



Invigor8  
THE PERFECT FIT

# Public Health Funding Final Report

P4252

Upskilling of Fitness Instructors

### Project Description:

This proposal was to enhance the health and well-being of the population of Wirral population by meeting both of the two high level outcomes through the development of Wirral's Leisure Centre and Parks and Open Spaces activity programmes.

- Increased healthy life expectancy
- Reduced differences in the life expectancy and healthy life expectancy between communities
- Wirral Council Leisure Centre's offer a wide range of activities across the 8 leisure sites and now branching out into the parks. These include swimming, pool based classes, fitness suites and fitness classes. We also offer Buggy Park Fitness; Run in Wirral, Health Walks and Park Fitness Buddies in our outdoor spaces and are also being asked to provide Outdoor Boot camps.
- We are now developing specific Teen and Junior activities and would like to offer a wider range of activities to these young people. If we can engage with them at a younger age then hopefully exercise will become a way of life rather than a chore.
- Some of our leisure centres are also now operating with day services using the centre's for full days so we need to look at suitable sessions for this group also so they can be led by fully qualified and confident instructors.
- In order to keep up with the latest market trends we need to ensure that our staff, have the relevant qualifications and also that we have enough staff trained up to deliver the sessions.
- Qualifications that have been identified which are needed include Personal Trainer, Pre and Post Natal Exercise Instructor, Kids Fitness Instructor, Teen Gym Instructor, Yoga, Exercise and Disability, Outdoor Fitness, Exercise Referral, Exercise for the Older Adult, High Intensity Training, Suspension Fitness and Stott Pilates, Circuit training, Kettlebells, Chair Based Exercise instructors
- Depending on what qualifications that the instructors already have will depend on how their career pathway will look. In the past instructors have gone off and got their own qualifications but we wanted to develop a clearer pathway and play on the instructors strengths and who they will work with. There was a great need to get instructors through their Personal Training qualification in order to work closer with one to one clients who need that extra support for various reasons.
- By offering a wide range of activities we will then be able to hope, that there will be an activity that will suit most people's needs.

## Finance:

This project was awarded £67,208 and we did spend the whole amount.

- 80% of the total amount was spent on courses to upskill current staff
- 20% of the total amount was spent on equipment and kit to enable the classes to take place

**If further funding were to become available we have already made contact with providers of additional more specialised courses such as Pink Ribbon Breast Cancer Recovery Programme (working closely with Clatterbridge Hospital Oncology Department), GP referral, in particular, Joint Replacement (e.g. hip and knee), Obesity and Diabetes, Back Care and Mental Health.**

## What went well?

- Being able to give something back to instructors, they have never had courses paid for in the past. Lots of enthusiasm, which was great to see and it showed us which instructors were keen and who wanted to better themselves. Some of them had a lot of study to work around their busy work and home lives and this showed us who was committed to us.
- Personal Training course was a pre-requisite for some of the more specialised courses and so we have had to wait a long time for instructors to get all the qualifications in place before we could start offering certain sessions. So in the very near future we will begin to set up the specialised sessions that we originally planned i.e. Pre and Post Natal classes and Personal Training
- We built an excellent working relationship with the course providers who gave us flexibility when it was needed and did not charge us for changing names and courses etc, which was a huge bonus. We were not charged transfer fees due to a successful working relationship, again this saved valuable funding which we were keen not to waste.
- The relationship between ourselves and our instructors improved greatly as they have felt more appreciated. Some have shown a new enthusiasm and even paid for extra courses themselves to enhance their CV as there has been a healthy competitiveness born out of the situation.

## What didn't go well?

- In some cases staff left Wirral Council before getting the qualification or once they had the qualification they then left. This was extremely frustrating and before we spent any money we did ask if we could fine staff or reclaim money back if they did not complete. We were told that this was not possible and yes although you do expect to see some natural wastage, it's still not good and very frustrating when you could have put somebody else on the course.
- Deeper investigation into some of the qualifications found that some companies were offering courses that our staff were already qualified to teach via previous qualifications they had gained. We looked at an Outdoor Fitness (Bootcamps) qualification but speaking with course tutors on other courses we found that other qualifications covered the instructors. So luckily we were able to cancel those courses and rebook onto another course, therefore avoiding duplication and wastage of valuable funding.
- We wanted to get all fitness suite instructors trained up with their Exercise and Disability course but due to a restructure of all staff across all sites, we were advised against this.

