

Small Steady Steps

The evaluation of a Belfast pilot community based physical activity referral programme, for those living with and beyond cancer

Authors:
Jane Rankin, Belfast Health & Social Care Trust
Sean McQuade, Belfast Health Development Unit
on behalf of the Active Belfast Cancer Rehabilitation Sub-Group.

Background:

Being physically active has been shown to have multiple benefits for people living with cancer.¹ A 2010 review of controlled intervention trials for exercise performed after cancer treatment showed significant small to moderate improvements were indicated for aerobic fitness, body weight and body fat, quality of life and fatigue, and large effects for muscular strength.²

Although the evidence is strong to support the benefits of physical activity for cancer patients, awareness amongst healthcare professionals is not universal and some actively discourage physical activity, thinking rest is best.³

Some epidemiological studies have shown physical activity can reduce the risk of cancer reoccurrence and survival rates.⁴ This demonstrates good evidence to support the integration of physical activity into the pathway for cancer care.

Aim:

To promote physical activity and the benefits of an active lifestyle, provide access to services and engage with patients living with and beyond cancer.

Objectives:

- Design an evidence based physical activity programme
- Promote physical activity to healthcare professionals
- Evaluate the impact and effectiveness of the programme
- Integrate physical activity into the pathway for cancer care.

Process:

A multi-agency group was established in 2012 to pilot a physical activity programme for people living with and beyond cancer. The initial pilot comprised of a 12 week physical activity programme for people living with cancer. Six participants attended the first pilot programme, and 12 the second programme.

Evaluation and Outcomes:

Both quantitative and qualitative research methods were used including the Social Return on Investment (SRoI) principles and impact mapping to develop the evaluation.

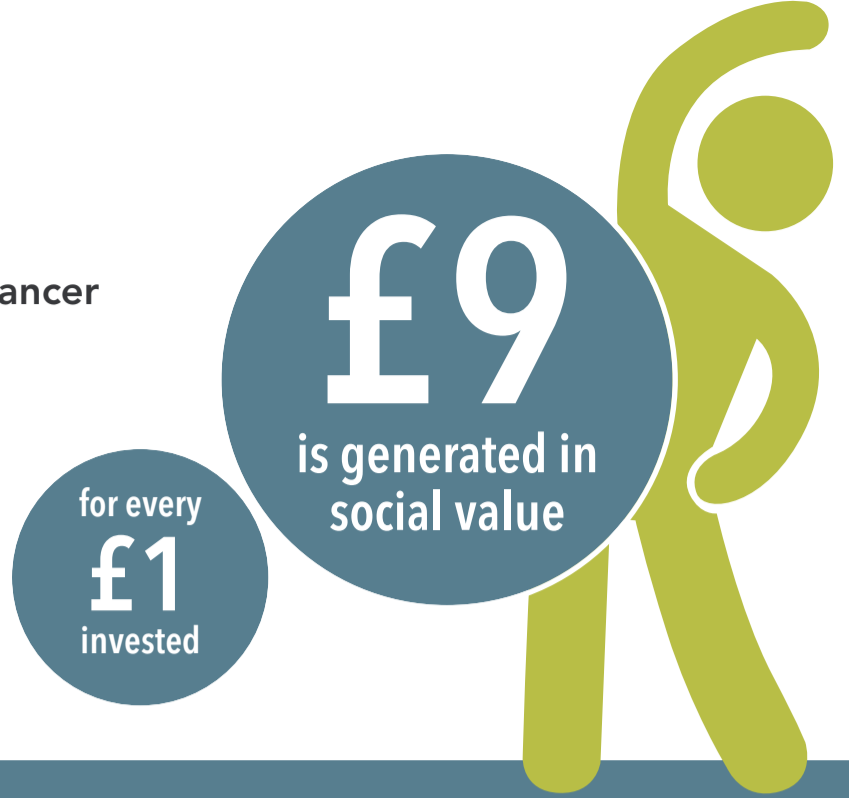
References

- ¹ Macmillan Cancer Support The importance of physical activity for people living with and beyond cancer – a concise evidence review. London: Macmillan Cancer Support; 2011
- ² Speck R, Courneya K, Masse L, Duval S, Schmitz K (2010) An update of controlled physical activity trials in cancer survivors: a systematic review and meta-analysis. J Cancer Survival 2010; 4:87-100
- ³ Stone P, Ream E, Richardson A, Thomas H, Andrews P, Campbell P, Dawson T, Edwards J, Goldie T, Hammick M, Kearney N, Lean M, Rapley D, Smith AG, Teague C, Young Cancer-related fatigue – a difference of opinion? Results of a multicentre survey of healthcare professionals, patients and caregivers. European Journal Cancer Care 2003; 12:20-27
- ⁴ British Association of Sport and Exercise Science, Campbell A, Stevinson C, Crank H The BASES Expert Statement on Exercise and Cancer Survivorship 2011.

