



Annual Review

April 2022 – March 2023



The Braveheart Association

**"I will be dancing down
the street going home!"**

Top Toes Client



Mute Swans photographed during a Braveheart led walk – Image courtesy of Charles Colliar, Braveheart Trustee

Contents

Supporting The Wellbeing of People Across Forth Valley	3
Chair's Report	4 - 5
Key Achievements 2022/2023	6 - 10
Strategic Priorities 2023/2024	11
Volunteering	12 - 13
Thank You	14 - 15

**"I feel blessed for being part of this group. Not only did we cover
every single aspect of health and wellbeing, but it was all linked
together in a simple and easy way."**

Ambreen, Living Well Service User

Supporting The Wellbeing of People Across Forth Valley



Over the past 20 years, the Braveheart Association has delivered an increasing number of innovative health and wellbeing 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.

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

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 pandemic.

Our activities, which include walking, exercise, wellbeing 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.

Bullfinch and Roe Deer photographed during a Braveheart led walk – Images courtesy of Charles Colliar, Braveheart Trustee



Chair's Report

This is a very significant year for Braveheart. It is 20 years since we first registered as a charity and ten years since we became a Scottish Charity Incorporated Organisation (SCIO).

Back in the early 2000s we only offered mentor support groups for people after a cardiac event. Since then, we have developed into a much larger organisation and, today, we employ more people, work with more volunteers and deliver our services to more people than ever before. We spend more time trying to prevent cardiac events and our focus is to try keep people well by promoting a more healthy lifestyle.

We operate across a number of locations and have also incorporated a social enterprise that supports the community by offering a toenail clipping service into our organisation.

We should take time to reflect and be very proud of just how much we have evolved and developed our services to meet the changing needs of people today.

The growth of Braveheart brings a greater level of complexity and our organisation needed to evolve as a consequence.

During the year our organisational development had a particular focus on recruiting and looking after our volunteers.

Two staff members retired during the year and another moved on to new challenges. One staff member returned from maternity leave (another first), we took on an additional three new staff members and created two new positions.

Many changes were made to how we do things to help create a fitter organisation for the future. This had an impact on all members of staff and I'm grateful to everyone for embracing these changes.



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

"Today, we employ more people, work with more volunteers and deliver our services to more people than ever before."

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"We should be very proud of just how much we have evolved and developed our services to meet the changing needs of people today."

We also recruited the services of outside consultants to help us with the more complex HR and IT issues that come with a larger organisation. They are available to us when we require their expertise and have already been very helpful in steering us through a number of challenging situations.

Another highlight of the year, for me at least, was the chance for staff and board to spend a day together to work on key issues. This year we met in August and focused on agreeing the best way we should communicate the purpose of Braveheart.

We work with more organisations and funders than ever before and it is important that we communicate a consistent message about what we do and how we do it.

We worked with an expert in branding and communication, who has focused on working with charities. We had several sessions on this throughout the year and have appointed a member of staff who leads on our communication and marketing.

This was our first year post lockdown. We know that we still have to live with COVID and there is no doubt people are still feeling the impact of lockdown.

Social isolation is still being felt by a wider section of our population than ever before and there are more people feeling the physical and mental health consequences of this. Braveheart offers a structured and safe way for people to take gentle exercise and start to mix with others.

We started doing more work to support people with dementia and started walks in Alloa specifically to cater for this group of people.

An increasing number of refugees came to Forth Valley during this period and, through the New Scots Refugee integration programme, we held a number of events where people from across the world got the chance to meet and to learn about Scotland with the key aim of making them more confident both physically and mentally.

We were very proud that we were one of eight organisations chosen to work on the Living Well programme with the Scottish Mental Health Foundation and the Health and Social Care Alliance helping protect the mental health of people living with long term conditions. We have learnt a lot during this project which continues into 2024.

Our plan to is to make sure that over the next year, Braveheart staff can benefit from the work we have been doing with others.