Taking into account the current staff that we had we were looking to spend in the region of £7,500 on these qualifications. I would however like to revisit this at a later date when we know the new staff structure and if there is any unspent funding from other projects, could those monies be re-directed to us? I feel that this is a very important course for our staff to have to give them confidence when working with people with disabilities as our fitness suites are attracting more and more disabled customers. They could then be supported and take advice from those staff who have completed the G. P. Referral course and we could also then apply for accreditation for all our fitness suites.

### Did the PHOF make a difference?

Most definitely, for the following reasons:

- Before the PHOF funding we, as a Council, delivered 280 classes per week and we will now be able to offer some more specialised classes such as Ante and Post Natal. We have begun the journey to set up a GP Referral Scheme by qualifying some of our current staff. However, as this requires additional funding to be sustainable, we will need to approach the local consortiums and build partnerships to ensure the success of any scheme going forward. We are confident we already have 'buy in' from local NHS staff as we received very positive feedback when we attended the 'Hip and Knee Pathway conference a few months ago'.
- It has also meant that by having other instructors trained up we have not had to cancel as many classes. We are now able to offer a wider range of classes and across more of our 8 sites. Without this funding we would have struggled to get more staff trained as they had to self-fund courses for themselves and money has been tight for many.
- Many customers have given positive feedback about us having more qualified staff available and that the quality of these classes has improved greatly.
- This funding has helped us to ensure our minimum standards of recruitment for any instructor must be a Level 2 qualification. This means all instructors have the background in anatomy and physiology knowledge and they know why they are teaching particular moves and the benefits these moves have on the fitness of the client.
- Fitness Instructors have reported back that by gaining more knowledge they feel more confident in the delivery of their classes.
- Due to the recent opening of a brand new fitness suite and studio at Guinea Gap Leisure Centre, we have seen a huge influx of new customers and had to develop a full studio programme of classes. Due to the popularity of these sessions we are about to expand the timetable to reflect demand.

## Anything else:



New Nordic Walking Session in West Kirby



Instructors on their kettlebell course

## Courses

PT – 8 qualified, 1 failed to complete

GP Referral – 7 currently qualifying

Coach in Running Fitness – 2 qualified

Leadership in Running Fitness – 8 qualified, 2 currently qualifying

Nordic Walking – 15 qualified

Aquanatal – 13 qualified

Aqua – 8 qualified

Ante and Post Natal – 1 qualified, 3 more about to start course

Exercise to Music - 5 qualified, 1 now left, 1 failed to complete, 1 looking to qualify again

Kids Fitness – 2 qualified, 3 failed to complete, 1 about to start course

Gym Instructor – 3 qualified

Circuits – 11 qualified, 1 failed to complete

Kettlebells – 32 qualified

Group cycling – 15 qualified

Clubbercise – 5 qualified

Nutrition – 12 people took the course – 2 did not complete

Pilates x 7 – This course takes a long time to get qualified with and It's only now seeing the instructors

Yoga – x 5 - As with the Pilates this is another course that takes a long time to gain the qualification.

### Equipment

Spinning bikes x 24 for West Kirby Concourse

Kettlebells for 4 sites

Circuit training equipment

Clubbercise Glowsticks

Disco Lighting at 3 sites for Clubbercise

New run leaders kit

Exercise equipment for Guinea Gap

Nordic Walking poles x 2 sets

New Classes set up as a result of Public Health Innovation Fund

### West Kirby Concourse

Introduction to Kettlebells x 1

Introduction to Spinning x 2

Introduction to Pilates x 1

Kettlebells x 7

Clubbercise x 2

Nordic Walking x2

H.I.I.T. & Stretch x 3

Pilates x 1

### Europa Pools

Kettlebells x 2

Revolutions x 1

### Leasowe Recreation Centre

Kettlebells x 7

Revolutions x 4

Yoga x 1

Teen Clubbercise x 1

Clubbercise x 1

Teen Fitness x 2

### The Oval, Wirral

Kettlebells x 8

Revolutions x 4

Weight Management x 1

Teen Revolutions x 1

### Wirral Tennis Centre

Kettlebells x 2

Clubbercise x 1  
Circuits x 3  
Yoga x 2

### Guinea Gap Baths

Kettlebells x 2  
Yoga x 2  
Introduction to Revolutions x 1  
Circuits x 1  
Revolutions x 3

### Woodchurch Leisure Centre

Clubbercise x 2  
Pilates x  
Yoga x 2  
Aqua x 2

### Case Studies

Kerry Smith by Alex McCrudden - Mentor

I met Kerry 2 years ago when she attended one of my keep fit classes; at the time she was some 19 stone but I could tell she was determined to get fit and create a better future for her children; Alfie, 5 at the time has severe autism and Ava, who was 1. I told her I would support her as much as possible, she attended every class that I deliver and put 110% effort in. I weighed her every week and gave her dietary and nutritional advice. Kerry now delivers her own keep fit class for Wirral Borough Council. She has lost 11 stone and has qualified to be a keep fit Instructor. Despite having dyslexia she has studied for 12 months and now can teach a range of keep fit classes.

