

Transforming Lives

Living Well West Midlands is now in its third year of delivery and the impact it has had on the lives of thousands of people in the region will, for many, last beyond the lifetime of the portfolio.



As projects look forward and explore ways of continuing their work, we thought this would be an ideal time to present the very real benefits that people have experienced as a result of their involvement in one of our 29 projects.

At commencement of the portfolio, Living Well was one of 14 multi-million pound projects supported by the Big Lottery Fund through their Well-being programme.

Living Well has widened access to opportunities for healthier behaviour, increased the capacity

of communities to deliver healthier opportunities and campaigned for healthier choices.

Our last evaluation highlighted how many individuals involved in the projects, have made improvements in their diet, and amount of physical activity they take, and how this and other interventions have led to improvements in their mental wellbeing.

Lives have been transformed across our region as a direct result of this portfolio. Living Well West Midlands is an excellent example of how Big Lottery funding and partnership working

across voluntary and community organisations, health bodies and local authorities is making a real difference to communities.

Due to the hard work and tenacity of project leads working with commissioners and sourcing alternative funding routes, we are proud that many projects will continue to deliver this important work beyond the initial grant funded period as well as leaving a legacy in terms of influencing policy and practice in the future.

**Zena Lynch, Director
Living Well West Midlands**

Partnerships key to Living Well West Midlands impact

This newsletter looks at some of the real life success stories and how Living Well West Midlands is an excellent example of how Lottery and partnership funding is making a real difference to the well-being of communities.

These success stories owe much to the strong partnerships that have been developed across many different sectors. Additionally, significant levels of support have been received by the projects, with over 15% of the total funding for the portfolio coming from in-kind support - a massive £709,400 so far. This figure is also largely due to the amazing contribution and work of volunteers, whose commitment and dedication is highly and rightly valued within the Living Well portfolio.

As you read through the case studies, you may notice some common themes occurring including 'helping and supporting', 'creating opportunity', 'developing and understanding', 'opportunity and awareness'. These testimonies speak for themselves and the success of the projects and portfolio as a whole.

BWell Communities – Birmingham

The bWell Communities Programme funds and supports projects in communities across Birmingham that address stress, depression and the physical inactivity and isolation associated with these common problems. By offering activities through the Communities Programme, bWell hopes to prevent further ill health and deeper difficulties arising, and to offer support where this has already happened.

The range of projects currently funded by bWell, include Birmingham Voluntary Service Council, which supports volunteers and provides volunteering opportunities across the city. Gateway Family Services provide services to children and families across Birmingham and run the Size Down diet and nutrition advice project. The Health Exchange run bWell Fit, which supports individuals to engage with physical activity opportunities of their choice that will have an impact on their overall health and wellbeing.

Danny's Story:

Danny had been working alongside his Practice Nurse at his GP surgery to lose weight and had already lost three stones over three years; he had reached a plateau and it seemed that the strategies he had been using were no longer working. Danny began to feel de-motivated and depressed about his weight again. He did very little physical activity within his job as a buyer, spending most of his day sat at his desk. By the time he finished work he didn't feel like he wanted to exercise.

When Danny first came to Size Down he did not know what to expect and he didn't know how he would feel talking openly about his weight issues. At the first session, with the leader's encouragement, Danny talked about previous weight loss attempts and various diets he had followed. He found the support and encouragement of the leader and the rest of the group of real benefit during the six week programme.

Danny liked the idea that Size Down was not a diet and that he could still enjoy a night out with his friends to socialise simply by reducing his alcohol intake and making healthier food choices. He also found the portion size guide very useful for him and his girlfriend.

Towards the end of the course, Danny's Practice Nurse said he would be eligible for Exercise on Prescription if he could lose a few more pounds he did just that and has since joined a gym, which he enjoys visiting twice a week.

Living Well West Midlands - Birmingham

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Coventry Body and Mind

The Coventry Body and Mind programme works holistically to help improve people's physical activity, diet and nutrition, and mental health. An individually tailored wellbeing plan is developed at the start of the programme, helping to define specific goals and the required input. It offers weekly 1-1 sessions along with a variety of group activities and workshops.



Penny's Story:

Penny is a 60 year old woman referred by the Community Mental Health Team to Coventry Body and Mind. Penny had a long history of anxiety, depression and low confidence, and also felt isolated with not many friends. Penny suffered from high cholesterol and was advised to partake in more exercise. Following a difficult childhood

which involved family abuse, Penny experienced low confidence and very low self esteem. Penny's main goals when starting the programme were to get fit, lose weight and reduce her cholesterol. During the programme Penny attended all twelve of the 1-1 sessions, the majority of group exercise sessions, the 8 week self-esteem course, swimming most weeks and a practical cooking session.