These last 12 months have been very busy and very challenging. We have taken on new staff, new projects, implemented new policies and procedures and we are well placed to continue the great work we do to help the people of Forth Valley live healthy lives. Who knows what we will look like in another ten years?

Gordon Thomson

Chair

The Braveheart Association

Key Achievements 2022/2023

It was another successful year filled with growth and new initiatives across our key programmes.

Walk with Braveheart



13 Weekly Walks delivered
including **6** one to one walks
and new walks in Alloa



10 Monthly Walks delivered



188 Walkers recorded
walking or using public
transport to reach the start of
our walks



£588 raised at our
sponsored walk around Dollar
Park and surroundings

Active Travel to Walks

- Active Travel was a key focus once again as we worked to empower our Leaders and Walkers to take short, local journeys by foot, cycle or local bus or to car share and reduce single use car journeys
- Walk Cards and travel plans were produced for all walks and promoted through our links and partners
- We also delivered an active travel themed litterpick and picnic in Clackmannanshire. Children designed a poster to encourage others to walk, cycle or wheel more

Strength & Balance whilst Walking

- Thank you to our NHS Health Promotion partners who gave our staff, volunteers and walkers the opportunity to try out some of the simple strength and balance exercises on the LochPower boards around Larbert Woods
- We hope everyone can now try these at home, on the move, or even on a Braveheart walk



Living Well - Healthy Way Weight Management and Lifestyle Programme

Our Braveheart Living Well volunteer Health Mentors continued to help and inspire our community members to live a healthier life by encouraging them to eat well, move well and feel well.

Over the year, we delivered a diverse range of evidence-based nutrition and physical activity education services at our **Braveheart Connections Health Hub** in the Howgate Centre, Falkirk, and at various community locations.

In particular, we worked hard to reach and include those with limited means to access support, particularly refugees and those from ethnic minority groups.

We also saw an increasing demand for holistic health and mental health support and our programmes continued to adapt to meet these changes.

Altogether, it was a successful year during which we were able to advance a number of our innovative projects and capitalise on new opportunities and partner initiatives.

"Top Toes is a good, affordable service that I wouldn't be able to access otherwise. I also get to socialise at my appointment and would not see people otherwise."

Top Toes Client

Key Achievements

As many as **617** people engaged with Braveheart Living Well services and activities – an increase of **25%** on last year

205 various Living Well sessions delivered including **38** supervised physical activity sessions such as fitness, strength and balance, Zumba and Yoga

3 weeks of healthy summer holiday clubs offered to families in Falkirk, Stirling and Clackmannanshire



Key Achievements 2022/2023

"The group provides me with motivation and support when I have a setback."

Necolla, Living Well Service User

Over **350** people from across the Forth Valley area attended our major **'Know Your Numbers Day'** held at the Braveheart Connections Health Hub and benefitted from free blood pressure measurement and health and wellbeing information

168 adult refugees and more than **70** refugee families benefitted from a range of health-related, culturally sensitive interventions helping them integrate into the community through our **Resilient Communities, New Scots Integration** project

57 young women from an ethnic minority background or facing multiple socioeconomic, health and other disadvantages, helped to take control of their long-term health condition or develop improved health and wellbeing for them and their families through our **Health Plus Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Project**

51 people helped to achieve and maintain a healthy weight through our Healthy Way with Braveheart programme

1,450 people from across Forth Valley regularly took advantage of Top Toes, Braveheart's nail cutting service

With **488** new users, Top Toes clients were up nearly **50%** on last year

3,996 volunteer hours dedicated by Top Toes volunteers

A week of activity around **Mental Health Awareness Week**





"I love coming to this group! Excellent information and great interaction. I always look forward to the next meeting."

