



Annual Review

April 2015 – March 2016



The Braveheart Association



Our vision is to see the burden of long-term conditions reduced to the individuals who might develop them, to those who are already living with them, and to wider society as a whole.

Around 40% of the Scottish population has at least one long-term health condition such as diabetes and heart disease and this figure continues to grow.

The Braveheart Association provides a framework of active support and encouragement to promote the current and future well-being of adults with one or more long-term health conditions as well as those at risk of developing chronic health problems.

We promote healthy lifestyles with a focus on prevention, providing support in two key ways:

- Self-management programmes, where people come together to learn and encourage one another, including Braveheart Plus which offers longer-term support
- An extensive network of free, led walks across Forth Valley which encourage people of all abilities to take gentle exercise

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

We rely on our volunteers to deliver much of what we do, and we are committed to training and supporting them to the highest standards.



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Chairman's Report

Building For The Future

During 2015/16, Braveheart built the foundations that will enable us to continue to support the people that we work with across Forth Valley.

In April, we made public the results of our consultation project. This was a huge piece of work where we talked with staff, volunteers and service users to help us understand what we do well and what we might be able to do better. It was a really positive exercise and you can read the full report on our website.

What we learnt was important in helping us develop our strategy for the coming years. This again is available on our website.

The strategy is best described as having five interlinked pillars.

We describe the need for us to work in partnership with other organisations, especially the NHS. We also have a responsibility to communicate the good work we do and to continually evaluate it to make sure we are delivering on what we promise. This may require us to develop new services and for this we will invariably be required to seek new funding.

This strategy has helped shape a lot of what we have been doing, with a particular focus on developing closer links with NHS Forth Valley as well as a more targeted approach to secure funding.

“...we over delivered in every area of our work.”

For example, we ran a very successful pilot on weight management in early 2016 in partnership with the NHS.

We have also developed closer relations with some of the key people in the larger funding organisations from whom we hope to secure longer term funding for what we do.

In March of this year, we successfully applied to the Integrated Care Fund for a continuation of funding for our **OPTIMISE** programme. This allowed us to continue to develop our programme with the support of a development officer, secured to the end of March 2017.

As an organisation we achieved continued accreditation in Investing in Volunteers. This is a clear reflection on the importance of our volunteers who deliver all that we do.

We also set ourselves the target to recruit at least two new board members. In fact, we recruited three new members who have already made a tremendous impact. They



all have significant experience working with charities and this is matched by the energy and enthusiasm they bring to the organisation. You can read about them on our website.

Unfortunately, due to pressure of work, Claire Tucker, our board secretary, had to resign. We thank her for her enormous contribution over what was a very busy period for Braveheart.

We are tremendously lucky to have had the same core staff throughout the last 12 months. Eva Finlayson is a fantastic walking development officer who continually delivers more than expected.

Our Optimise development officer, Eva Asante, delivered on a number of key initiatives as well as engaging with new client groups throughout the year. Maureen, our support worker, continued to support everything that we do in one way or another. The team is headed up by Anne and we continuously benefit from the skill and expertise that Anne brings to the organisation.

Between April 2015 and March 2016, we over delivered in every area of our work.

We delivered more Optimise mentoring sessions than originally planned, 10 community sessions were delivered to 132 hard to reach clients.

We delivered more walks with more attendances than ever before. In 2015/16 there were 421 walks, an increase of 22% on the year before and there were 5678 attendances throughout the year. This means that the average number of people attending each walk has gone up by 10%.

There will, of course, be challenges ahead.

Before the end of 2016, we are looking to secure longer term funding for both our mentoring and our walking programmes. However, what we have put in place over the last 12 months puts us in a better position to access funds: greater dialogue with potential funders and closer links with NHS Forth Valley.

We have strong internal resources with the staff and board to support the organisation as we move forward.

Importantly, we have a highly trained team of volunteers who we know are supported and skilled at delivering our high quality programmes.

*“There will,
of course, be
challenges ahead.”*

Gordon Thomson

Chairman

The Braveheart Association

Achievements of the Past Year



This has been a very successful year for Braveheart.