Penny put a lot of effort into attending exercise sessions and completing her home workout on a regular basis.

Penny has lost weight, reduced her BMI and also improved her score on the WEMWBS (mental wellbeing scale). Three and six month reviews revealed that Penny continued with exercise three times a week and has also maintained a healthy diet. She continues to include 5 portions of fruit and vegetables into her daily diet and has replaced white bread with brown. Penny reported the maintenance of these healthy lifestyle choices has given her more energy, a general feeling of increased well-being and more self-confidence.

"Thank you to all of the team. I have enjoyed my appointments and have really benefited from the exercise. I know I need to control my stress levels to protect both my physical and mental health. I will try to do this. I hope in the future I will be in a position to put all the advice into practice."

Living Well West Midlands - Coventry

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Healthy You – Dudley

Healthy You is a project delivered through Ehsas Carers, a support group for family carers of individuals with learning disabilities and the Apna Group, an advocacy and social group for people with learning disabilities from minority communities.

The project provides funds to undertake specific activities to promote the importance of regular exercise and develop structured plans to support healthy lifestyles, including improving diets for individuals with learning disabilities from minority communities. Support is also provided for family carers to reduce feelings of isolation and depression by linking into health activities and wider services available across the borough.

Abdul's Story:

Abdul is a young man in his early twenties from a British Pakistani background who has severe learning disabilities; in addition, he is also diabetic. Abdul's week revolves around his participation twice a week at both a gardening project based at The Black Country Museum in Dudley, and at the Apna Group.

Abdul is a huge Arsenal fan and his love of football has helped him to break the ice with some of the new faces he meets from time to time. Abdul had spoken of his desire to participate in sporting activities, particularly football but said his sporting outlets were limited to playing with his siblings. His father, who is his main carer, could not support him

to participate in any sporting or physical activities outside of the home environment. Thanks to the funding received from Healthy You, Apna Group has been able to expand its physical activities and now supports its members, including Abdul, in a variety of health related activities such as indoor football and cricket at the local leisure centre.

Thanks to the support and advice Abdul also gets about healthy eating, he has improved his diet. He monitors his own sugar levels and is growing in his capacity to judge his abilities and boundaries with regards to the amount of exercise he should do, and types of food he should eat. The progress Abdul has made over the last 2 years has also given him the confidence to think about opportunities outside of Apna Group and he is applying for part time jobs.

Healthy You has allowed Abdul to not only develop his fitness and knowledge on health issues, it has also allowed him to grow as an individual from a very shy, introverted young man to one who is gaining confidence and becoming increasingly independent.

Parklife - Dudley

The Parklife project promotes and provides greater physical activity in parks and open spaces across the borough. The project provides a Parks Physical Activities Coordinator who works alongside friends of parks groups to support a summer programme of physical activity and walking. There is a particular focus on groups with access issues and where a lack of confidence prevents the use of the facilities by individuals or by certain groups.

June's Story

June is a 38 year old mother of two who is self employed as a painter and decorator. She previously had no exercise history as she had always been too busy with the children to fit in any leisure time.

June started the running programme with her work colleague with the intention of getting fit together. Her main objective was to lose weight, improve her body shape and image. From the initial session

June was not a natural runner but demonstrated a lot of determination and was very self motivated.

June participated in three fun runs, improving her performance each time. Since joining the running class 8 months ago, her exercise has increased from sedentary to two activity sessions a day, also attending her local leisure centre. She has lost 1 1/2 stones and dropped two dress sizes.

June's motivation and enthusiasm has been shared with her family and she now brings her teenage son with her to participate in the running class.



Workmate - Dudley

The Workmate Project provides information, advice and guidance for individuals and their families who want to work but are faced with barriers of disability or previous health problems. The Project also aims to help employers recognise and support the employment of individuals with health issues or disabilities.

Gillian's Story:

Dudley Council's Building Services provided four placements, each on a six month contract. The posts were advertised through the Community Team for Learning Disabilities and other professionals working with people with learning disabilities.

Gillian was supported on a one to one basis by a Job Coach, to give her the confidence to apply for employment opportunities. Based on discussions, it emerged that she was ideally suited for a placement with Dudley Council's Building Services in an administrative role.

The Job Coach was available to support her throughout the interview process and Gillian was successful in her application. Her duties now include helping with the post, shredding and other administrative tasks.

