



# **Annual Review**

April 2020 – March 2021



# The Braveheart Association

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**Photo Credit:** Special thanks to Charlie Colliar for his beautiful photographs inspired by the natural world all around us in the Forth Valley area.

**"I have been trying to manage my weight most of my adult life but this is the first time I feel that I have peace with my inner self."**

*Jenny, Weight Management Programme participant*

# Helping People across Forth Valley lead healthier lives



Since 2003, the Braveheart Association has delivered an increasing number of free and innovative health and well-being services helping those who live with, or are at risk of developing, a long-term condition such as cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, sensory impairment or dementia.

Focusing on early intervention, we help people address risk factors associated with ill health particularly weight and exercise. We also support those facing social isolation, which has become increasingly prevalent during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Our activities, which range from walking and exercise groups to healthy eating, cookery, stress and weight management support groups are delivered by our dedicated staff and volunteer teams. Together, we listen to those we help, supporting them to develop their own solutions at their own pace.

Our services evolve in line with local regional and national health improvement policy and priorities. Braveheart works hard to help create more resilient individuals and to build healthier communities across Forth Valley.

# Chair's Report

**This has been a remarkable year for everyone. For Braveheart, it was one that demonstrated the resolve and ingenuity of the staff as well as the dedication and commitment of the volunteers.**

Despite the remarkable circumstances, we continued to deliver many of the programmes that help support the hundreds of people that we work with across the year.

This meant transferring many of our services to online and telephone support for much of what we do. We provided practical healthy living resources and every week we posted key information on our social media platforms. We also produced a monthly Newsletter which was distributed to service users and volunteers offering advice and access to resources to support service users to manage their health and wellbeing. The Newsletter was particularly important for service users who were not online.

We started new Initiatives. For example, we started new one-to-one Buddy Walks and additional face-to-face support was delivered to individuals who felt extremely isolated or were facing a crisis.



We continued to support our volunteers and additional training sessions were organised for our Walk Leaders and for our new Digital Champions. Eight volunteer health mentors received further training and support to adapt to the new way of delivery due to Covid-19 pandemic and the associated restrictions.

Group health mentoring support sessions continued online and, when Covid guidance allowed, we restarted our group-based activities such as our walking programmes with a great response from volunteers and our service users.

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**“Despite the remarkable circumstances, we continued to deliver many of programmes that help support the hundreds of people that we work with across the year.”**

#### **New Initiatives and Plans for 2021 /2022**

We are developing a new toenail cutting service for the people of Falkirk who are not eligible for free NHS treatment. We piloted this between September and December 2020. This service is being offered across four centres in Falkirk and we hope to be able to make this available to others across Forth Valley.

As well as providing a valuable service for those that use it, we hope that Top Toes will play an important role in helping support the other services that Braveheart delivers.

We delivered a new support service for ten vulnerable adults who needed training and support to get online. We also took part in the Child Healthy Weight pilot in Clackmannanshire and five teams of volunteers and staff took part in the NHS Forth Valley Step Together Walking Challenge in January to March 2021.

We plan to expand some of the services that we currently deliver at the Connections Hub. This will include weight management and digital support services and our activity-based services including buddy walks, mall walks and strength and balance exercise classes, accessing new sections of society.

We will continue to support and train our volunteers and staff to continue to deliver high quality services, accessing new areas of Forth Valley with a focus on issues like mental health and diabetes.

With Braveheart becoming a more complex organisation, it is important that we build the capacity of the organisation. This will involve recruiting more staff and more Board Members some with specific experience in organisational development.

**Gordon Thomson**

*Chair*

**The Braveheart Association**



# Key Achievements 2020/2021

Following Lockdown in March 2020, we acted quickly to develop new ways to continue to support our service users, volunteers and staff. We transferred many of our services to online and telephone support until we could resume in person services safely.

We also provided additional face-to-face support for individuals who were extremely isolated or faced a crisis or bereavement.

Despite the challenges of Covid-19, it was a successful year with many highlights.

## Walk with Braveheart

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**2,256** walkers benefitted from  
**249** walks when they resumed in September  
**= 4,966** attendances in total on our  
Falkirk and Clackmannanshire walks



**30** new walkers welcomed



**20** walkers, Walk Leaders and community  
partners

took part in **2** online **Tea & Chat**  
sessions to  
connect everyone during Lockdown



Great Place Heritage Walk led at Callendar  
Park in partnership with The Great Place Project



Arc Housing clients joined a weekly walk



A litterpick and picnic delivered at Gartmorn  
Dam



Successful grant applications made to Paths  
for All and Smarter Choices, Smarter Places

**800+** people across Forth Valley made  
**8,148** attendances at our health and  
wellbeing services including walking and  
exercise, nutrition, cardiovascular disease and  
type 2 diabetes awareness workshops



## Active Travel

Through our walks, and in partnership with Keep Well and Alzheimer's Scotland, we continued to encourage new walkers to use local paths for short journeys with remarkable success during the period. As well as distributing bus and train timetables, we engaged families in discussion around climate change and the impact of transport.



