



Annual Review

April 2021 – March 2022



The Braveheart Association

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"The group is so motivational; my life has been improved so much since I joined the Braveheart Healthy Mums group."

Healthy Living Participant

Supporting The Well-being of People Across Forth Valley



Since 2003, the Braveheart Association has delivered an increasing number of 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, disability, sensory impairment or dementia.

Focusing on early intervention, we empower people to address risk factors associated with ill health, particularly being over-weight. We also support those facing social isolation and mental health challenges, both of which have become increasingly prevalent since the Covid-19 pandemic.

Our activities, which include walking, exercise, well-being activity groups, a toenail cutting service, self-management support groups and a weight management service, are delivered by our dedicated staff and volunteer teams.

Together, we listen to those we work with, supporting them to develop their own solutions at their own pace.

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

"My own mental health has improved so much since becoming a Walk Leader. I can't thank Braveheart enough."

Braveheart Walk Leader Denny

Chair's Report

This was a year of tremendous growth and consolidation.

Braveheart grew more than at any other time in its history. We almost doubled the number of staff we employ, we more than trebled the funding that we received and we are now operating across more sites in Forth Valley than ever before.

In part, this was due to the increased opportunities created by the Covid pandemic, helping people to live healthy lives after the most remarkable period of restrictions.

The fact that we have been able to take advantage of those opportunities is testament to the creativity and hard work of our staff.

It is clear that the Covid pandemic has had an impact on peoples' fitness, both physical and mental. Braveheart has a well tried and tested model of delivering

support and this was recognised in our success in securing new and significant funding to support people with diabetes, mental ill-health and dementia. We also secured significant funding to work with refugees, a particularly vulnerable group within our society.

We continue to grow the walking programme across Forth Valley and are now leading more people than ever on health walks. The walking programme is well recognised in supporting physical and mental health, providing essential opportunities for chatting, socialisation and drinking coffee.

Top Toes continues to provide a toenail clipping service and has expanded from the four sites in Falkirk which we worked in last year to ten sites across the whole of Forth Valley. The number of people who regularly take advantage of this service has grown to around 1,000.



Photo left to right: Gordon Thomson, Nina Saunders and Charlie Colliar

"Braveheart grew more than at any other time in its history.... We are now operating across more sites in Forth Valley and leading more people than ever on health walks."

As well as supporting people with diabetes, mental ill-health and dementia, we secured significant funding to work with refugees, a particularly vulnerable group within our society.

Without Top Toes, many would struggle to get any footcare at all, which would have a much wider impact on health and mobility. It is great to see that some people who have used Top Toes are now taking advantage of our walking programme too.

As an organisation, we cannot expand without having to make some fundamental changes to how we do things. We need to ensure that the policies and procedures we have in place are fit for purpose within the larger organisation. There are also changing demands on how we report our finances to our governing body OSCR.

In order to tackle these issues, we got funding for, and recruited, a new member of staff. As a result of this, there have been many changes made to how we do things over the last 12 months.

Change is always a difficult thing for individuals and organisations and I am eternally grateful for the positive way in which staff and volunteers have embraced those changes. We are building a fitter organisation for the future.

Let us not forget that within the period of this review, a member of staff went on maternity leave and produced a magnificent baby boy.

What about the next 12 months?

Hopefully we can have a period of calm and consolidation. Every member of staff has had to work over and above normal capacity and my hope is that the workload returns to more normal levels.

We will achieve this by recruiting one or two more staff and by introducing policies that make this more likely. For example, we need to ensure that the growing number of volunteers across the many different programmes that we offer, have the same enjoyable experience and are provided with the same support. The funding is already in place to recruit a Volunteer Coordinator. It is hoped that this will take some pressure off existing members of staff.

Whilst staff members have grown, the number of Board members has fallen; from five to three. It is a priority to increase this number back to at least five.

The most important priority is to keep on doing what we are doing. This will take continued hard work from staff, volunteers and Board members. Everyone plays an important role in providing support for people across Forth Valley.

