



Annual Review

April 2013 – March 2014



The Braveheart Association

The Braveheart Association is a charity based in Falkirk Community Hospital working hard to lessen the risk of heart disease, diabetes and other long-term chronic conditions suffered by around 40% of people living across the Forth Valley.

Our free health services help them, and others who are at risk of developing a long-term condition, to improve their current and future health and well-being.

The number of older people living in Scotland continues to rise with a further 50% increase in people aged 60 years or over expected between 2010 and 2033.

To help create a healthier future for all ageing and older people living within the Forth Valley and ensure we have a more active, fitter, healthier community, our services are also open to the wider community and people of all ages and abilities.

Over the past 17 years, we have achieved a strong track record for providing effective active support and encouragement helping people with heart problems and/or diabetes improve their health and well-being. We began with our Self Management Groups introducing our walking programme in 2004.

This year, we added our new Optimise programme and a Type 2 Diabetes Self Management Group to our growing variety of services, which now include:

- **Optimise** – a range of community-based groups promoting healthy living amongst people over 55 who are at risk of developing chronic health conditions
- **Braveheart Plus** – a programme of monthly sessions with specialist speakers and group activities and for older people living with heart or other health problems
- **Self Management Support** – support for those with health conditions such as coronary heart disease and diabetes
- **Walk with Braveheart** – a series of monthly and weekly walks for people of all physical abilities

All our services are friendly, welcoming and run with the help of community volunteers, who we train as Health Mentors and Walk Leaders.



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Chairman's Report

This was a tremendous year of creation for The Braveheart Association.

We started the year as an unincorporated charity and finished as a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO). This significant change to our governance means we are now in a better place to fulfil our aims and objectives, access resources, employ staff and support those working within our organisation.

We began the year with two members of staff, Anne Black, Manager, and Maureen Forbes, Fundraiser. We completed the year with four employees, welcoming Selas Jennings, our Optimise Development Officer, in September 2013 and Eva Finlayson, our Walking Development Officer, in February 2014.



We also started the year looking for funding to deliver new and innovative walking programmes and to broaden the scope of the volunteering and mentoring opportunities we offer.

We finished the year having secured funding for both and, I'm delighted to say, achieved an extension to March 2015 from one funder because they "were delighted with the reputation (we have) built up and with the quality of the results (we are) achieving".

So, in many ways we created a new organisation over the year. Through our strengthened staff team and new and sustained relationships with funders, we have created new opportunities to encourage the people of Forth Valley to get well and, importantly, keep well.

In addition, we continued to deliver on existing programmes and activities. For much of the year, we operated without the support of our new development officers so I would like to offer a particular thanks to Anne and Maureen who have both worked above and beyond in what were sometimes very challenging circumstances.

I would also like to thank our funders and our team of volunteers. Our volunteers are the powerhouse of this organisation. Everything that we do depends on the skill and dedication of those who actually deliver; those that lead the walks and those who support the mentoring groups.

I am very proud to have been involved with The Braveheart Association over the last ten years and increasingly proud of what we are achieving.

Gordon Thomson
Interim Chairman

A Great Step Forward for our New Organisation



This was a year in which Braveheart was revitalised with a raft of new ideas generated, funding bids developed and new services established. The Braveheart team of volunteers, staff and Board have worked together to create a dynamic organisation, in a better place to anticipate and rise to future challenges.

Excitingly, new funding streams were confirmed and we quickly put these ideas into practice with new mentoring and walking programmes launched during the year, including our new Optimise initiative.

Feedback from Optimise has already been excellent with many participants making positive changes to their lifestyles. Based on the success of the programme, Falkirk Partnership Innovation Fund announced an additional six months funding enabling us to extend the number of Optimise programmes we can offer to local communities into 2015. Very well done to all the Health Mentors and staff involved in making this happen!

During the year we also worked closely with Stirling University Health Psychology Department to develop evaluation processes for the Optimise programme. In the coming year, we will continue to work in partnership the University, extending their involvement in evaluating the effectiveness of our programmes.

