



Annual Review
April 2019 – March 2020



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Credit: Thank you to Braveheart volunteer Charles Colliar for photos on the cover and page 14

"I have been trying to lose weight since I was a teenager. I used to bemoan the fact that I had no willpower and that was why I kept failing with diets. The structured programme, never being judged but instead given so much positive encouragement has helped me realise that I need to take control of my own behaviour and that behaviour can be changed. I've lost a stone in weight and have begun to believe that 'I am worth it.'"

Jenny, Weight Management Programme participant



New Braveheart Connections Health and Wellbeing Hub, Falkirk Howgate Centre Official opening, October 2019

Today, people are living healthier and living longer. At the same time, the gap between those living in the most affluent and the most deprived areas continues to widen and preventable long-term disability and ill-health increases. This year, the Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic has brought new challenges to our health and well-being, many of which we are still to fully understand.

The Braveheart Association steps into this gap to help people across Forth Valley who live with, or are at risk of developing, a long-term condition live healthier lives by

delivering innovative and free physical and mental health related activities and support.

Since 2003, the Braveheart Association has grown to become an established resource across Forth Valley communities. The dedicated staff and volunteer teams deliver an increasing number of activities, ranging from walking groups to healthy eating support groups. All activities closely align with local, regional and national health improvement policy and practice and many focus on early intervention.

Chair's Report

In so many ways this has been our most successful year ever. We secured more funding, recruited more staff, expanded our network of volunteers, opened our new Braveheart Connections Health and Wellbeing Hub and were invited to incorporate another organisation into what we do. This all resulted in being able to deliver more high quality resources to more people than ever before.

One of the most exciting developments of the year was opening the Braveheart Connections Health and Wellbeing Hub in the Howgate Centre in Falkirk. This gives us another venue to deliver great services as well as being able to raise our profile directly with members of the public.

We are usually open on Mondays and Wednesdays offering a number of different resources to encourage healthy living. The intention is to work closely with other partner organisations to enable us to open more days of the week and to deliver a wider range of useful services. We are especially keen to hear your ideas. So, if you have not visited, please take the time to come along, have a cup of tea and a good natter. It is there for you.

In order to develop some of the potential that Braveheart Connections offered, we accessed additional funding to employ a new member of staff. We also expanded what we do into Clackmannanshire and for this we also recruited a member of staff. Maureen and May have already made a huge and positive impact on what Braveheart does as you will read below.

I also have to reinforce my gratitude to the existing four members of staff, Anne, Maureen, Eva and Munira, who have



been a powerhouse in driving forward our plans over the year.

We have helped more people than ever engage with walking and enabled people with dementia and challenges with their mental health to take part. We have also established group classes for people from ethnic minorities who are a particularly high risk group within our society. Our focus has been on prevention of diabetes, heart disease and arthritis.

Towards the end of 2019, we were delighted to be invited to take over the running of Top Toes, a toenail clipping service delivered by volunteers across much of Forth Valley.

Top Toes almost closed a few years ago but CVS (Community Voluntary Services in Falkirk) took over the running of the business as they recognised it provided a vital service for those unable to access NHS podiatry services. There are clear similarities between the two organisations; delivered by volunteers and helping to keep the population more healthy. This transfer was due to take place on April 1st this year. Whilst the date of transfer is still to be determined, I am sure Top Toes will be an

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important addition to what we do.

Towards the end of 2019/20 we all know that the world became a different place. Covid-19 has changed the way we live life, as individuals, organisations and nations. As I write, we are still in lockdown with much reduced opportunities to support those people in our communities who need what we do the most. Times of crisis often bring out the best in people and this has certainly been the case with our brilliant staff.

There is little doubt that the charity sector will come under increasing pressure as the country tries to tackle the economic and health challenges created by the pandemic. However, in so many ways, the need for Braveheart has increased. I am confident that the people involved with Braveheart will enable us to sustain and continue to deliver great things. We have a brilliant team and I am indebted to the dedication of the Board over this difficult time. We started and finished the year with five very able and active members of the Board, and we have needed every minute of their time that they have spent with Braveheart. I would especially like

to thank our staff, volunteers, our many funders and partners, including the NHS, for their continued support and unyielding confidence in Braveheart continuing to deliver to our communities.

I know we are all keen to return to normal. Nonetheless, we need to be patient and cautious. The safety of everyone associated with Braveheart is at the heart of every decision we make. However, move forward we will and I would like to thank everyone for the remarkable year that has just passed and for their contribution to what lies ahead.