Gillian is now living independently; using public transport to get around the borough she always arrives at work on time. When asked about her placement Gillian responded positively in her own words, "I love it and I have made a lot of new friends."

Her Manager is very impressed with the work she is doing and has commented that:

"Gillian has come a long way since starting her role and her confidence has really grown. This has been, and continues to be, a very positive experience for Gillian, making a significant impact on her self esteem. Without this project she would not have benefitted from this life changing opportunity."



Priority Care - Dudley

Priority Care in Dudley reduces the isolation experienced by older people within the community by offering a personalised service to individuals with long term conditions. The project provides improved well-being, social contact, meaningful activity along with safety and security support, access to appropriate accommodation and prevents unnecessary deterioration in health or admission to hospital.

Priority Care is co-ordinated by Dudley Council and delivered by Heantun Care, a local charitable housing/care organisation. Following assessment, a support or action plan is created for individual service users. An enabling approach is then used to assist service users and those in the local community to help and support themselves and each other. Service users are encouraged to support one another, rather than be wholly dependent on professional service providers.

Catherine's Story:

Catherine (name changed) is 90 years old and lives alone in a Local Authority bungalow. She has a heart condition and Reynauds disease (a circulatory problem), which results in her feeling the cold particularly badly. During the past 3 years both her husband and her daughter have died, and Catherine doesn't see her other daughter very often.

When referred to Priority Care she was very lonely and unhappy, and due to her condition needed to move from the static caravan she had lived in for many years. To help reduce the loneliness, Priority Care provided Catherine with a priority carer once a week for 2 hours.

Catherine's carer Maxine listens to her stories about her late husband and daughter and encourages her to go out more regularly. Catherine has expressed her interest in a local tea dance at Dudley Town Hall and until she feels confident enough to attend on her own, Maxine has agreed to escort her.

Catherine finds it difficult to keep warm in her bungalow due to the electric storage heating. In light of this the Project Manager Janet, has contacted the council and advocated on Catherine's behalf to see if central heating could be installed in the bungalow.

"An excellent service, nothing is too much trouble"

Living Well - Herefordshire

The Living Well Herefordshire project has three elements: sports sessions, woodland activities and counselling sessions. The sports sessions consist of weekly children's activities such as football, trampolining and badminton, which aim to provide fun in a non-competitive setting. They also provide opportunities for parents to volunteer and participate in the programme.

The woodland sessions offer children and their parents the chance to visit nearby woodlands and participate in fun and exciting activities including building fires and shelters and learning how to lay trails to find hidden treasures.

Living Well Herefordshire also offers counselling and psychotherapy services for young people (aged 10 and above) and their families, to improve their emotional and psychological well-being.

The Walker's and the Smith's Story:

The Walker family and the Smith family (names changed) have seen remarkable benefits to their health and well being as a result of attending the Wye Wood Project Woodland Sessions over a 5 week period. Before the sessions parents and children in both families expressed feeling 'very unfit' and as families, they participated in very little physical activity.

At the woodland sessions the families took part in a range of activities including fire making, woodland one pot cooking including wild game preparation, woodland walks and treasure hunts. The parents were able to see that healthy cooking can be cheap, easy and can be done by the children themselves. One mum said, 'if it can be achieved outdoors then it's got to be much easier to achieve in a warm dry kitchen'. For the children there was also the revelation that healthy food can be tasty.

Additionally the exciting environment contained within the woodland encourages play and exploration, and is an easy, fun way to increase physical activity levels. *"My son is usually very tired by this time of day, however he is full of energy at the end of his day here,"* said one mum.

Now both families have joined the Wye Wood Project Health Walks in the Woodlands and walk at least twice a week. Both families have also been successful in encouraging their relatives to join the walks. One parent has even completed the Volunteer Walk Leader training and now leads several Wye Wood project Woodland Walks on a regular basis and encourages others to participate.



Living Well West Midlands - Herefordshire

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Being Well in Sandwell

West Bromwich YMCA Well Being Centre was set up as a result of funding from Living Well West Midlands.

This exciting project brings a range of new initiatives to the heart of Sandwell including Aromatherapy, where proven relaxation and de-stressing benefits are delivered at highly affordable prices. Light Box Therapy, specifically for people who suffer from Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) is available from 6 light boxes across three different locations in Sandwell.

The Sandwell Community Café overhauled its menu and is now offering really healthy yet satisfying options. In addition, the Community & Food Advisor runs frequent Cook & Taste sessions across Sandwell and works with schools to increase

awareness amongst pupils of the impact a good diet can have on well being. Finally, the project enables more people with hearing difficulties to access all Well Being and Fitness Facilities, as well as promoting healthy living amongst the deaf community of Sandwell.