Our key organisational achievements included:

- Funding secured from the Integrated Care Fund and Lloyds TSB
- Stakeholder Consultation report distributed
- Braveheart 3 Year Strategic Plan developed
- Three Board Members recruited
- New Weight Management Programme piloted
- 22% more walks
- More volunteers recruited and trained
- New Braveheart Newsletter initiated

Plans for the Year Ahead

Once again Braveheart has ambitious goals for the year ahead:

Board, Staff and Volunteers

- To further strengthen our Board of Trustees through increasing numbers and providing appropriate training
- To hold a Joint Board/Staff Planning Day
- To review staff contracts and pensions
- To develop Braveheart organisational values with key stakeholders
- To organise an event to celebrate our volunteers
- To continue to seek feedback from our volunteers to review what works well and how we can improve
- To provide volunteers with appropriate training for the new programmes being developed
- To increase the number of active, trained volunteers
- To further involve volunteers in marketing and outreach events

Funding

- To secure funding to deliver our strategic plan for 2016/17
- To involve stakeholders in discussions on funding priorities
- To focus where possible on longer term funding support
- To develop a number of fundraising initiatives to increase unrestricted funds
- To develop and test social enterprise ideas

Marketing and Communication

- To increase circulation of the Braveheart Newsletter and develop new publicity for our services
- To look at innovative ways of using the website and social media to improve our communication
- To increase the profile of Braveheart through regular press releases to local media
- To promote Braveheart programmes direct to the public through events and marketing initiatives

Evaluation

- To continue to evaluate all that we do
- To engage with our volunteers and service users to evaluate the quality of the services we offer
- To build a library of case studies to demonstrate the quality of the services we provide

Partnership Working

We are grateful that The Integrated Care Fund investment has enabled Braveheart to pilot preventative programmes designed to keep people well to and develop new strong partnerships with other organisations.

These partnerships will enable us to extend health and wellbeing services over the coming year and tackle health inequality challenges faced by groups living in our communities. In particular,

we will seek to encourage people to take personal responsibility for their health and health conditions and support them to make positive lifestyle changes.

Partnership Working Goals are:

- To hold regular partnership meetings with the NHS Public Health team
- To work with NHS staff to develop new initiatives in line with our strategic objectives and supporting us to access funding
- To continue working with community organisations to develop services integrated within the health and social care agenda

Tackling Risk Factors For Long-Term Conditions – Obesity and Loneliness

"....social isolation and loneliness are significant problems in Scotland and individual citizens, public services and the Scottish Government should take collective responsibility for improving the situation....We believe that it should be considered alongside issues such as poverty and poor housing as part of the public health agenda in Scotland."

Scottish Parliament: Equal Opportunities Committee
5th Report, 2015 (Session 4): Age and Social Isolation

Braveheart supports individuals to reduce their risk factors for long-term conditions such as obesity, loneliness and inactivity through our weight management, health mentoring and walking programmes.

Obesity and isolation are growing social problems in Scotland and we are learning more about how these issues have a direct bearing on wellbeing and the onset of long-term health conditions.

- 65% of the total adult population is overweight with 28% of those classed as obese
- 78% of those aged between 55 - 74 years of age are overweight or obese
- 87.9% of people diagnosed with Type 2 Diabetes in Forth Valley are overweight or obese
- Recent research indicates that the effect of loneliness and isolation on mortality can exceed the impact of obesity and have a similar influence as cigarette smoking ¹

- Loneliness increases the risk of high blood pressure ²
- Lonely individuals are at higher risk of the onset of disability ³
- Loneliness puts individuals at greater risk of cognitive decline ⁴
- Lonely people have a 64% increased chance of developing clinical dementia ⁵

¹ Holt-Lunstad, 2010

² Hawkey et al, 2010

³ Lund et al, 2010

⁴ James et al, 2011

⁵ Holwerda et al, 2012



Development of Services

Extending our Optimise Health Mentoring and Weight Management Programmes

In the coming year, we will continue to:

- Develop and deliver Braveheart's new Weight Management programme, working with the NHS to connect patients to our services
- Develop new Optimise sessions in response to evaluations with community groups, including Healthy Eating with Diabetes, Cooking Healthy Meals for One, Developing a Healthy Lifestyle For Healthy Blood Pressure and Recipe Modification for a Healthy Heart
- Offer Optimise sessions to key target groups such as carers, ethnic minorities, people with disabilities and older people
- Support Braveheart Plus groups

Developing Walk with Braveheart

Braveheart's 2015 Consultation showed we are successfully reducing isolation and loneliness for many of our service users. People told us how much they value the support of our walk leaders and health mentors as well as the social contact they gain from their peers in the groups, with many close friendships resulting.

Braveheart is now the most successful walking programme in Scotland for people with long-term health conditions, enabling them to keep active, improve their physical and mental health and providing them with regular opportunities for active social contact.



In the coming year, we will:

- Increase the number of new walkers by 10%
- Develop the range of walks to meet needs identified by service users, including dementia friendly walks and walks for blind and partially sighted people
- Extend our walks into other areas of Clackmannanshire
- Research where there is greatest need for Braveheart walks, targeting the least active individuals

Braveheart's overarching goal is that people can learn about, actively manage and maintain a healthier lifestyle. Through walking and health mentoring, Braveheart has been privileged to see large numbers of individuals make the changes in their lives that support and maintain their health and wellbeing over the years.

In the coming years, we aim to expand the Braveheart programmes which have been demonstrated to work well for people and reach out further into communities where there is greatest need.

Anne Black
Manager

Programme Overview: Walk With Braveheart



Key Achievements

- 421 walks led across Forth Valley
- 17 weekly walks & 11 monthly walks
- 5,678 attendances on walks
- 24 new walk leaders were trained during the year
- We now have **52** active walk leaders
- Braveheart walkers achieved **681,370 steps in one week!**
- Braveheart was chosen as TAG Charity of the Year



Weekly Walks

Braveheart weekly walks have gone from strength to strength over the past year. New walkers have been welcomed and many now join multiple walks throughout the week.

Two new walks were launched in Clackmannanshire in the summer of 2015. We trained local volunteers to lead walks around their community to encourage people to be more physically active. We plan to develop these walks further in 2016.

In addition to our evening canal walk in Polmont, we also launched a new daytime opportunity which walk takes in the wonderful woodland. Numbers are increasing and we hope this walk becomes as much of a success as our other weekly walks.

Monthly Walks

Braveheart had many marvellous monthly walks throughout the Forth Valley over the past year walking in a variety of delightful places - along the Allan Water in Dunblane, through the woodland of Banton, in picturesque Dalgety Bay and around the beautiful grounds of Airthrey Castle.

We now have as many as 50 walkers enjoying our monthly walks.



Partnership Working

Since early 2015, Braveheart and Inner Forth Landscape Initiative (IFLI) have provided joint partnership walks throughout the Inner Forth area.

The focus of these walks is to provide additional shorter (45minute) monthly walk opportunities for walkers, to let them see more of the Inner Forth area and hear some of its history.

The walks have been a great success with walkers discovering new walking possibilities like Bothkennar and Kennetpans.

We aim to revisit some of these areas in 2017 extending the route previously walked with IFLI.



TAG Support

The TAG group, led and organised by individuals with physical/learning disabilities chose Braveheart as their Charity of the Year in 2015, and at their Annual Ball we were presented with a cheque for £454. Braveheart walk leaders led TAG's Sponsored Walk around the Helix Park, helping them raise some funds to support the great work they do.

We greatly enjoyed working in partnership with TAG, and we thank them for their kind donation and their ongoing support.

"Braveheart gives people a purpose to get out, especially those living alone"

Braveheart's Big Fit Walk

Fifty one walkers attended Braveheart's first Big Fit Walk in June 2015 and many were inspired to join our weekly Helix Park walk – a great success!

Ten Years of Walk with Braveheart

Braveheart Sponsored Walk of 2015 was our 10 year celebration.