Gordon Thomson
Chair

The Braveheart Association


"With Covid-19, the need for what Braveheart does has increased in so many ways, and increased substantially. I am confident that the people involved with Braveheart will enable us to sustain and continue to deliver great things as we move forward."

Key Achievements 2019/2020

The past year has been our most successful ever.

We exceeded targets, increased the range of services and number of service users and built up our volunteer and staff teams.

1000+ 
people across Forth Valley joined our health and wellbeing services including walking and exercise, nutrition, cardiovascular disease and Type 2 Diabetes awareness workshops

 A record **7,700** attendances registered across all walks

 **200** regular walkers and **50+** new walkers supported

 **50** people joined our Sponsored Walk at Callendar Park, September 2019

 **35** took part in our successful Big Fit Walk in Polmont Woods, resulting in tripling numbers on our weekly Polmont walk

 **37** community members participated in Braveheart's Weight Management Programme in Camelon and our new Braveheart Connections Health and Wellbeing Hub

Strengthened Community Relationships



288 community individuals benefitted from healthy lifestyle activities including:

- 10 healthy lifestyle talks and workshops delivered to 68 people from different local community groups
- 3 community consultation meals at Kersiebank Community Centre and Camelon Community Centre attended by 104 people

"Thanks to Braveheart, I now have the tools for a healthier lifestyle and have the motivation to keep the weight off."

Susan, Healthy Way with Braveheart participant



New Braveheart/Partnership Initiatives

- Pilot mental health support group at Kersiebank Community Centre, Grangemouth, with all participants reporting significant improvements
- **My Health For Life** weekly self-management workshops empowering adults from ethnic minority groups living with a long-term health condition - Delivered to 27 members of the community
- **Healthy Way with Braveheart** popular weekly weight management and healthy lifestyle group
- New Monthly Walks exploring Cumbernauld to Culross
- International Women's Week foraging walk to Calendar Estate in partnership with Forth Environment Link and Central Scotland Regional Equality Council
- Increased engagement with Forth Valley NHS Keep Well Health Assessments and Social Work Adult Services to develop referrals in Clackmannanshire - 18 people assessed to date and a further 52 ready to take part
- New 'It's the best thing I ever did!' Paths for All video promoting Braveheart walks



NEW Braveheart Connections Health and Wellbeing Hub Howgate Centre, Falkirk

Falkirk Provost William Buchanan marked the official opening of Braveheart's exciting new drop-in Hub in October.

The new services, which were developed in consultation with the local community, NHS, Keep Well, local ethnic minority groups and community organisations, include health information and advice, free support for weight management and conditions such as diabetes and mental well-being as well as strength and balance exercise sessions and short mall walks.

Through activities such as the Wednesday 'Wee Blethers' group and bee keeping, the Hub also helps keep people socially connected.



Key Achievements 2019/2020

NEW Braveheart Clackmannanshire Walking Project

Our new Clackmannanshire Development Officer and volunteer team worked with Paths for All, Clackmannanshire Council, local GP practices, the Social Work Adult Services Department, NHS Post Diagnostic Clinic (clients with memory impairments), Clackmannanshire Third Sector Interface, Resonate with Arts in Mind, Wee County Walkers, Carers Centre, Department for Work and Pensions and Sauchie Resource Centre to:

- Start 8 health walks with 50 regular walkers
- Provide Strength and Balance sessions
- Offer free Trishaw rides

The team also joined the Active Living Framework sub-committee to help develop the new Wee County, Wee Cycle initiative and website.

"The Walk Leaders are great. They take you different places, you feel safe and the walks are good for you, both physically and mentally. They're great to keep you moving as you get older and we enjoy a lot of social interaction. It's the best thing I've done for a long time."

Margaret, Walk Group participant

Developing Volunteering

- **18** new Health Mentors recruited and trained
- **12** new volunteers recruited and trained to form the Clackmannanshire Walk Leaders Team
- **5** new volunteers trained to join the Falkirk Walk Leaders Team
- Walk Leader Stanley Stewart nominated for Paths for All Volunteer of the Year
- Walk Leaders Charlie Colliar & Stanley Stewart jointly awarded Braveheart Walk Leader Volunteer of the Year and Avril Tetsil awarded Braveheart Health Mentor Volunteer of the Year
- Volunteers Day Out to Japanese Gardens, near Alloa, and Christmas Lunch at Ross Priory, near Loch Lomond, for Braveheart's 59 active volunteers

Funding Success

- Two new staff members recruited: Maureen Hill, Development Officer for the new Braveheart Connections Health and Wellbeing Hub with support from NHS Public Health
- May Richmond, Clackmannanshire Development Officer with support from Clackmannanshire Council
- My Health For Life self-management workshops for ethnic minority groups living with a long-term health condition launched with support from Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland



Continuing to develop and maintain strong partnership by:



- Working closely with the NHS, Keep Well, local ethnic minority groups and community organisations to promote integration and inclusion within our new Health and Wellbeing Hubs
- Increasing our engagement with local community groups with a focus on the Health and Social Care partners in Clackmannanshire
- Meeting regularly with key personnel within NHS Forth Valley to plan and co-ordinate future work

Growing and supporting Braveheart volunteering by:

- Recruiting and training volunteers for the new Health and Wellbeing Hubs
- Continuing to develop, train, recognise and reward our volunteers

Strategic Priorities 2020/2021

Like an aircraft about to take flight, Covid-19 interrupted the smooth transition of Braveheart's plans into 2020. Though grounded for the moment, we have been proactive in finding new ways to maintain close contact with our service users, encouraging and supporting them to stay well physically, mentally and emotionally during these challenging times whether that's through online platforms, telephone support or written materials delivered by post.

Our staff and Board have also used the time to learn and reflect, developing plans and policies, securing funding and beginning to strengthen our profile and raise the voice of Braveheart at regional and national level.

Many experts agree that the secondary effects of the lockdown on the population's health will give rise to a public health challenge which will require real integration between the public sector and the voluntary and community sectors. As we tackle the effects of Covid-19, our services will be needed more and we plan to develop our capacity and scope quickly to meet this new demand. Our volunteers, who are recognised health leaders in the community, will be the key to the success of our plans.

The tank is full, the engine is running, the Braveheart plane is on the runway. The weather is looking a little stormy but the skies are clearing and there is sunshine in the forecast. Fasten your seatbelts, we're ready for take-off...



"I use my car less as I've been encouraged to walk more. I now travel by bus to Braveheart walks and walk after the bus journey. I've had improved test results at my GP and even feel up to longer distance walking. Braveheart groups are a good reason to get out walking every day, keep up fitness levels and meet new people."
Frank, Walk Group participant

"A great interactive healthy eating workshop! I learned about food groups, what an actual portion size is for different food groups and how to read food labels and use that to my benefit, all of which will help me improve my health."
John, Healthy Eating Workshop participant

Increasing Braveheart services by:

- Further developing the Braveheart Connections Health and Wellbeing Hub in Falkirk
- Taking over management of Top Toes as a Braveheart social enterprise
- Continuing to develop our weight management programme and Diabetes prevention work with NHS Forth Valley
- Continuing to develop and integrate our healthy lifestyle work with ethnic minority communities
- Further developing our work with the Council and NHS in the Clackmannanshire area
- Continuing to promote walking, strength and balance and active travel through our programmes with partners including Cycling without Age, Inner Forth Landscape, Falkirk Active Travel Hub, Get Out Get Active Forth Valley, Great Place Project & NHS Forth Valley
- Securing funding to make all of the above possible

Further developing our capacity to deliver our services by:

- Developing and supporting our Braveheart volunteer teams
- Developing the Board to lead in key strategic areas
- Providing staff and volunteers with appropriate training and development opportunities

- Raising the profile and influence of the organisation at local, regional and national level
- Developing and delivering an organisational Marketing Strategy with external funding

Continuing to develop and maintain strong partnership working by:

- Holding regular planning meetings with NHS Forth Valley and developing a Partnership Plan for 2021-2022
- Promoting partnership through involvement in relevant strategic groups and meetings with key decision makers
- Developing our partnership working with Health and Social Care organisations across Forth Valley
- Initiating new partnership working through the Braveheart Connections Health and Wellbeing Hub and other projects



"Braveheart is just fantastic! It's helped me mentally and physically and I've met so many great people!"
Fiona, Walk Group participant

Volunteering with Braveheart



We cannot thank our volunteers enough for all that they do. Without them, Braveheart could not deliver lifeline services supporting health and wellbeing in the community.

Braveheart recruited and developed new volunteer teams during the year and we now have 59 volunteers across four teams, each supported by a Development Officer.

Clackmannanshire Walking Team

May Richmond leads our newly recruited volunteer team of 12, which has already formed strong bonds with our clients with dementia, gaining their trust and friendship. Our youngest volunteer, 18 year old Russell Carberry, gave a wonderful presentation on Braveheart to achieve his SVQ Saltire Award.

Health Mentoring Team

Our team of 12 Health Mentors, led by Munira Farara, support the delivery of our lifestyle programmes including weight management, peer support for health conditions and work with ethnic minority communities.