**70%** of Braveheart walkers reported walking more on shorter journeys rather than using their car

## Healthy Way Weight Management and Lifestyle Programme

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Our trained volunteer Health Mentors continued to provide evidence-based nutrition and physical activity education throughout the year.

**1,240** attendances at sessions on weight management/healthy living/long term conditions

**552** attendances at Healthy Living for Refugee Families activities

**324** one-to-one weight management support sessions offered

**116** people engaged with the Braveheart healthy living service

**92** self-management group support sessions delivered weekly via Zoom

**76** weekly self-management one-to-one sessions delivered at the Braveheart Connections Health Hub (October – December) and via Zoom and telephone (January – March)

**38** people from ethnic minorities participated in the My Health For Life self-management initiative

**30** people took part in **4** weeks of online Strength & Balance sessions

**28** refugee and migrant adults and 25 children were helped to integrate into the community through stress management, art and craft and cooking activities

**28** supervised physical activity sessions including fitness, strength and balance, Zumba and Yoga classes offered

New intensive online, phone and, where allowed, in person individual support sessions introduced

Practical healthy living resources and weekly encouraging and informative information promoted online

Monthly Newsletter offering advice and access to resources to manage health and well-being distributed by post and online

# Key Achievements 2020/2021

## Key Health Outcomes

- **91%** of participants reported being better able to manage symptoms of their long-term health condition
- There were also statistically significant increases in self-rated health scores with **77.8%** reporting Good/Very Good Health following 12 months of intervention compared to 30.5% pre-intervention
- **63%** of participants increased their physical activity level



**"I'm glad we're being kept in the loop and looking forward to a call to say the walks are back. I fairly miss them."**  
*Walker Margaret*

## Developing Volunteering

- **71** Braveheart Volunteers
- **2** new Walk Leaders trained for Falkirk District
- **7** new Walk Leaders trained for Clackmannanshire
- Walking Development Officers Eva and May achieved Online Cascade Walk Leader Training enabling them to train new walk leaders online where required
- Dementia Friendly Walk Leader Training taken by our Clackmannanshire Walking Development Officer May and one Walk Leader
- **8** volunteer Health Mentors received further training and support to adapt to new ways of delivery due to Covid-19
- Digital Champion Training introduced

**"I liked being taken through the strength and balance exercises online, shown the correct posture and encouraged to do these again throughout the week."**

*Participant Janice*





### The Braveheart Connections Hub

Weight management and peer support groups, exercise classes and health testing had been delivered in partnership with Keep Well in The Hub in the Howgate Centre, Falkirk, since it opened in October 2019. We re-opened in September with one-to-one support and the start of our new footcare service, Top Toes.

**"The Buddy Walks have been great to enable us to walk with someone else, a Leader or even as a small group. It's really helped and gave me something to look forward to."**

*Walker Maureen*

## New Braveheart / Partnership Initiatives

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### New Buddy Walk

- **30** people benefitted from taking part in **310** new one-to-one Buddy Walks

### New Cycling without Age Partnership

- Supporting individuals who are unable to walk to enjoy fresh air and company on a trishaw ride

### Vulnerable Adults - Online Access

- **10** vulnerable adults given training and support to get online, in conjunction with Connecting Scotland and Falkirk Council
- Support also included an iPad, Internet connection for a year and a Braveheart Digital Champion assigned for support

### Braveheart Top Toes

- From September to December 2020, Braveheart piloted delivery of a new toenail cutting service run by NHS trained volunteers. Due to the success of the pilot, we decided to continue the service. When Covid restrictions were lifted in March 2021, Top Toes became operational in the Connections Hub and in other locations in Forth Valley.
- **1,250** attendances at our Top Toes clinics with **448** regular users

### Child Healthy Weight Pilot, Clackmannanshire

Braveheart took part in the pilot together with NHS Forth Valley and local organisations

### NHS FV Step Together Walking Challenge

- **9,642,631** steps walked by Braveheart volunteers and staff between January and March