In ten years, Braveheart has:

- trained over 60 walk leaders
- provided over 5,000 free walks

Today, Braveheart walkers collectively walk in the region of 700,000 steps each week!

"Braveheart saved my life"



"Braveheart is keeping us alive" - Dementia sufferer

"Braveheart supported me to walk and make new friends"

"I enjoy the social aspect"

"The walks have let me discover different local areas which I didn't know existed"



*"Leaders are very friendly
and supportive"*



*"Everyone goes
through troubles.
Braveheart walks
have got me
through"*

"The walks are very relaxing"

**These are just some of the
benefits our walkers told
us they get from Walk with
Braveheart.**

Programme Overview: Health Mentoring



Braveheart health mentoring programmes are designed to encourage people to take individual responsibility for managing their own health and increase their understanding of how they can achieve a healthy lifestyle. We also work to increase the independence of people with long-term conditions through supported self-management.

Our services support the Falkirk Partnership's Priority of Early Intervention and Prevention, building on the strengths of our community by training local people to become Health Mentors. As trained Health Mentors, our volunteers are positive, active role models and leaders of health services in their community. The opportunity to become a health mentor also offers volunteers the opportunity to actively participate within their community and develop new knowledge and skills.

Braveheart Plus Self-Management Programmes

Through Braveheart Plus, we offer support to help people with long-term conditions to live well and independently for longer through self-management.

Led by trained volunteer health mentors, the groups offer social and information





Optimise Development Officer Munira Farara

sharing activities to provide people with the support and advice they need to maintain and improve their health. The monthly meetings help people live well with long-term health conditions, maintaining active, healthy and fulfilling lifestyles.

Providing regular opportunities to take part in a wide range of activities helps to reduce isolation and the effects of long-term loneliness.

Braveheart Plus is now in its 12th year and the two groups continue to flourish as members live life to the full.

For example, the Camelon group kicked off 2016 on a healthy footing with some useful dietary information from Eva Asante, Braveheart Development Officer. After all those Christmas treats, the group reviewed their individual diets and learned ways to improve them for optimum health.

Later in the year, they hosted a fascinating afternoon with Geoff Bailey, archivist and historian of Callendar House, and members found his wealth of knowledge of Falkirk's rich and diverse past fascinating.

The Stenhousemuir group also enjoyed a great variety of interesting sessions and a wide range of specialist speakers.

They played host to Diabetes UK representatives who described current research and developments in diabetes awareness and treatment.

An outing to Callendar House and Museum was also greatly enjoyed, as was

the well-earned cuppa in the tearoom afterwards!

Both Braveheart Plus Camelon (for Coronary Heart disease) and Braveheart Plus Stenhousemuir (for Type 2 diabetes) continue to welcome new members.

Braveheart Optimise Programme

Through the Optimise programme, we further developed the Braveheart mentoring model to provide an early intervention, prevention and learning support for people at risk of developing long-term conditions.

This year, we continued to work with people at risk of developing long-term conditions due to factors such as



inactivity, poor diet, obesity and isolation, supporting them to attain and maintain good health and wellbeing through regular exercise, eating well, connecting with others and managing stress.

During the year, Braveheart also engaged with key groups who may experience barriers in accessing health improvement services such as:

- Carers
- Criminal Justice service clients
- Homeless people
- Unemployed people
- Older people

Throughout 2015, 10 community sessions were delivered to 132 clients from these groups.

These sessions helped people learn what constitutes a healthy (balanced) diet, how to make healthier lifestyle choices and find ways to increase levels of physical activity in their daily lives.

Braveheart provided sessions in community centres in local areas and signposted participants onto Braveheart walks, weight management programmes and Braveheart Plus as well as other relevant services.

Evaluation of the sessions strongly indicates that participants made positive changes to improve their health and wellbeing.

“ The sessions empower people to take control of our lives and diabetes. ”

“ We have met new people and heard their views about our personal needs and medications which is very helpful. ”

“ The group has a variety of people but common issues to talk over and hear from speakers. ”

“ It is a reason to come out of the house and continue to learn. ”

“ Group therapy! ”

These are just some of the benefits listed by participants of our self-management programmes.

