

Addressing the increased need around physical activity and **mental wellbeing**, brought about due to the challenges of the **Covid-19 pandemic**.

Using **social prescribing** and partnerships with 3rd sector community organisations to provide an accessible **yoga class**, offering support to increase **physical activity** and manage stress, anxiety and isolation.



COMMUNITY NEED

- ✓ The pandemic has caused an increase in mental health problems, such as stress and anxiety and 2 out of 3 adults (over 25 years) with an existing mental health problem reported worse mental health.
- ✓ There was a lack of accessible physical activity opportunities during the pandemic for those on low income, with a long term health condition or experiencing increased pain due to a lack of physical activity.
- ✓ There was a need to provide a connected community to provide support emotionally, by sharing feelings and experiences and reducing isolation.
- ✓ 1 in 3 older people agree that their anxiety is now worse or much worse than before the start of the pandemic.

THE PROJECT

The project was organised thanks to a partnership between Energise Me, Community First and Minded Yoga Winchester, using Sport England 'Tackling Inequalities' funding to provide a pathway for adults aged 18-55 to receive the following support to tackle their stress, anxiety, isolation and physical inactivity:



10-week Yoga4Health course, including mindfulness & breathing.



Online resources to encourage continued yoga practice at home.



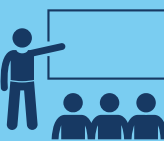
Emotional and behaviour support through phone calls and doorstep conversations.



Access to exercise classes through YouTube, also offered to all NHS staff.

What was key to making the project a success?

- 1 Providing the participants with **extra support** through **phone calls** and **door step conversations**. Taking into account the **motivation** and **emotional support** required to take part in the classes.
- 2 Having the **right teacher** with the **personality, passion, knowledge** and **commitment**. Being able to support and show empathy to the participants.
- 3 **Attending partner meetings**, this project began by bringing together Community First (social prescribers) with the Active Partnership and various community groups.
- 4 Organising a **presentation by Minded Yoga Winchester to GPs** at the Winchester Central PCN, facilitated by the social prescriber. This was vital to **promote the benefits** of Yoga4Health and consequently **increase referrals** with an ever growing waiting list.



HOW WAS LIVED EXPERIENCE INVOLVED....

Referrals were received through social prescribing. This provided an opportunity to understand the challenges faced by participants with lived experience. A pre-course phone call also helped to ease any concerns.

Providing regular phone call support throughout helped with understanding different barriers and making adaptations. E.g. Options (chair or mat) for different fitness / ability levels.

Gaining feedback from participants helped to understand that everyone has different coping mechanisms and sometimes they don't want to share.





Sport England's 'Tackling Inequalities' fund provided vital delivery money for the project to take place.



The Active Partnership for Hampshire and IOW, provided the support, advice and access to funding for the project.



a2dominion donated Chrome books to be loaned out so adults on low income could also access the classes online.



Community First provide Social Prescribers who were instrumental in planning the project with partners, as well as referring participants.



Relationships with GP surgeries and social prescribers signposted those in need to the sessions.

PARTNERSHIPS

Judith Davis is the instructor who delivered the programme. Her knowledge, personality and commitment were vital in making the project a success.

OUTCOMES

Improved physical health

Changes in eating & exercise habits

Improved mental wellbeing & feelings of isolation

Reduced pain & stiffness

Increased confidence and self-awareness

Improved form, strength & flexibility

Regular commitment and seeing the benefits of weekly practice and how it affected my sleep and sense of taking responsibility for my own health.

The good news is that my pre diabetic level following a blood test is now within the normal range.

I feel that the course really helped me to improve the stiffness and pain that I suffer from with fibromyalgia. I use it on a regular basis to reduce tension when I feel a flare-up.

Since starting yoga I no longer suffer from stiffness in my ankles/legs. I feel stronger emotionally/mentally and more grounded and balanced. No longer feel panicky.

SHARING BEST PRACTICE

Create cross-sector collaborations to share insight, knowledge and skills. As well as being able to have a joined up approach to reaching those in need.

Everyone involved in the project needs to have the commitment and passion to make it a success and support individuals.

Build trust with participants and create a community where everyone feels safe. Be adaptable to everyone's needs both physical and mental.

Go over and above with the motivational and behavioural support for participants. Phone calls and checking in goes a long way to overcoming their barriers.

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