Gordon Thomson

Chairman

The Braveheart Association

Key Achievements 2021/2022

It was another successful year filled with growth and new initiatives.

Our walking groups in Falkirk and Clackmannanshire grew again over the year and we introduced some lovely undiscovered paths into our monthly outings.

We also continued to deliver our one-to-one walks in Falkirk and Alloa to support those who remain cautious about walking in groups.

Walk with Braveheart



643 regular Walkers joined our weekly and monthly walks



Our Clackmannanshire group was awarded the **Active Travel Group of the Year** by Paths for All



Through our new **partnership with Sauchie Active8**, we delivered a range of health and well-being events including Easter egg hunts, nature walks, litterpicks with picnics and a visit to The Japanese Garden at Cowden for Mental Health Awareness Week



Healthy Way Weight Management and Lifestyle Programme

Our trained volunteer Health Mentors continued to help improve community health through evidence-based nutrition and physical activity education. In particular, we worked with hard-to-reach groups including those with limited means to access support, those from ethnic minority groups and refugees.

Over **490** people engaged with the Braveheart Healthy Living service with a total of **5,392** attendances

156 group sessions were held including:

- Supervised physical activity classes (35) from fitness and strength and balance to Zumba and Yoga
- Self-Management Support sessions (26 from April to September)
- Weight Management sessions (46) delivered at the Braveheart Connections Health Hub
- Art and Craft, Healthy Cooking and Mindfulness sessions (17 in total)
- Online Strength & Balance sessions

414 one-to-one healthy living support sessions delivered

Beneficiaries included:

160 refugee and migrant adults and their children

58 people from ethnic minority backgrounds with long-term health conditions

23 young mums



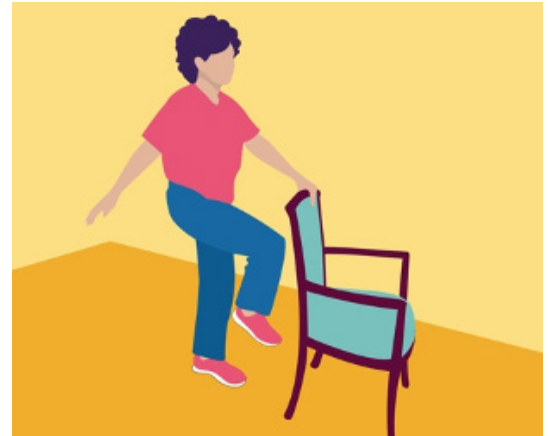
"The programme taught me that 'one step at a time' is the best approach for long lasting results. Thank you."

Healthy Living Participant Nick

Key Achievements 2021/2022

Key Health Outcomes

- **93%** of participants reported being better able to manage symptoms of their long-term health condition
- **85.5%** of participants reported improvement in their social relationships and a decreased sense of isolation as a result of participating
- **73%** of participants increased their physical activity level
- **61%** of weight management programme participants achieved a minimum of 5% weight loss



"My Health for Life group showed me how to carry on managing my condition and improve my health."
Healthy Living Participant Saminah

Key Initiatives:

- **Top Toes** - Around **1,000** people now regularly take advantage of this important footcare service across Forth Valley
- **My Health For Life Self-Management Initiative** - Helping those from an ethnic minority background take control of their long-term health conditions
- **Resilient Communities, New Scots Integration Project** - Helping refugees integrate into the community
- **Health Plus Project** - Supporting positive mental health and well-being
- **Living Well: Emotional Support Matters** - A new initiative supporting the mental health and emotional well-being of people living with long term health conditions
- **Connecting Scotland** - Supporting this Scottish Government initiative to ensure digital access for all

"The feeling that I am making a difference and helping others in my community overcome their barriers and challenges, fills me with satisfaction and happiness."
Braveheart Health Mentor

The Braveheart Connections Health Hub

Services at our Braveheart Connections Health Hub in the Howgate Centre, Falkirk, continued to grow over the year. Highlights included:

Weight Management – The number of participants has steadily increased

New Taster Sessions - Introduced to help people on their weight loss journey, including Chair Yoga, the slow flowing movement of Qui Gong, Laughter Yoga and Line Dancing

'Wee Blethers' group - Encouraging people to pop in for a 'cuppa and chat' helped identify new activities for the Hub including a Bee Keeping class which now meets weekly

International Women's Day celebrations in partnership with Forth Environment Link and Central Scotland Regional Equality Council including:

A foraging walk to Callendar Estate followed by a wild garlic pesto demonstration and lunch

A Qui Gong session for adults and children

"My mental health has improved greatly since joining the walks."
Walk with Braveheart Participant

Developing Volunteering

Over last year, our band of wonderful and dedicated Volunteers grew by a staggering **46%** and we continued to support them and develop their skills.

- **23** New Walk Leaders trained
- **18** Walk Leaders attended Outdoors First Aid Training
- **8** Health Mentor Volunteers received further training and support

Today, over 1,000 people regularly take advantage of Top Toes. Without this service, many would struggle to get footcare which would have much wider impact on health and mobility.

Key Achievements 2021/2022

Organisational Improvements

This year, to ensure our internal practices are fit for our continuing growth and the challenges and opportunities arising during the pandemic, we employed an Organisational Development Manager.

We then began to roll out a range of robust new and improved operational systems, procedures and policies including:

- New financial systems including:
 - Online banking
 - Purchase Orders
 - An Asset Register
 - An Expenses procedure
 - An Imprest cash accounting system for Top Toes
- New and refreshed policies covering areas such as:
 - Finance
 - Health & Safety
 - Safeguarding
 - Lone Working
 - Maternity
 - Home Working
 - Flexible Working
 - Privacy
- A new Employee Handbook
- A Microsoft SharePoint strategy with training delivered

"I have got my self-confidence back and feel healthier."

Healthy Living Participant Jenny

"I have lost 2.5 stones in six months and my Diabetes has got much better. That and May gave me the confidence to become a Walk Leader."

Walk with Braveheart Participant

"Braveheart has been a major part of my life since my husband died. The Walk Leaders are lovely."

Walk with Braveheart Participant

Strategic and Service Priorities 2022/2023

This year our Strategic Priorities are to:

Increase Braveheart services by:

- Expanding our walking programme in Clackmannanshire for people with dementia
- Developing well-being activities in the Braveheart Connections Health Hub including health testing, exercise options, healthy lifestyle sessions and conversation cafes
- Expanding Braveheart's Top Toes footcare service into Clackmannanshire and Stirlingshire
- Expanding Braveheart's well-being work with refugees, organising events across Forth Valley
- Providing self-management support for people living with long-term health conditions
- Promoting Active Travel through our walking programme and Braveheart Connections Health Hub

Continue to develop and maintain strong partnership working by:

- Conducting a stakeholder analysis to identify current and desired stakeholders
- Producing a partnership development action plan to focus our resources appropriately
- Building Braveheart's brand identity to ensure the right message and image is communicated to all stakeholders and partners

Further develop our capacity to deliver our services by:

- Building organisational capacity to support people with mental health and well-being by providing training for staff, Board and volunteers
- Recruiting, training and supporting volunteer teams including delivering Walk Leader training, Footcare and Health Mentor volunteer training
- Building the Braveheart Board of Trustees to better support and develop the organisation
- Changing our accounting system to one that is fit for purpose for our new more complex organisation
- Updating organisational policies and procedures in line with the changing needs of Braveheart



**"I feel good about myself
and I am a lot better than I
used to be."**

*Healthy Living Participant
Carol*

Jack's Story

"I can't thank Braveheart enough, especially the Walk Leaders May and Charlie for their patience and time – It has made a massive difference to my father." *Nina Saunders*



Nina Saunders recounts her father Jack Saunders' journey building confidence and stamina, and making friends along the way, with Braveheart.