Carrol's Story:

Carrol was experiencing a lot of upheaval in her personal life and this was causing her a great deal of stress. As a result, a friend who had been to the Aromatherapy Service herself bought Carrol a course of sessions as a gift. She had never attended Aromatherapy before and after her session at the YMCA she was able to contain her anxieties.

Carrol has since attended four more sessions at the YMCA and feels much more relaxed and optimistic about her life. She says "It is an excellent service, delivered by a very professional therapist. She made me feel instantly at ease, showing a genuine interest in my wellbeing and explained the benefits massage can have, which I did not know! It enables me to have some real 'me time' which is a rare opportunity."

"The consultant was brilliant and made me feel really relaxed, explaining the benefits of Aromatherapy to me."

Living Well West Midlands - Sandwell

Community Café | Physical Activity | Social Skills Training | Light Therapy for S.A.D. | Being Well in Sandwell | Relaxation and Mindfulness Training
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SHINE – Solihull

SHINE (Stay Healthy: Improve Nutrition and Exercise) is a community based weight management programme for children and their families between the ages of 8-15. Activities are delivered by a team of trainers and coaches at clinics held in community venues throughout Solihull. Participants can enrol on the programme for up to 12 months which is broken down into bronze, silver and gold awards.

The bronze award is a 12 week intensive course which supports the whole family in engaging in a new healthy lifestyle through behavioural support, physical activity and healthy eating; this consists of both one to one support and group activities. The overall objective of the project is to reduce the year on year rise in childhood obesity health inequalities in Solihull.

Charlie & Jayne's Story:

Charlie and Jayne completed the full 12 week Bronze award programme with 100% attendance and achieved significant results. Charlie had lost his interest in football training on Saturday afternoons and had been unwilling to do any physical activity due to medical problems. Coupled with his loss of enthusiasm for sport, Charlie suffered a loss of confidence and was struggling to concentrate both at home and at school.

Improving Charlie's lifestyle and re-igniting his passion for sport helped improve his confidence and concentration levels at home, in school and at the Shine sessions. During the 12 weeks, Jayne achieved improvements in all aspects of her health assessments. She set realistic goals and worked well on making changes at home. Jayne now feels she has the knowledge to continue living a healthy lifestyle, but most importantly she feels the changes she has made have been easy to implement and leading a healthier lifestyle has been easier than she anticipated.

As a family both Jayne and Charlie have worked very hard, and have been able to achieve sensible goals. Charlie formed a great partnership with fellow participant Joe which has helped him through the programme. Jayne's determined attitude and her ability to apply the knowledge gained from sessions to her current lifestyle meant that any changes implemented were easily followed.

"I feel I have been re-programmed. Shine has given my son Charlie his enthusiasm for sport back." Jayne and Charlie have continued with the Silver award and Charlie's younger brother has since gone on to start the bronze award.

SHINE | Stay Healthy: Improve Nutrition and Exercise
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Living Well Stoke on Trent

Living Well Stoke on Trent focuses on supporting communities, marketing health and improving health and well-being. The project raises awareness, increases knowledge and challenges perceptions about mental health within the local community. It highlights the benefits of healthy eating and regular physical activity, which helps to build people's confidence.

Activities include physical wellness workshops that look at practical wellness tools and how to achieve healthy eating and physical activity goals. These offer local people the opportunity to become a 'Volunteer Community Health Champion' and be trained to lead healthy walks and deliver cook & eat sessions.



Janet's Story:

Janet saw the flyer advertising the Physical Wellness Workshops being held at the Hope Centre in Stoke-on-Trent City Centre, and was keen to attend the 5-week course. Its location in the city centre meant Janet was able to take part.

"I am quite interested in food and the benefits of a healthy diet and this short course proved ideal, coming along at the just the right time for me." She believes that food has been messed about with too much and was keen to learn of the different ways of achieving '5-a-day' portions of fruit and vegetables; the session on healthy eating was therefore particularly valuable.

Janet found the food myths and sugar quiz really interesting and informative, they got her thinking about food and eating. She now buys more vegetables and makes more soups, particularly at weekends. The sugar content of biscuits proved 'a bit of an eye-opener,' as did the sugar contents of certain foods in general.

Janet has gone on to apply what she learnt from the workshops as much as possible, although she recognises that it isn't always possible to adhere 100% to the best examples all of the time. She enjoys making soups with vegetables and adding bananas to porridge, which are both examples of practical lessons learnt. She said that if there was anything that could be added to the sessions, it would be a few really simple and inexpensive recipes; for herself, a vegetarian, and her husband, who eats meat.