The Braveheart Association continues to be a dynamic partnership between local volunteers, health professionals and our local communities. We are immensely proud of the achievements of all the local people who have been involved in our Self Management Groups, Braveheart Plus, Optimise and Walk with Braveheart throughout the year. In particular, we applaud and celebrate our committed volunteers; our Walk Leaders and Health Mentors for their stellar work throughout the year.

Braveheart is turning national policy into local voluntary action. Our volunteers are successfully extending healthcare and self-care into the communities of Forth Valley.

Together with our NHS partners, The Braveheart Association aims to stem the growth of chronic health conditions in Forth Valley. We hope that longer term funding can be secured to keep this vital work going.

Anne Black
Braveheart Manager

Key Achievements



Highlight achievements during the year included:

Funding

- Falkirk Partnership Innovation Fund award enabled launch of new Optimise initiative and appointment of Optimise Development Officer
- Scottish Natural Heritage funding enabled launch of new Nature Walks programme
- Voluntary Health Scotland Digital Inclusion award secured for new website development

Walk with Braveheart

- 327 walks delivered across the Falkirk district
- 3,824 people took part and benefitted (up over 20% on the previous year)
- Walking Development

Officer appointed February

- New Nature Walk programme launched March

Health Mentoring

- New Type 2 Diabetes Self Management Group launched in April 2013 with 15 participants. Ten participants completed the course in October 2013.
- Optimise Development Officer appointed September
- New Optimise programme launched on UK Older People's Day on October 1st
- 100% of participants in the first Optimise programme report health benefits since joining including eating more healthily, participating in physical activity and feeling healthier
- Health Mentor training programme developed
- Five new Health Mentors recruited and trained bringing the total to nine
- CHD/Type 2 Self Management Group in Stenhousemuir flourished

Organisational Development Targets for 2104/2015



Our key goals over the coming year are to:

Funding

- Organise a sponsored walk to raise Braveheart funds
- Secure funding to work towards accreditation of Health Mentor training programme
- Secure funding for Investing In Volunteers accreditation process
- Apply to the Robertson Trust for matching finance for Walking Programme
- Submit a funding proposal to Falkirk Partnership Innovation Fund for a six month extension of Optimise
- Develop funding proposal for the Big Lottery Fund following consultation process in November
- Apply to Sons of The Rock for funding for a photocopier

Marketing

- Raise the profile of The Braveheart Association by completing a rebranding process, including development of new publicity materials and website
- Raise the profile of The Braveheart Association by distributing publicity material to NHS services and local community centres
- Together with the Board, investigate options for the commissioning of research in the local communities to review the needs for people at risk/with long-term conditions
- Prepare and produce our Annual Review

Business Planning

- Secure Supporting Communities consultancy support for Braveheart organisational development process
- Work with the Board, staff, volunteers and partners to develop the organisation's Strategic Plan
- Work in partnership with Stirling University and the NHS in the evaluation and future development of Braveheart services
- Organise monthly Finance Meetings between the Braveheart Treasurer, Manager and staff
- Advertise Braveheart Board opportunities aiming to recruit new Trustees

Walk with Braveheart



Key achievements:

- 327 walks delivered across the Falkirk district
- 3,824 people took part and benefitted (up over 20% on the previous year)
- Walking Development Officer appointed February
- New Nature Walk programme launched March
- New events delivered including Picnic Walk (July) and UK Older People's Day (October)
- 'Walk of the Month', Falkirk Herald



Through our Walk with Braveheart programme we inspire and support adults with long-term health conditions, or who may be at risk of developing these in the future, to use their local paths and greenspace to become more active and improve their physical and mental well-being.

Our weekly and monthly walks are also open to everyone in the wider community and people of all physical abilities.

All activities are free and we provide free transport to and from our walks, which take place throughout Forth Valley area.

“Being part of this group has allowed me to feel safe and make new friendships”



Going from Strength to Strength

Our walking programme received a huge boost when Eva Finlayson was appointed as Development Officer in February.

Under her direction, we have made significant progress in developing new partnerships with local groups and organisations. This has enabled us to further co-ordinate and promote our walks

within the area and reach more people across the district of Falkirk inspiring them to walk regularly and improve their general fitness and social well-being.