In September 2021, my father moved to Scotland from the South of England where he had lived for most of his adult life.

He moved in with me whilst waiting for his new house to be completed and, although due to underlying health conditions he had lost a lot of fitness and confidence, we started going out for short, ten minute walks together.

I soon suggested he join Braveheart and go on group walks and make new friends.

He thought that the walks might be too much for him but, nevertheless, we contacted Braveheart and Walk Leader Charlie soon began weekly one to one walks around Bonnybridge with Dad building up his fitness and confidence.

Although these initial short walks made my father tired and his legs ached, he came home with lots of local news and history from Charlie and I learned lots as well!

Today, one year on, Dad attends both the Bonnybridge and Denny walking groups each week often tackling the long walks having built up his fitness and confidence.

Walking everywhere, he's made friends, learned a lot about the local area and the local Scottish lingo! He also joins me for longer local dog walks and we go further afield too. I've even had to buy him some new walking boots!

I can't thank Braveheart enough, especially the Walk Leaders May and Charlie for their patience and time – It has made a massive difference to my father.

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.

Today, we have 72 Volunteers working across three core teams.

Our Walk with Braveheart team of Walk Leaders is led by Eva Finlayson (Falkirk) and May Richmond (Clackmannanshire). Together, they encourage and support people across Forth Valley to get active, enjoy fresh air and a connection with others.

Our Health and Living Well Volunteer Mentors are led by Munira Farara. Together they support the delivery of our

lifestyle programmes including weight management, peer support for health conditions and work with ethnic minority communities.

Our Braveheart Connections Health Hub and Top Toes footcare service Volunteers are led by Maureen Hill.

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.

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
or telephone: 01324 673706 or email: maureen.forbes@nhs.scot**

"Volunteering with Braveheart gives me a sense of purpose and helps me improve my own health and well-being."
Braveheart Health Mentor

Thank You

We are immensely grateful to all our staff and volunteers.

We are also grateful to all our partners and funders including NHS Forth Valley.

NHS Forth Valley provides the vital annual funding needed to employ our experienced Manager and access funds from other sources where match funding is required.

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

- **Braveheart Staff Team**

Anne Black, Maureen Forbes, Eva Finlayson, Munira Farara, May Richmond, Maureen Hill, Lee Stevenson, Doreen Fullerton and Louise Bleazard

- **Braveheart Board of Trustees**

Gordon Thomson, Charlie Colliar and Nina Saunders

- **Braveheart Funders & Partners**

Adapt and Thrive; Clackmannanshire Council; Clackmannanshire and Stirling Health and Social Care Partnership; Clackmannanshire Third Sector Interface; CVS Falkirk; Dementia Friendly Walking; European Union European Social Fund; Falkirk Council; Falkirk Health and Social Care Partnership; Life Changes Trust; Living Well; NHS Forth Valley; Paths for All; Scottish Government; Scottish Refugee Council; Smarter Choices, Smarter Places; Stirlingshire Voluntary Enterprise; The Health and Social Care Alliance (Scotland); and The National Lottery Community Fund

- **Braveheart Volunteers**

All our Walk Leaders, Health Mentors, Braveheart Connections Health Hub and Top Toes Volunteers

- **Braveheart Supporters**

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

"We have discovered lots of new local attractions since walking with Braveheart. We now go out walking as a family at weekends."

Walk with Braveheart Participant



"I am thrilled at how much fitter I feel since I ditched my car and started walking more."

Walk with Braveheart Participant

"The programme taught me that 'one step at a time' is the best approach for long lasting results. Thank you."

Healthy Living Participant Nick



"My dad is new to the area and he is making so many friends through joining the Braveheart walks. I know he won't feel lonely."

Walk with Braveheart Participant's family member.

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

Telephone: 01324 673706

Mobile: 07979 700112

Email: maureen.forbes@nhs.scot

Donate to Braveheart

To support Braveheart, please visit

www.justgiving.com/braveheartassn

**THANK
YOU!**



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