As a result of attending the Physical Wellness Workshops Janet now goes to the gym more often.

Living Well West Midlands - Stoke on Trent

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Shropshire Indoors

Shropshire Indoors encourages and supports adults who experience difficulties when looking for opportunities to do more physical activity. This might be because of learning or physical disabilities, health problems, mental health issues or problems associated with older age. The project offers a number of exercise classes including Tai Chi, Yoga and Dance to help people to stay independent and mobile, whilst introducing them to both new activities and new groups of people.

Cath's Story:

Cath (name changed) is a female in her late 70s living in sheltered housing apartments in Whitchurch. Her physical mobility had reached such a poor state that she was considering moving into accommodation with more support. She had real difficulties in walking and always used a frame; she found it almost impossible to sit down without assistance. Cath joined the Extend group taking place

within the sheltered apartment complex provided by Shropshire Indoors.

Since beginning Extend 12 weeks ago, Cath has become much more mobile, now being able to sit unassisted and walking with only the use of a cane.

"The others in the group cite her as an inspiration to us to keep working at our mobility and fitness."

She now holds her posture much better and is thrilled with her progress.

This group is continuing to meet since funding has finished, and has formed a fundraising committee called 'The Residents Recreational Group' to raise money for those who find the cost of continuing more difficult.

Shropshire Outdoors

Shropshire Outdoors engages with people who experience barriers to accessing the countryside. The project focuses on the needs of adults with learning difficulties, people with physical disabilities and people that are experiencing or recovering from mental ill-health. Participants are supported to be more physically active in countryside activities such as walking, orienteering, wildlife surveys and practical conservation tasks. This project also includes promoting progression into mainstream volunteering.

Brian's Story:

Brian, a 46 year old man, lives in a residential home in Shrewsbury. He has a moderate to severe learning disability with associated physical limitations, and is only able to walk a short distance on flat terrain. His balance is good but physical and/or practical tasks are both mentally and physically challenging.

Brian has taken part in activity sessions at Colemere and Poles Coppice. There he helped to manage scrub and make piles of brash using tools that he had never used before such as loppers and bow saw. He has since taken part in several 'all ability walks' at locations such as at Haughmond Hill, which he managed in the snow.

Taking part in these activities is a great achievement for Brian; his lifestyle previously was sedentary, due in part to a lack of confidence in outdoor activities, but the more involved he becomes, the more likely he is to participate in the future.

"The work is good for my arm muscles because I don't have any, it's all fat and work will make me strong."



DOVE Mentoring – Staffordshire

DOVE Mentoring in Staffordshire supports and mentors those who have suffered from mental ill health and social exclusion. It is particularly targeted at people who have experienced mental health distress in 'hard to reach groups' specifically in the black and minority ethnic (BME) community. The project promotes recovery, recognises individual aspirations and provides support to help people achieve their goals and ambitions. This enables people to access mainstream services as part of a community which also works towards reducing the stigma of mental ill health.

Faye's Story

Faye (name changed), a mixed heritage young lady, aged 22, referred herself to the programme having recently been diagnosed with depression. She was given a prescription for anti depressants, however was not referred to any other support services. Having left school with fairly good results, Faye embarked on a three year university degree course which ended abruptly due to a traumatic incident and a breakdown within the family unit. She became increasingly withdrawn and isolated from her normal social circle and embarked on the use of alcohol as a means of escapism.

A mentor was assigned and between them they devised a short term, middle and long term action plan to address structuring her days e.g. getting up early, going for walks and looking at employment, training and education. Her mentor also supported her through counselling sessions, encouraged her to engage in community based activities and re-connect with her social circle. Over a few months you could see the remarkable difference and as a direct result of her confidence being restored she has gained employment.

Faye now feels more confident to move forward in her life knowing that she can always call on her mentor who is local to the community and has now also become a friend. Faye has remarked that without the support of the programme and particularly her mentor she would probably have ended up in a psychiatric unit as she was completely overwhelmed with her situation, not knowing where to turn or who to turn to for real help.

Volunteering for Health – Staffordshire

Volunteering for Health aims to widen participation in volunteering. Frequent visitors' to GP surgeries are one group benefitting from this project and there are also opportunities for self-referral.

Patients are referred to the programme for a variety of reasons, including those with mild to moderate depression, those who are socially isolated and vulnerable, and people who want to make positive changes in their life but may feel anxious, fearful or unaware of how to do that. The project is being delivered in conjunction with Volunteer Centres in Staffordshire, selected GP surgeries and medical centres.