Many walkers now join us on more than one walk a week and many more take part in our special monthly nature walks.

To enable us to inspire and cater for the needs of each and every service user, we also introduced a one hour and a 30 minute walk option on three of our weekly walks. This allows walkers to walk at their own pace while feeling comfortable and safe as they do so.

During the year, we also created and led a number of innovative new walking-based activities.

“We feel fitter after the walks.”



Walking Development Officer Eva Finlayson

Walk Leaders

Our 13 dedicated and fully trained volunteer Walk Leaders have a vast knowledge of the surrounding area of Falkirk and enthusiasm for walking outdoors. On average each volunteer leads two Braveheart Walks each week.

Until we were able to secure funding for our new Walking Development Officer in February, our walks were co-ordinated solely by volunteer Walk Leaders. We would like to take this opportunity to wholeheartedly thank all our Walk Leaders for their time, patience and commitment during this time. Without them, we would not have achieved so much this year.

New Nature Walks

In March this year, we launched our new Nature Walks programme.

Part-funded by Scottish Natural Heritage for three years, the exciting new weekly and monthly walks programme has already proved extremely popular for regular walkers.

Importantly, our new Nature Walks have



also enabled us to reach and engage new participants from across the Forth Valley area, encouraging more people to walk regularly in the natural greenspace on their doorstep.

The new programme also includes special interest monthly Nature Walks which take place on the 4th Tuesday of each month.

Programme benefits reported by participants include improved physical fitness, social interaction and general well-being.

A Perfect Picnic in the Park!

In July we organised a Picnic in beautiful Muiravonside Park to thank all our Braveheart volunteers for their commitment over the year.

The volunteer celebration included a walk, led by John, a Falkirk Community Trust Ranger, who spoke of the heritage of the estate and the bygone industrial and agricultural history of the surrounding area.

On a very hot and sunny day our walk under the wonderful canopy of trees in the woodland area was just perfect and John pointed out the diverse variety of flora and fauna on our nature trail.

We are grateful to Tesco and Morrisons who kindly provided the ingredients of a well-deserved picnic.

'Walk of the Month'

We were thrilled when the Falkirk Herald awarded our Dawson walk 'Walk of the Month' in March. This was a great achievement to begin our new funding year and helped put our Walk with Braveheart programme in the spotlight.



Development Targets for 2014/2015

Looking forward, our aims for 2014/2015 are to:

- Organise a 'Put A Spring In Your Step' sponsored walk from The Falkirk Wheel for staff, volunteer Walk Leaders and service users
- Recruit and train 10 new Walk Leader volunteers
- Attract and engage 20 - 40 new walkers
- Train our Walking Development Officer to become a certified Paths For All Walk Leader trainer
- Develop new partnerships in particular
 - growing links with local providers such as the Falkirk Community Trust Rangers. This will enable us to broaden the cultural, natural and built heritage learning we offer participants during our walks
 - extend our partnership working into Clackmannanshire and plan the development of new walks within this area
- Develop a series of new weekly and monthly nature walks
- Re-develop our Callendar Park Walk
- Increase the opportunity and flexibility for our service users including developing more 30 minute and one hour options within our walking programme



Health Mentoring



Key achievements:

- New Type 2 Diabetes Self Management Group launched in April 2013. Ten people completed the programme in October 2013.
- Optimise Development Officer appointed September
- New Optimise programme launched on UK Older People's Day on October 1st
- 100% of the participants in the first Optimise programme reported health benefits including eating more healthily, participating in physical activity and feeling healthier
- Health Mentor training programme developed
- Five new Health Mentors trained bringing the total to nine
- CHD/Type 2 Self Management Group strengthened

Optimise

During the year, we successfully secured funding for our new preventative programme Optimise from Falkirk Partnership Innovation Fund.

This exciting new initiative offers over 55s in the Falkirk area the opportunity to take stock of their current health and give themselves a personal health makeover, making changes to ensure a healthier life into the future.