For further information please contact:

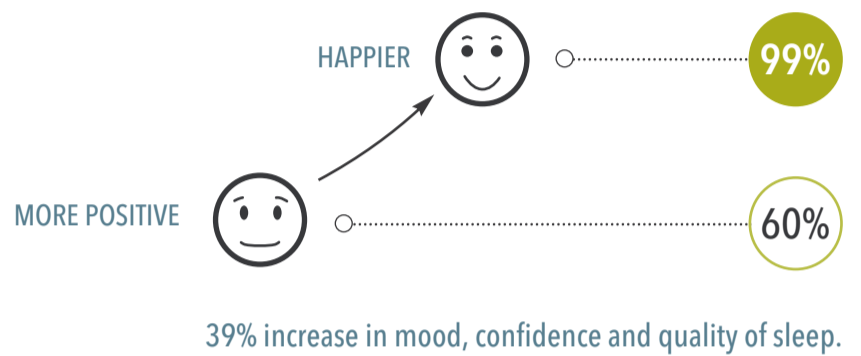
Sean McQuade
Physical Activity Referral Coordinator
Belfast Health Development Unit
Email: sean.mcquade@bhdu.org

The evaluation identified a positive economic and social impact:



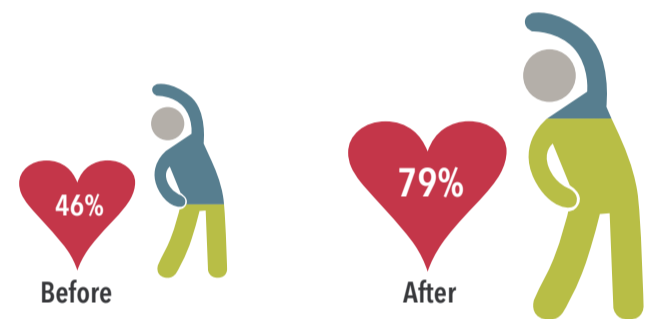
Feel good index

The 'feel good index' score suggested a significant improvement in participants feeling more positive, happier and experiencing reduced feelings of anxiety and depression.



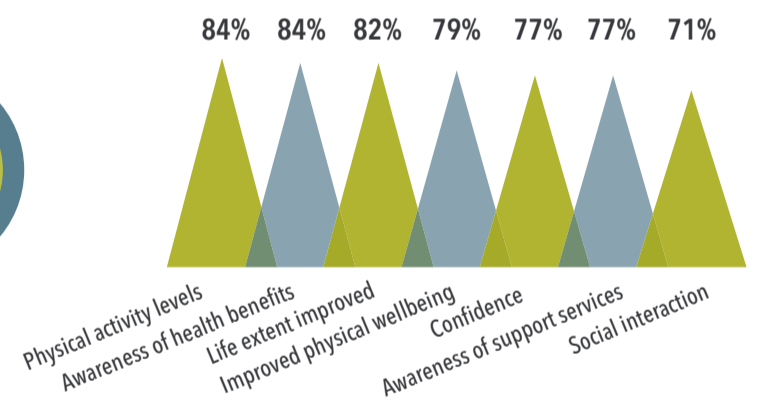
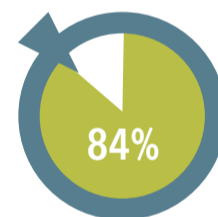
% of change to overall health

The initial pre-programme score of 46% was raised to 79% after the intervention.



Social outcomes

An 84% increase in the level of physical activity and increased awareness of the benefits of health and physical activity.



Additional outcomes

- +
- + Confidence + Fitness + Feeling healthier + Motivation
 - + Levels of resilience + Engagement in 'usual activities', such as work, family or leisure activities.

90%

Reported they were continuing to be physically active after the programme.



Conclusions and Implications

The evaluation highlights the positive impact the programme had on participant's health and wellbeing both physically and mentally. It shows the important role physical activity plays giving a **£9 return for every £1 invested socially and economically.**

Integrating physical activity into the pathway for cancer care will require a number of improvements to current practice:

- Need for more collaboration across agencies to integrate physical activity into the pathway for cancer care
- Improved system and methods for collecting data to better inform evidence of benefits of physical activity including long term follow up for people living with and beyond cancer
- Increased awareness and change in attitudes to physical activity by health professionals to increase referrals to programmes.



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