David's Story

David visited the Tamworth Volunteer Centre after receiving a Volunteering for Health leaflet from his GP. David spoke openly of his health problems and how he was forced to finish paid employment many years ago. As his health deteriorated and with no known cure for his condition David's mental state worsened and he suffered with long periods of depression.

David was an active person and found the transition from paid employment to being unemployed difficult. David explained how people couldn't understand and support him as he didn't have a physical illness and he looked well. His wife had to care for him and this made him feel useless and a burden.

The Volunteer Centre helped David find a role where he could engage with people outside his home in a non-physical way and where he could feel useful again, regaining his self-confidence. The project supported David in an application to an organisation that provides support to people who have worked in the automotive industry and now suffer financial hardship.

David has been shadowing current volunteers and attending conferences where he has been able to meet other staff and volunteers. David now conducts home visits on his own and completes reports for the organisation. Even with his good and bad days he has something else to focus on, and has a purpose to his days. He is now offering support to other people, engaging with them and finding ways to improve other people's lives.

David has since taken on an additional volunteering role, where he teaches mathematics at a local HMYOI. He has developed a good working relationship with the Teacher and is now providing one-to-one tuition to a number of Young Offenders.



"Volunteering has had a positive impact on me. It has made me put my own issues into perspective and given me a sense of purpose, by helping people who are less fortunate. I feel appreciated for the role I play and always look forward to the days when I volunteer. I would actively encourage anyone who is unable to work due to ill health to do this as it has made such a difference on my life."

Sharing Spaces – Staffordshire

Sharing Spaces supports schools across Staffordshire to develop their grounds, thereby achieving health, educational and environmental benefits for the whole school community.

The project does this by providing a new learning environment in schools, and giving children greater awareness of mental health and well-being. The project helps schools overcome the challenges to improving their grounds by providing support, practical advice and resources to put grounds development plans into action.



Maryhill Primary and High School's Story:

It was the vision of Mr George Finney, former teacher at Maryhill Primary School and the Chair of Governors of Maryhill High School to construct a wildlife garden that was environmentally friendly and would be used by both schools. Working in conjunction with Newcastle Countryside Project the schools designed and constructed a Memorial Garden for Mr Finney.

Initial design plans for the gardens were put together by a group of pupils across all age ranges. These were then incorporated into the final plan produced by the Newcastle Countryside Project. The garden contains raised beds for growing plants, fruit and vegetables, composting and water collecting facilities as well as shade, shelter and seating for outdoor study and reflection.

"Living in a former coal mining area, houses tend not to have substantial gardens and so children from both the primary and secondary schools have really benefitted from seeing the plants and produce grown from seed through to harvest," explained Rosey Hopwood from Maryhill School. *"Being part of Sharing Spaces has enabled us to make our memorial garden a reality. We will continue to grow plants and vegetables here as well as use it to deliver lessons around the curriculum."*

Well-being Workshops Programme - Staffordshire

The Well-being Workshops Programme provides direct training sessions to equip organisations throughout Staffordshire with the knowledge and skills to deliver mental well-being workshops to both their own workforce and clients.

Through a 12 step recovery programme, the workshops provide a holistic approach to mental well-being. This includes structured and effective self management tools, enabling individuals to understand and manage their mental distress. A number of 'Train the Trainer' courses take place each year across a wide variety of organisations and groups to ensure the project reaches a broad cross-section of Staffordshire.

Jenny's Story:

Jenny, a 59 year old divorcee living in Lichfield, suffers with severe anxiety and depression following a divorce from her abusive husband some years ago. Since then Jenny has become a virtual recluse, and has consequently suffered a total mental breakdown. She started to receive treatment and medication with an occasional visit from a community psychiatric nurse, but her problems still persisted.

Jenny started to attend an opportunities centre in Beacon Park, where she was able to make friends and get out of the house. The Well-being Workshops Programme started a course at the centre and Jenny saw it as an opportunity for help. Over the 8 weeks she learnt new techniques to change her un-healthy thinking and behaviour, and has been able to identify a lot of areas she could change in her life.

Since joining the programme Jenny has gained lots of knowledge regarding mental health issues, which were never explained to her before by her health care professionals. Her depression has lifted and her self-esteem has grown. Jenny now has the confidence to approach professionals and specialists to ask questions that she never would have asked before, questions that many have refused to answer.