Weight Management Pilot

Obesity and excess weight is a major preventable cause of morbidity and premature mortality in Scotland and losing 5-10% of body weight is associated with substantial improvements in obesity related illnesses.

During the year, we worked with NHS FV to develop a new community based learning and support for overweight people, designed to be both straightforward and free.



Our resulting Weight Management pilot programme, meets the Obesity Guidelines from The National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE). It is a multi-component programme focussing on how we can make healthier food choices and increase physical activity.

Evaluation of a small-scale pilot in Spring 2016, showed that the group reduced weight by an average of 7.2lbs per person and waist measurement by an average of 2.5 inches over 8 weeks. In a follow up focus group session, participants all said that they would not have been able to lose the weight without the group.

Braveheart acknowledges that obesity is a serious health concern that requires a collaborative approach across public and voluntary sectors in order to achieve a long-term positive impact on individuals, families and communities.

We will continue to work in close partnership with Dietetics, Health Promotion and Community Food Development within NHS Forth Valley and Healthy Working Lives to contribute to the aims of the Preventing Obesity Route Map.

"The Weight Management sessions gave me the motivation and support to identify and make small achievable changes and maintain them. I have now started to view healthy eating and exercise as non-negotiable daily habits and, more importantly, I regained control of my weight! I was 55 kg when I joined the programme, I lost 1 kg in the first week and now weigh 50 kg which is the ideal weight for my height. I feel healthier and energetic."

Married mother and postgraduate student.



Developing Volunteering



Building on the Strengths of our Community

At Braveheart, we rely heavily on volunteers to deliver our services.

We believe that engaging local people as volunteers fosters community engagement in Braveheart services, it creates a strong volunteer base and provides an affordable health improvement service.

Volunteer Week Celebrations

After the awards ceremony, our volunteers enjoyed a guided tour of grand Hopetoun House, followed by a wonderful cream tea, a small gesture of thanks for the time, work and talent they give so generously throughout the year.

Falkirk Council for Voluntary Services (CVS) Awards



Seven Braveheart volunteers attended the annual Volunteer Awards Ceremony to collect their awards for hard work and commitment throughout the year from Provost Pat Reid.

Our thanks and congratulations go to all.

Thank You!



Braveheart Board and Staff planning day

THANK YOU

Thank you to Braveheart's Staff Team - Anne Black, Maureen Forbes, Eva Finlayson, Eva Asante and Munira Farara.

Thank you to Braveheart's Board of Trustees – Gordon Thomson, David Bremner, Claire Tucker, Lorna MacIntyre, Vicky Junik and John Holleran.

Thank you to NHS Forth Valley, Falkirk Integrated Care Fund, The Robertson Trust, Scottish Natural Heritage and Lloyds TSB Foundation For Scotland for their support in making the outstanding successes of this year possible.

Many thanks to the TAG group who donated £454 to Braveheart when they chose us as their Charity of The Year. Thank you again to all supporters who contributed to Braveheart's Sponsored Walk and raised £380.

Our heartfelt thanks to all our dedicated volunteers who offer their time and talents so generously throughout the year.

Start a Healthier Life

People who are active and involved in communities, and who feel able to access formal and informal support, are both happier and healthier.

Braveheart programmes have been designed to provide resources and support to improve the health and wellbeing of Falkirk communities.

Braveheart creates community led activities and outreach health services to improve the health and wellbeing of local people.

We help our community:

- Make healthier choices
- Take part in regular healthy activity
- Increase skills and understanding for health and wellbeing and resilience
- Live well with long-term health problems
- Attain and maintain an ideal weight
- Have regular fun social experiences

You can help Braveheart help our community by:

- Joining our Board of Trustees
- Volunteering as a Walk Leader
- Volunteering as a Health Mentor
- Volunteering as a Fundraiser
- Volunteering as an Administrator
- Making a donation

All our services are free and delivered by trained volunteers

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

Telephone: 01324 673706

Email: maureenforbes@nhs.net

www.braveheart.uk.net

