

Come Outside! Case study

Supporting volunteer leaders to sustain health improvements

Area

Caerphilly

The group

Penybryn

Supported by

Mid Valleys West

Communities First Cluster

Start date

May 2014

Total participants

47

Number of sessions

51

Session types

Walking, Nordic Walking,
Astronomy

ABOUT THE GROUP

The Penybryn group was started as a result of a healthy eating course run by Communities First in Caerphilly. Residents took part in a Foodwise course and decided that they wanted to go walking to get fitter and help them lose weight. Communities First put them in touch with the Come Outside! Regional Coordinator.

The group started taking part in taster sessions in summer 2014 and there have been a total of 47 participants who have taken part in at least one session. It is a mixed group, however slightly over half the members are female, aged from late 30s to 60s. A number of families have also taken part with parents bringing other adults and younger age children to the sessions. There is a mix of economic status, with 48% of the group employed, 17% unemployed, 13% retired and 9% long term sick or disabled.

COME OUTSIDE! ACTIVITIES

The group started going out for walks in summer 2014 and to date have taken part in 51 sessions. On average 6 people attended each session, some have been very well attended with more than 20 people attending, with others less well attended due to poor weather in the winter months. 15 members have taken part in at least 5 sessions and there is a core group of 8 people who have attended more than 10 sessions.

The group attended a Dark Skies event, where another participant talked to the group about Nordic Walking. This interested the group as they thought the walking poles would help some members with back, hip and mobility problems caused by their weight. They started doing Nordic walking and find they are more stable with the poles.



What the participants said

8 participants completed our survey, of these all 8 are more physically active as a result, with 4 of these moving from a sedentary lifestyle to taking part in regular physical activity, and 2 of these now meeting the recommended 5 x 30 minute sessions a week. 6 participants are more confident about taking part in outdoor activities outside the organised sessions and 6 are happier as a result of taking part in Come Outside!

“Walking has really helped keep the weight off”

“We feel fitter and it’s helped us to do more”

“I thoroughly enjoyed it, wouldn’t have missed it for the world”

“Well - I have got muscles I didn’t know existed after my first experience of Nordic Walking earlier. Looking forward to Monday already. Thanks Donna [volunteer leader] for introducing me to my new keep fit regime and for your patience with me. Thoroughly enjoyed it. ‘It’s also good to meet people – before I was just at home or work all the time and it’s been good to meet people and socialise. Walking is relaxing, stress free, you enjoy the fresh air. It gets people out of the house socialising which makes you feel better’ ”

“Initially I was ‘volunteered’ and just decided to ‘go with the flow’ but it’s been really rewarding to see people getting more active – I feel a real sense of achievement and I really like helping people. It helps keep you going knowing you’ve helped people”

One regular member of the group was asked if they would be interested in taking more of a lead role on a voluntary basis; helping to coordinate and lead some of the sessions. They have taken part in walk leader training and Nordic Walking training to help them in this role.

IMPACT ON THE GROUP

Group members report that they are losing weight as a result of taking part in the walks. Some people really struggled at first, finding even the short walks difficult. But those who have attended regularly are improving, with one member managing a 5 mile walk in December 2014 which was a great achievement.

There has also been a social benefit to taking part in the group; the group find walking outdoors a relaxing, stress-free and enjoyable form of exercise.

The training has also been beneficial for the volunteer leader, who has enjoyed the training she’s been provided as a result of Come Outside!, as well as that provided by Communities First. The volunteering has also been personally rewarding.

SUSTAINABILITY

Communities First helps to promote the group and keeps them in touch with other opportunities, so they are now less reliant on the support of Come Outside!

The training for the volunteer means that the group can continue to meet and go for local walks once the programme ends and they are confident this will happen. The group has also been encouraged to be self-sufficient financially; all members pay a small amount into a ‘kitty’ that is then used to pay for any costs.

March 2016

“We are confident we will keep going once Come Outside! finishes”