"I wish this had come along years ago, the project has explained goodness knows how many things to me that I have been able to put into practice, I have recommended this course to a lot of people on my travels and can't stop telling the specialists to start getting more people to attend," says Jenny

Women in Motion - Telford & Wrekin

Women in Motion works with women in various communities within Telford to encourage greater levels of physical activity. The scheme aims to overcome self highlighted barriers, such as cost and childcare issues. The project also recruits female volunteers to undertake training and gain qualifications in a variety of sport and physical activity disciplines. This allows them to become Community Physical Activity Leaders, and lead sessions to the 16+ female population in their own communities.

Debbie's Story:

Debbie became a volunteer on the Women in Motion project in December 2008 after being a participant at an existing 'Women in Motion' gym session running at Telford College. The gym session encouraged Debbie to get involved; she was particularly interested in 'Gaining training in all or any aspects of exercise and pursuing a career in exercise.'

Since then, Debbie has successfully gained nationally recognised qualifications in both a Leadership in Running Fitness course and the CYQ Level 2 Gym Instructor course. She has also completed training in First Aid and Volunteer Health and Safety, which has

given volunteers the skills and guidance required for delivering safe and effective physical activity sessions.

Debbie has built up an excellent relationship with the participants and has led the same session at Telford College of Arts and Technology since officially gaining her qualification last year. Debbie has also been leading a second session for beginners running in Hadley near to where she lives.

Debbie said; *"the project has changed my life. I've become a lot more confident in myself and I've found a career path which I want to take."*

Living Well West Midlands - Telford & Wrekin

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Feeling Good! - Walsall

The 'Feeling Good' project is aimed at women from a South Asian background, age 12 upwards. The project works with schools, youth groups and community organisations to raise awareness of mental well-being and general good health. The project has separate Outreach Programmes for Adults and Young Persons.



Rizwana's Story:

Rizwana (name changed) took part in an 18 week role out of the 'Feeling Good!' project consisting of well-being theory, creative arts, healthy lifestyles theory and physical activity. To help Rizwana understand the concept of well-being she was introduced to the '5 ways to well-being' as well as the importance of eating well, exercising and how such activities can increase 'well-being'.

Rizwana helped the project to develop a tool for young people to keep and refer to when looking for ways to improve well-being, as well as a tool for teachers to use when teaching a lesson surrounding well-being.

"I am going to senior school next year and I will try to pick healthy dinners as I will be doing this instead of taking a lunchbox ...it is hard to change what I eat at home as I eat what is made...I understand that healthy eating, exercise, and having time for myself helps me to have a happy healthy mind."

The programme has been well received and the women's centre where the programme takes place has requested further physical activity classes to be run for their attendees.

Living Well West Midlands - Walsall

Feeling Good | Email: Craig.perry@walsall.nhs.uk | Website: www.walsall.nhs.uk | Telephone: 01922 619900

Farm to Fork – Wolverhampton

Farm to Fork in Wolverhampton, delivered by Groundwork West Midlands, encourages school children, aged 3-16 to eat more fruit and vegetables through a programme of physical activities centred on a school growing area or allotment.

A series of eight workshops for each school is delivered with activities on plant growing and setting up the food growing area. The pupils also have the opportunity to visit a working farm to learn about food production. The desired outcomes for children (and their families) include: improved knowledge and awareness of food growing and healthy eating, reduced weight and increased levels of physical activity. The desired outcome for each school is an improved capacity to deliver activities connected to food growing and healthy eating.

Field View Primary School's Story:

A Year 5 class from Field View Primary School in Bilston visited Sheepwash Farm in Lichfield as part of the Farm to Fork project. Farmer Rob Gray and wife Victoria have been tailoring free visits for groups for over a year to the farm. Working with the support of neighbouring farms and local experts they have been providing the opportunity for groups to develop an understanding and awareness of the relationship between modern farming and the countryside.

On the day, the class enjoyed a tractor-trailer journey around the farm, neighbouring farms, a fishery and fields to learn about locally

grown crops and habitats. Throughout the day the children learnt about crops such as wheat, oilseed rape and potatoes. They visited a neighbour's dairy herd and found out about dairy production.

Then at the lake the class was split into smaller groups to participate in a variety of activities that included; a talk on food chains and pond creatures, a wildlife study of the margins of the lake and a nature walk.

During the afternoon, after a ride to the strawberry fields the class enjoyed picking their own strawberries to eat and take home.

The visit linked in with the project and the children were able to make strong connections with what they had been growing at school. The trip was well received and the school looks forward to using the farm again next year.