Kerry has now also passed her driving test and due to the Public Health Innovation Funding she has now gained Indoor Group Cycling qualification, Kettlebells and is currently working towards her Kids Fitness qualification. Kerry has now got a massive following as she has been covering some long term sickness at West Kirby Concourse and the feedback that we have received has been phenomenal. When customers read Kerry's story they are blown away by how far she has come. We put her story on our Invigor8 Facebook page and the Council has never had a response to any story like it. Without this funding Kerry could not have funded the courses herself as she was just starting out on her career and would not have made the impact that she has done. Kerry is an asset to our instructor team.



Kerry's before and after photo

### Kim's story

I was 53; a smoker with asthma and type 2 diabetes and my blood pressure was too high. My diabetic medication had been increased recently and I was being told I needed medication to control my blood pressure. I was sluggish and unfit and although I had always been a party animal I was finding myself avoiding going out. I had recently been in hospital because of asthma attacks and could not even climb stairs without huffing and puffing. I had two teenage children and knew that if I wanted to see any Grandchildren I needed a drastic life change. I wanted to give up smoking but knew I would use food to replace it so I looked around for something else to do to help me become the healthy person I needed to be.

A woman at work had recently begun to run with a group on the Wirral. Okay, she was 20 years younger than me but she was not your usual runner type and she began to talk about the people she ran with who also did not seem the usual types to be runners. I had always dreamt of running and tried it unsuccessfully when I was younger so now thought I had missed the boat. I questioned this woman about how I would be received at this group and whether or not they would welcome or indeed cope with such a physical wreck. Eventually I decided to give it a go and although very, very nervous, I turned up for a Monday night session at West Kirby. I was surprised to find people there of all shapes, sizes and ages and was introduced to Fiona, one of the leaders. She assured me that I would be ok and chatted for a few minutes to put me at my ease. I told her that I had given up smoking the day before and that I had not done any exercise for a long time. She said we would take it easy and I could intersperse small runs with walking.

I felt like a fish out of water when I began to run and was glad it was dark so nobody could see me. I was asking myself what on earth I was thinking of to even attempt this. I managed to run only for 30 seconds at a time with 3 minutes walks in between. At one point we went up a steep hill, which I walked up. I had to stop a few times and I felt faint when I reached the top. Fiona kept saying how well I was doing and by the end of it I almost believed her. I did it though and felt a real sense of achievement. I had not felt the humiliation I had expected and just felt a great sense of acceptance and empathy from everyone there.

It was really difficult but I knew that I could only improve; I certainly couldn't get much worse. To Fiona's surprise (and mine) I turned up again for the Wednesday session and had another go when I managed to run for a minute and walk for 2 minutes. This is how it went on for week after week with small improvements and I eventually replaced my addiction to cigarettes with a real desire to get fit. I remember the first time I ran around the Marine Lake without stopping when I almost cried with happiness. I began to remember what it felt like to feel well and healthy. I stopped relying upon my inhaler and people commented on how well I looked. I added a Saturday morning session to my itinerary and a few lunchtime swimming sessions. My Doctor began to notice the difference and no longer felt that I needed medication for high blood pressure and my diabetic medication was halved as my blood sugar became much more stable.

I have been running for four years now and to say my life has changed would be an understatement. As an added bonus, I have also met some wonderful people from all walks of life and, I believe, some will be lifelong friends. We all have a story to tell and some of our runners have and do overcome immense obstacles to run. This alone is enough to keep you motivated and we all help each other, never judging. Now four years later I am still not Paula Radcliffe and never will be. I do the occasional 10k and still need to stop a few times during it but that is fine. I have recently had a pace maker fitted and was back at running group 3 weeks later. I trained about a year ago to become a run leader and I love it. I am like a proud mother at sports day when the beginners achieve a milestone whether it be running for 2 minutes nonstop or 1 mile nonstop. If I can run, anyone can!!! Kim helps out with the Absolute Beginners group and also the other beginner sessions which she gets most of her enjoyment from, seeing people who were in the same position as she was 4 years ago.



Kim with her Absolute Beginners Group