Anne, Living Well Service User

Key Health Outcomes

Living Well Participants:

87% reported being better able to manage their long-term health condition

86% felt a decreased sense of isolation as a result of their participation in Braveheart activities and groups

72% said they felt good about themselves often

70% increased their physical activity level

Weight Management Participants:

84% reported eating better with more vegetable intake and a **56%** increase in home cooking

72% achieved a minimum of **5%** weight loss

"So many people need this service. It feels good to be able to serve people in this way, knowing it makes such a difference."

Top Toes Volunteer

Key Achievements 2022/2023



"Brilliant group. It has helped me to focus on my own needs and fulfil a full, happy life."

Isra, Living Well Service User

Developing our Volunteers

We continued to support our amazing and valued Volunteers and develop their skills.

Key Achievements

46 volunteers increased their skills and knowledge through one or more training sessions which included Walk Leader Training, Strength & Balance Training, Dementia Friendly Training and First Aid Training

15 new volunteers joined our Living Well, Top Toes and Walking with Braveheart services

A **Volunteer Celebration Christmas Lunch** brought our wonderful volunteers together as we thanked them for their hours of commitment

"I like the way how the group is constantly offering a new activity; I never feel bored coming to this group."

Living Well Service User

Strategic and Service Priorities 2023/2024

This year our Strategic Priorities are to:

- **Grow the Network of Resources to Support More People in Forth Valley to Live Well** by providing opportunities to connect with others, take part in activities and receive encouragement and support. We will do this by continuing to:
 - **Create Communities of Walkers** throughout Forth Valley, focussing on promoting wellbeing for people who need support to become active and maintain regular walking
 - **Deliver and enhance our footcare service**, supporting the wellbeing of local people who are unable to cut their own toenails
 - **Build organisational capacity to support people with mental health issues** and offer appropriate opportunities
- **Develop Volunteering** - Building our capacity for volunteering, enabling greater inclusion and offering local people more opportunities to take advantage of the benefits of volunteering with Braveheart
- **Increase Staff and Volunteer Training** - Providing appropriate training and promoting a culture that involves and celebrates our volunteers and equips them to be effective and feel supported in their role
- **Promote Good Work Life Balance and Build New Team Working and Support Opportunities for Staff Wellbeing**
- **Encourage Feedback** - Listen to our community, volunteers and service users about what we do well and could do better and develop our resources accordingly
- **Continual Organisational Development** - Continuing to review and update policies and procedures as well as produce a new Volunteer Handbook
- **Foster More Partnerships** - Continuing to develop our partnerships with the NHS and community organisations across Forth Valley



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.

Today, we have 74 Volunteers across three core teams:

Our Walk with Braveheart Walk Leaders encourage and support people across Forth Valley to get active, enjoy fresh air and a connection with others.

Our Living Well Volunteer Mentors help deliver our lifestyle programmes including weight management, peer support for health conditions and work with ethnic minority communities.

Our Top Toes Volunteers deliver our footcare service in the Braveheart Connections Health Hub.

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**

"Volunteering can make a difference to everyone - including yourself."

Colin, Walk Leader

"I enjoy volunteering. It's a win - win situation - I've made friends, we look out for each other and I always feel good after a walk in nature."



Claire (pictured right) with Braveheart Walkers

Walk Leader Claire Daly shares her experience of becoming a walker and then Walk Leader with Braveheart.

I worked in the NHS and knew that Braveheart was initially aimed at offering health walks to people who had heart conditions. While I was still working, I attended a few walks but felt 'this is not for me, I'm not old enough!' However, I changed my perspective post pandemic lockdown and into my first year of retirement. I had more time on my hands and preferred walking with others so Braveheart was ideal!

I have always enjoyed walking to keep active. It's great for the body, spirit and mind. Fellow Braveheart walkers are friendly, enjoy a blether, breathing in the fresh air, observing nature and seeing the changing seasons. We rarely shy away from rain and there's always the Retro Cafe to enjoy a cuppa. Most of the walks have nearby cafes so it is great way to socialise.

I decided to become a Walk Leader as I wanted to become more involved. I

attended Zoom training last year. It was informative, informal and interactive. The routes have two to three Walk Leaders so walkers can choose short/long routes at a pace that suits the needs of the individual.