Wellbeing for Life - Wolverhampton

Wellbeing for Life, aimed at the 50+ age group, is delivering a preventative programme which provides physical and mental stimulation to improve the general well being of older people, encouraging an active life with less falls and accidents. Managed by Age Concern Wolverhampton, fully qualified tutors carry out physical activity programmes, which mainly consist of extend exercises and mature moves.

Susan's Story:

Susan (name changed), who is 86 years old, attends an Age Concern Luncheon Club where she has been a member for 2 years. She suffered with a nervous breakdown following the death of her husband 6 years ago and was referred to Penn Hospital twice weekly. The hospital in turn referred her to Age Concern in the first instance, as she was not well, extremely isolated and very lonely. The Club meet every week and receive a seated exercise session every 2 weeks. The sessions were initially provided by one of Age Concern's paid tutors but now it is delivered voluntarily by one of the newly trained Exercise Champions.

Susan explained that she felt at ease straight away and was warmly welcomed by the Club Leader and the other members,

who she said were all lovely people. She joined in with the exercise sessions from the very beginning and recalls that after the first exercise session she remembered feeling uplifted and a lot better than she had been in a long while. As the weeks went on she started to progress and eventually felt much better and looked forward to the exercise class.

Susan said that she firmly believes that as a direct result of joining the Club and subsequently taking part in the exercise session she feels better than she could have imagined. She says *"I was quite an active person anyway but these sessions are keeping everyone fit so we are able to maintain our balance and co-ordination in our own homes. I always look forward to the next session and have made a lot of friends."*

Action for Wellbeing, Warwickshire

Action for Wellbeing's Buddying Project aims to support those feeling isolated in the community and those at risk of developing, or currently suffering from low level mental health difficulties. The project provides one to one support to encourage participation in community activities.

Tom's Story:

Tom (name changed) recently lost his wife, and having been her carer throughout a long illness had had little time for any hobbies, interests or leisure activities. Caring for his wife had become his main focus and any other social contact was not a priority for him. After his wife passed away, he quickly felt depressed as he found

he had lots of time on his hands and nothing to fill his day. His step-daughter referred him to the Buddying Project for help.

The Project helped him to identify his potential interests and then introduced him to activities to try. With the assistance of the Buddying Project he attended taster sessions for lawn bowls, tried local group walks and attended a local coffee morning.

Tom is now a member of the lawn bowls club entering competitions and he has also joined an indoor bowls club during the winter months. He goes on two organised walks each week and on his own most other days. He continues to attend the coffee morning and is a very pro-active member of the group, baking cakes at home for everyone. Since he started his walks he has lost two and a half stone in weight and has become much fitter. His step-daughter has been delighted with his progress and also commented on the fact that she can never get hold of him as he is always so busy.

"At the Project we have noticed a great improvement in Tom's mental state; he no longer feels depressed and has activities to do each day giving him a sense of purpose again. He has now completed Walk Leader Training and regularly leads a walking group as an official volunteer."



Living Well West Midlands - Warwickshire

Action for Wellbeing | Email: jayne.longfield@ageconcernwarks.co.uk | Website: www.ageconcernwarwickshire.org.uk | Telephone: 01926 458119

Wellness Works – Worcestershire

Wellness Works is a programme of free business advice, education, and training for employers across Worcestershire. It provides support and promotes positive emotional and mental well-being in the workplace. It aims to ensure all people are able to work and live to their full potential – able to strive not just survive; and that goes for their businesses too!

Angie's Story:

Angie Abraham, HR Advisor from Bromsgrove District Housing Trust (BDHT), attended the Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM) Award in Health and Wellbeing Management after developing a working relationship with the project over the last 18 months. BDHT has recently been developing its approach to health and well-being at work.

The ILM course has provided an opportunity to incorporate all aspects of well-being including emotional well-being into their staff's day to day lives. As a result the company

will be undertaking more risk assessments for staff; these will focus on their work stations. They are also considering questionnaires such as a work pressure profile tool which could be included in staff support sessions.

The course has reminded them of all the simple, low cost initiatives that can be used to support staff well-being, and certainly within the HR team the award has really raised awareness of health and well-being at work. As a result of the award BDHT will be reviewing its health and well-being strategy and ensuring it links to other relevant strategies across the organisation.

The award has enabled the HR team to feel more confident and able to support staff around well-being at work.

This has meant that they are now more proactive at exploring issues with staff and clearer about their role in assisting them in the workplace.

The award really focuses on the fundamentals of effectively managing people. The course considers the wider needs of employees at work and helps to create links between managers and well-being, and therefore creates a more balanced organisation.

Living Well West Midlands - Worcester

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