of being strong and competing against herself to continually lift greater weights. Like many women, she agrees that ‘strong is not a size’.

“ I have a very small frame and people are often shocked at the weights I am able to lift. Strength comes in many different packages and weightlifting not only increases strength of the body but also strength of the mind.”