Falkirk Walking Team

Our successful Falkirk walking project led by Eva Finlayson now has 26 active Walk Leaders, who are committed, enthusiastic and a friendly face for all.

Braveheart Connections Health and Wellbeing Hub

The newest team of nine volunteers at the Braveheart Connections Health and Wellbeing Hub is led by Maureen Hill. As we extend opening hours and services, we will continue to recruit and develop this team.

"Joining Braveheart is the best thing I have ever done. I've volunteered elsewhere but didn't get the support or thanks that you get here at Braveheart."
Neil, Walk Leader



Recognition and Awards

Long-standing Falkirk Walk Leaders Stan Stewart and Charlie Colliar were awarded joint Walk Leader Volunteer of the Year at the Braveheart AGM and Health Mentor Avril Tetsil received the award for Health Mentor Volunteer of the Year.

Stan was also nominated as Paths for All Volunteer of the Year.

We are particularly grateful for all our Braveheart volunteers for stepping up so quickly at the onset of the Coronavirus pandemic, making connections with isolated and vulnerable people, helping with shopping, dog walking and many other kindnesses not in the job description!

"I love going out with older people. They tell such interesting stories and always make me laugh!"
Russell, Walk Leader, 18 years

Covid-19: Reason for Hope



The fight against Covid-19 has been described as a marathon not a sprint.

As we move out of lockdown and through the phases of recovery, there will be increasing demand for our community based health services. As a public health organisation, Braveheart will continue to support those at risk of conditions such as diabetes and heart disease, those already experiencing health conditions as well as those suffering from the new or secondary health effects of the lockdown.

We know from Government reports, for example, many people have been taking less exercise, not eating well and drinking more alcohol during the lockdown. Some are experiencing social isolation and a lack of mental stimulation. Many are stressed and anxious about the future and may be experiencing mental health problems for the first time. Others are unable or fearful to attend hospital when necessary and coping with the withdrawal of regular activities and therapies provided by the NHS and community-based health charities, which will also inevitably lead to significantly increased strain on NHS

services into the future.

There is hope though. Organisations such as Braveheart are already well placed to deliver effective models of healthcare in the community with excellent, proven health outcomes. Offering peer support, with trained volunteers and staff leading and inspiring people to manage their health, we have been helping people lose weight, take exercise and learn how to avoid or limit ill health by living a healthier lifestyle since 2003.

Braveheart's staff expertise and our talented volunteering team have the opportunity to help us respond to Covid-19 and create lasting change to health and well-being across Forth Valley. A healthier population is indeed a reason for hope.

"My wife is like a new woman. I can see a glimpse of her old self again."
Alan, husband of walker with dementia

"The most important thing I have learned from the classes is that it's not all about weight loss. It's about how healthy I am."

Amelia, Healthy Way with Braveheart participant

Thank You

The achievements of the year have been made possible by...

Braveheart's Staff Team

Anne Black, Maureen Forbes, Eva Finlayson, Munira Farara,
May Richmond and Maureen Hill

The Board of Trustees

Gordon Thomson, Charlie Colliar, Jamie Bomber,
Nina Saunders and Blair Alston

Our Funders & Partners

Albert Hunt Trust; Clackmannanshire Council; NHS Forth Valley; Paths for All;
Smarter Choices, Smarter Places; The Corra Foundation; Awards For All;
The Health and Social Care Alliance (Scotland);
Baillie Gifford and The Robertson Trust

Our Volunteers

All our Walk Leaders, Health Mentors and Connections volunteers. Special thanks to Charlie Colliar for his beautiful photographs inspired by the natural world all around us in the Forth Valley area

Our Supporters

In particular, all those who contributed to our Sponsored Walk
and Friends of Braveheart Draw

We are also grateful to all those who donated individually in person or through our

Just Giving page

(which can be accessed via www.braveheart.uk.net)

"I have always wanted instant results with minimal effort in the past but now have embedded the knowledge that I am responsible for my own choices and that overnight miracles are totally unrealistic."

Jenny, Healthy Way with Braveheart participant

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 communities in Forth Valley.

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

We support our community to:

- Learn about and make healthy lifestyle choices
- Participate in peer support groups
- Take part in gentle physical activities
- Enjoy regular social activities
- Attain and maintain a healthy weight

You can support our community by becoming a Braveheart volunteer:

- Board Member
- Community Hub Volunteer
- Walk Leader
- Health Mentor
- Fundraiser

All our services are free and delivered with the support of trained volunteers.

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

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www.braveheart.uk.net

If you would like to donate to Braveheart, you can now do so through Just Giving

www.justgiving.com/braveheartassn



**Clackmannanshire
Council**