The development and launch of Optimise was a particularly exciting time for The Braveheart Association.

As part of the funding award, we were able to appoint a new member of staff



Optimise Development Officer Selas Jennings



and our new Optimise Development Officer, Selas Jennings, joined us in September 2013.

The Optimise programme was launched on Older People's Day, 1st October 2013. Braveheart participants celebrated feeling great by staying healthy and active and enjoyed a walk in the new woodland paths around Larbert Hospital.

Walkers appreciated the fresh air and glorious Autumn colours and then raised a celebratory toast to the day and the new programme with a well deserved cuppa!

Once the programme was developed, new health mentors were recruited and our first Optimise group began in Stenhousemuir in December with 10 participants.

Community Engagement and Participation

We undertook a number of different activities to attract new participants to Optimise and ensure a solid start for this innovative new programme.

In addition to developing awareness of the programme within the NHS amongst the Keepwell Co-ordinator, public health and health promotion officers, the clinical lead for the Falkirk District CHP and dieticians, we visited community groups such as Young at Heart, the Dawson Centre Lunch Club, The Salvation Army Home League and many more.

The community groups responded extremely well to Optimise and the majority of early participants were drawn from these groups.

As part of the programme development, we also created an Optimise participant booklet consisting self management tools, essential information and ways in which participants can log their progress.

Health Mentor Training

During the latter part of the year, we focused our Optimise resources on developing a 35 hour training course for Health Mentors.

Eleven people signed up to the first course and five fully trained Health Mentors successfully completed the training, which was delivered by the Optimise Development Officer with the support of external specialists. Training included a food and health session from the Community Food Development Team and a group work session from an external trainer with community education experience.

Supplementary Optimise training was delivered to our four existing Health Mentors bringing the total number of Health Mentors to nine.

The reputation of the Optimise programme has gone from strength to strength and we have received a lot of interest from community groups and individuals in the local area.

The excellent community involvement and positive outcomes achieved has also resulted in Optimise securing the maximum length of funding possible, to March 2015.

Altogether, Optimise has begun to make a real, lasting impact on the health of the local population and we are hugely excited about the bright future of this programme.

Early Evaluation

In participant evaluation, undertaken by Stirling University, 100% of participants reported health benefits since joining Optimise with the most cited being eating more

"I am using a pedometer now, it helps me to see if I need to walk more each day."

“I’ve kept off the weight I lost during the programme.”

healthily, participating in physical activity and feeling healthier.

Additional feedback showed participants enjoyed the physical activity sessions, highly valued the social aspect of the gatherings and appreciated the friendly and supportive manner of their mentors, Molly Priestly and Jim Farquhar.

New Type 2 Diabetes Self Management Group



Health Mentors Molly Priestly and Jeanette Horseburgh supported this new group which

met fortnightly in a new meeting space created in the Braveheart office in Falkirk Community Hospital.

The group, which we formed from members of the Young at Heart community group at Olivet Church, Falkirk, was a great success with regular attendances of 12. Ten people completed the full programme.

Braveheart Plus Groups

Health Mentors Tom Kelly and Katrina Bennie continued to support their CHD/Type 2 Self Management Group which meets monthly at the Tryst Community Centre in Stenhousemuir.

The group has 13 members and is now following our Braveheart Plus model, which has been operating successfully in the Camelon area for many years.

During the year, the group benefitted from many interesting sessions and

a wide range of specialist speakers. These included a specialist dietician covering weight management and carbohydrate awareness; a podiatrist outlining foot care in diabetics; Diabetes UK representatives describing current research and developments in diabetes awareness and treatment; and the NHS Health Promotion department who helped raise awareness of bowel cancer and screening available.

Both Braveheart Plus Camelon and Braveheart Plus Stenhousemuir groups continue to meet monthly and welcome new members

Development Targets for 2014/2015

Looking forward, our aims for 2014/2015 are to:

- Train ten volunteer Health Mentors for our Optimise programme
- Recruit 80 Optimise participants from the communities of Falkirk District
- Deliver eight Optimise programmes
- Fund and manage an external accreditation process for the Braveheart Health Mentoring training programme
- Further develop the evaluation of Optimise in partnership with Stirling University
- Develop ongoing support mechanisms for Braveheart Plus groups
- Build on the success of our CHD/Type 2 Diabetes Self Management Groups to develop new models of support

“I’ve been cutting down on portion sizes, now I know what a real portion should be.”