# Strategic Priorities 2021/2022

## Increasing Braveheart services by:

- Expanding weight management and digital support services in the Connections Hub
- Developing activity-based services including Buddy Walks, mall walks and strength and balance exercise
- Assessing demand for expansion of service provision in Clackmannanshire
- Developing Braveheart's well-being work with refugees across Forth Valley
- Continuing online training and support for Vulnerable Adults in conjunction with Connecting Scotland and Falkirk Council
- Promoting Active Travel

## Continuing to develop the strong partnership working at the heart of all our projects. This year this will include:

- Piloting diabetes prevention work with NHS Forth Valley and local partners
- Developing Braveheart's Top Toes footcare service in Forth Valley

## Further developing our capacity to deliver our services by:

- Providing appropriate mental health training for staff and volunteers
- Recruiting, training and supporting volunteer teams including delivering Walk Leader training, Dementia Awareness for Walk Leader training, Strength and Balance for Walk Leaders training and Health Mentor training
- Reviewing current organisational strategy and developing a new three year Strategic Plan
- Reviewing organisational systems, policies and structure and implementing agreed changes

**"In my recent visit to the doctor, they told me that my sugar control and generally my overall mental and physical health has improved."**





**"Attending the self-management programme was one of the best things I've done for myself and my family. It has made such a difference and my health has been so much better."**



# 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 well-being in the community.**

All our volunteers receive training and support to ensure they are confident and able to deliver the best service to our participants and, importantly, enjoy their time spent volunteering. They are wonderful, committed, enthusiastic and a friendly, welcoming face for our participants.

Currently, we support five volunteer teams with over **52** volunteers.

## **Clackmannanshire and Falkirk Walking Teams**

Our Falkirk walking project led by Eva Finlayson and our Clackmannanshire walking project led by May Richmond, together have **29** active Walk Leaders.

Together, they encourage and support people across Forth Valley get active, enjoy fresh air and a connection with others.

## **Health Mentoring Team**

Our team of **8** 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.

**"I agree it's a good time to start the walks back. We have the safety measures in place and it's important to get our walkers out before Winter and get them moving again. It also gives me my routine back which I've sorely missed!"**

*Walk Leader Brian*





### **Braveheart Connections Health and Wellbeing Hub**

Our newest team of **15** 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.

If you would like to support our community by becoming a Braveheart volunteer, we would love to hear from you.

For further information about volunteering,

visit [www.braveheart.uk.net](http://www.braveheart.uk.net)

or telephone: 07795 283 508 or email: [maureen.forbes@nhs.scot](mailto:maureen.forbes@nhs.scot)

**"I feel more confident in becoming a volunteer Health Mentor due to the regular and open discussions we have as a group. I am now good at supporting people and encouraging them to open up in the most relaxed and friendly way possible."**

*Samina Ali, Rainbow Muslim Women's Group Leader, My Health For Life Self-management Group*

# Thank You



We are immensely grateful to all our staff and volunteers who went the extra mile during this difficult year. As well as continuing our services, many helped support the most vulnerable in society by delivering shopping and medicines and taking pets out for walks whilst their owners were shielding.

We are also grateful to all our partners and funders including NHS Forth Valley which provides the vital annual funding needed to employ our experienced Manager and access funds from other sources where match funding is required.



**"It helped me improve my self-esteem to get motivated to start exercising."**

# Thank You

**Altogether, the achievements of the year have been made possible by...**

## **Braveheart's Staff Team**

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

## **The Board of Trustees**

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

## **Our Funders & Partners**

Clackmannanshire Council; NHS Forth Valley; Paths for All; Smarter Choices, Smarter Places; The Corra Foundation and The Health and Social Care Alliance (Scotland)

## **Our Volunteers**

All our Walk Leaders, Health Mentors, Connections volunteers and Top Toes volunteer team

## **Our Supporters**

All who contributed and donated individually in person or through our Just Giving page (which can be accessed via [www.braveheart.uk.net](http://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

### Helping People across Forth Valley lead Healthier Lives

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

Braveheart delivers free community-led activities and outreach health services to improve the health and well-being of people across Forth Valley. We also run a wide-ranging and rewarding volunteer programme.

### Volunteer with Braveheart

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

[www.braveheart.uk.net](http://www.braveheart.uk.net)

**Braveheart Connections: Telephone:** 01324 633 505

**Braveheart Mobile:** 07795 283 508

**Email:** [maureen.forbes@nhs.scot](mailto:maureen.forbes@nhs.scot)

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

[www.justgiving.com/braveheartassn](http://www.justgiving.com/braveheartassn)

**THANK  
YOU!**