I have gained many new skills as a leader while meeting new people including how to be prepared and aware of health and safety. I receive regular communication from Braveheart via email, postcards and website and there are ongoing opportunities for more training. Indeed, I recently attended a 'Dementia Friendly walk leading' session which helped me understand how to support the walker and contact the coordinator if we observe changes that family or carers may need to know.

Altogether, I enjoy volunteering and it's a win - win situation. The Braveheart Association is open to anyone who wants to exercise at their pace following recuperation from illness so I feel I and others are supporting them. For myself, I've also made friends and always feel good after a walk in nature, chat and a tea or latte and cake afterwards!

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**

There were a lot of changes to the staff team during the period.

In 2022, we said goodbye and thank you to Maureen Hill and Doreen Fullerton who retired. Louise Bleazard and May Richmond moved on to pastures new and Lindsay Staveley and Joyce Kent worked with us for a short time.

This January, Eva Finlayson returned from maternity leave and Lee Stevenson, who was working part time with us, returned to full-time work with Stirling Voluntary Enterprise. We also welcomed new members to the team - Eleanor Paterson and Rumbie Muza in February and Iain Currie in June.

Anne Black, Maureen Forbes and Munira Farara continued to deliver for Braveheart and provide stability throughout what was an extremely busy and productive year.

We would like to thank every member of the staff team who made the year so successful for Braveheart.

"Doing the Braveheart walks with the interaction with other people has enriched my life. It is amazing what you learn and can pass on to others."

Ruth, Walk Leader

- **Braveheart Board of Trustees**

Gordon Thomson, Charlie Colliar and Nina Saunders.

Sincere thanks to our Braveheart Funders & Partners 2022-2023

Adapt and Thrive; Central Scotland Regional Equality Council; Clackmannanshire and Stirlingshire Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund; Clackmannanshire Third Sector Interface; CVS Falkirk; European Social Fund; Falkirk Health & Social Care Partnership; Life Changes Trust; Mental Health Foundation and the Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland; New Scots Refugee Integration Delivery Project; NHS Forth Valley; Paths for All Walking for Health 'Moving On'; Scottish Government; Smarter Choices Smarter Places 'Connecting Communities'; Stirling Voluntary Enterprise; Volunteering Support Fund

"Walk leading lets me socialise and exercise and, at the same time, supports those who attend reap the same benefits."

Jacqueline, Walk Leader

"It is such a rewarding job. Seeing someone leave the room uplifted after having their feet done gives me a great buzz. I feel like I've really helped them and made a difference to their quality of life."

Top Toes Volunteer

Braveheart Volunteers

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

Braveheart Supporters

All who contributed and donated individually in person or through Just Giving

"I have learnt so much from the service users and staff too. Every day is different and getting to know everyone has been an absolute joy."

Rasha, Living Well Leader

Get Involved

There are lots of ways to get involved with Braveheart whether that's joining one of our free walks or healthy living sessions or volunteering.

Walk with Braveheart

Take part in one of our Braveheart walks. Walks of different distance and pace are available across Forth Valley.

Healthy Way Weight Management and Lifestyle Sessions

Pop along to our informal group activities to discover how you can make small changes to eat well, move well and feel well. Sessions are held at our Braveheart Connections Health Hub in the Howgate Centre, Falkirk, and across the community.

Top Toes Footcare Services

Take advantage of our popular, free nail cutting service delivered at our Braveheart Connections Health Hub in the Howgate Centre, Falkirk.

Volunteer with Braveheart

Become a Walk Leader or Health Mentor or join our Top Toes team. Full training and support given.

Donate to Braveheart

To support Braveheart, please visit
www.justgiving.com/braveheartassn

Thank you

Find Out More

www.braveheart.uk.net

Get in Touch

Top Toes

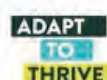
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THANK
YOU!



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