Volunteering

Volunteers are at the heart of what we do. We couldn't reach as many people within our local communities and organise and deliver our increasing number of health improvement services without our volunteers.

We are therefore committed to volunteer development and ensuring all our volunteers feel rewarded and enjoy and feel satisfied during their volunteering experience with The Braveheart Association.

We offer several types of training to ensure all our volunteers fully understand their responsibilities and can feel confident in their role, whether they are interested in becoming a Walk Leader or Health Mentor.

We offer a welcoming and supportive environment and opportunities are available throughout the year across Falkirk.

2013 Falkirk Volunteer Awards

We were delighted to see our dedicated Health Mentors and Walk Leaders recognised and celebrated for the importance their contribution makes to the health of the Falkirk community at the 2013 Volunteer Awards hosted by Pat Reid at the Inchyra Grange Hotel on Wednesday 5th June.

The Big Knit 2013



October saw the Braveheart office become home to frogs, lions and even

elephants as our talented volunteers rose to the 2013 Innocent Smoothie Big Knit Challenge, contributing to the national fundraising campaign for Age UK.

Our knitters worked hard to achieve

our target of 1,500 little hats, and the workmanship and creativity of our talented volunteers was truly amazing.

Braveheart staff were so proud to submit those perfect little works of art but we did miss all those cute little critters!

Thank you knitters!

Development Targets for 2014/2015

Looking forward, our aims for 2014/2015 are to:

- Plan an annual event for all Braveheart volunteers during Volunteers Week (June 2014) to thank them and celebrate their contribution to the organisation
- Nominate volunteers for awards, including long service awards, in the 2015 CVS Falkirk and District Annual Volunteer Awards.
- Deliver six weekly volunteer meetings with Development Officers for Health Mentors and Walk Leaders
- Review and update the Braveheart Volunteer Handbook
- Establish an Investing In Volunteers Working Group including Trustees, staff and volunteers
- Work towards achieving Investing In Volunteers accreditation renewal by March 2015

Thank You!



"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world. Indeed it's the only thing that ever has."

Margaret Mead

By giving their commitment, skills and knowledge our dedicated team of volunteers make a highly significant contribution to the health and well-being of the Falkirk community.

Thank you Braveheart volunteers. None of this vital work would happen without you!

Thank you also to NHS Forth Valley, Falkirk Partnership Innovation Fund and Scottish Natural Heritage for their financial support during the year.

Finally, thank you to all the local people, organisations and supporters who have worked with us throughout the year.

We look forward to working with everyone into 2015 and beyond.

"I've been a Walk Leader with Braveheart since 2006 and find it very fulfilling. I believe that Braveheart helps members to adopt a healthier lifestyle and encourages social interaction. I've seen many new walkers integrate into the groups and make new friends as well as improving both on their mental and physical health through it."

Ian Parker, Walk Leader

Do you have a chronic condition such as diabetes or a heart problem?

Don't suffer alone. The Braveheart Association offers friendly support and information on how to manage your condition.

Are you over 55? Do you want to do something positive for your long-term health and well-being, make changes to your diet, activity or stress levels?

Join an Optimise group where you will be supported to make small changes to your daily routine that can make a big difference to your future health and wellbeing.

Do you want to take up regular walking at a pace that suits you with friendly company?

Try a Braveheart Walk. We run a range of weekly and monthly walks suited to all abilities.

Could you become a Braveheart volunteer?

Volunteering opportunities include: Walk Leading; Health Mentoring; Fundraising; Administration; Board Membership. Full training and out of pocket expenses offered.

All services are free and delivered by trained staff and volunteers who have together already helped hundreds of people across Forth Valley improve their physical and mental well-being and ensure a healthier future.

For further information or to get involved,
visit our website or contact the Braveheart team.

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