



Community Leisure UK is a members' association that specialises in charitable trusts delivering public leisure and culture services across the UK. Charitable trusts work closely with their Local Authority and community partners to provide inclusive and accessible leisure, culture and health opportunities. The trust model supports this work through the cross-subsidy of surpluses where trusts:

- cross-subsidise services i.e. more profitable leisure activities e.g. fitness memberships, will subsidise some health, community, library activities, swimming activities etc
- cross-subsidise individuals i.e. where those that can afford to pay support those who cannot

Here are some examples of how our members have been using sport and physical activity to support the mental health and wellbeing of their communities throughout the Covid-19 pandemic:

Burnley Leisure keeps children active in class or at home with school fitness videos and resources

A recent programme of videos has been aimed at getting school children active through the winter lockdown period, when bad weather and short daylight hours added to the restrictions in keeping active.

Neil Hutchinson, Head of Group Operations at Burnley Leisure, said: *"The many weeks of lockdown have been especially difficult for children. Many have missed hours of PE lessons, physical play, sports clubs and other activities they would normally take part in, along with normal daily activity such as walking and cycling to school.*

"We recognised this problem and wanted to offer more help to children at school or home. We were also approached by one local school for help. Our fitness instructors' team, led by Rebecca McDevitt, quickly responded with new workout videos along with hosting three live family workouts on Facebook. These were really popular.

"We then had requests from other schools so we made the videos and streamed sessions available for all local schools through Burnley Schools Sports Partnership.

This is another example of us working together to support the community through difficult times."

The family fitness routines included skipping, dancing, jumping, boxing, stretching, balancing, body weight exercises and basic cardio routines – all at moderate intensity. These help to improve mobility, balance, coordination and body awareness.

They also educate children about healthy living and the physical and mental benefits from getting that all-important 'feel-good' factor through activity. The routines, experiences and knowledge will also benefit the children into the future as adults.

Helen Tyson, from Burnley Schools Sports Partnership, said: *"The UK Chief Medical Officers recommended children should have 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity every day. This includes all forms of activity such as informal play, sports, walking, cycling and after-school activities. But during the first national covid lockdown last year, less than 50 per cent of children met the recommended 60 minutes. With short days and poor weather during the latest winter lockdown, these rates are likely to have been less."*

Adam Booth, a teacher and PE coordinator at Whittlefield Junior School, said: *"Burnley Leisure have provided fun 'wake-and-shake' exercise videos to help encourage pupils and families to do physical activity at home and school. Children and adults found the videos to be fun, achievable and entertaining. The instructors tailored the videos for abilities and the resources are very accessible. We really appreciate the effort that Burnley Leisure have put into creating the videos – not only for our school but for the whole community."*

Angela Clough from St John the Baptist School in Padiham said: *"We've recently added a mental health page to our school website and know that keeping on top of physical health helps our mental health tremendously. We are trying to support everyone's health, especially during school closures. With the Burnley Leisure resources, we love being able to link-up with something so local and hope this will encourage children to stay active after the pandemic is over too."*

Richard Steele, the school's PE Coordinator, added: *"These fitness resources really help keep the children engaged, happy and healthy, especially through this pandemic. I've loved doing the activities with the kids. It's helped us cope with what's happening around us."*

Abbeycroft Leisure online sessions designed to support loneliness, isolation and dementia awareness

Abbeycroft Leisure's 'Together During Lockdown' programme includes a mix of gentle, physical activity sessions such as chair based exercise and strength and balance, as well as virtual friendship groups aimed at those living with dementia, their friends, families and carers. These friendship group sessions start with a chat and a cup of tea, maybe a quiz and for those who want to try it, they can remain to do the gentle physical activity as well.

The extended programme, funded by Hadleigh Dementia Action Alliance and Active Suffolk, has evolved from their original 'Together Tuesday' sessions, which were based at Hadleigh Pool and Leisure Centre, and awarded the prestigious 'Healthy Communities Award' at the 2019 UK Active Sports Awards.

Warren Smyth, chief executive at Abbeycroft Leisure said:

As a not-for-profit social enterprise, we're extremely proud to be offering these sessions whilst our centres remain closed due to lockdown restrictions."

"Movement and exercise will continue to be key in the nation's recovery from this pandemic, however, we should never underestimate the social benefits that it so often brings to people's lives."

"These sessions create much needed connection, conversation and belonging to many people living alone or isolated for whatever reason, and it's those conversations which are so vitally important."

Jill Mason, Together During Lockdown coordinator said:

"The sessions were always so popular in Hadleigh, so it made perfect sense to continue with an online programme, which has already been well received by customers old and new. The sessions are very easy to access and completely free of charge, so we hope more people will benefit from them."

"As soon as it's safe to do so, we'll be reintroducing the sessions in Hadleigh and starting in Haverhill and we'll also keep some sessions virtual, for those people who would rather stay at home."

Mary Mugford from Sudbury has been attending the online sessions and said:

"These sessions have been a life saver. They not only give my rusty joints an oiling but also make me feel part of a group. Seeing other people online is quite something when isolated at home. I live with my husband who has vascular dementia and the friendship group which Jill also runs keeps me in touch with others."

Your Leisure Kent supporting women and people with long-term health conditions to get active

Through a successful application for Sport England's "Tackling Inequalities" fund, and through their county sports partner, Kent Sport, Your Leisure have been delivering boot camps for women, yoga for people with hearing impairments and online low impact exercise for people with disabilities and/or long term health conditions.

The women's bootcamp session has been adapted to enable mums to bring their children with them, and it was great to see 3 generations coming together to enjoy their wellbeing together.

Here are a couple (of many) quotes from the grateful participants, describing the difference the sessions are making.

"Having a place on the bootcamp has meant a lot to me in different ways. I broke my ankle and part of my shin in February and I couldn't move, and I got heavier and heavier and more and more sad. Coupling that with lockdown I was very lonely. When I found out I could have a place on the bootcamp I already started to see signs of my old self coming back. I have met some incredible ladies on the journey. The ones that run at the front that look like a goal to me. The ones who have run further each week or done more push ups who are super motivating. And of course, Natasha who has been a rock and a great teacher. I don't ever want to be back at the place where I don't have enough energy to get up the stairs or run with my daughter and thanks to bootcamp I don't feel I'll ever be at that place again"

"I was a bit low with lockdown and shielding. Natasha and the support from the others attending has been very important for my mental wellbeing. Boot camp has been a very safe environment to exercise again in. More positive now and even enjoy the outdoors and running around the football pitch."

Active Tameside Community Fuel4Fun

Fuel 4 Fun launched in the Easter break, providing free school holiday activities, healthy lunches, sports activity bags and take-home family food boxes to over 400 children aged five to 13.

Formed through Tameside Holiday Activity and Food Funding (HAF) in partnership with Tameside Council and the Department of Education, it will target 10,000 families in the borough who are in receipt of free school meals or pupil premium.

It will run throughout the school holidays until March 2022, delivering interventions for a large number of young people aged five to 13 and the under 18 SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) population.

Throughout the Easter break Fuel 4 Fun was safely delivered in line with government social contact restrictions and safety measures across three Active Tameside Centres and within 10 schools.

Young people enjoyed a range of activities including sport, dance, gardening on the trust's allotments, nature trails, cooking, arts and crafts and swimming.

Each day they took home a box of ingredients – including donations from FareShare, local supermarkets and food grown on the Community Allotments – all ready to be prepared into a healthy family meal.

As a family they were invited to tune in to daily video tutorials via Active Tameside's social media channels which featured staff from the trust's Community Cafes showing them how to prepare the meal.

Alongside the huge social impact this initiative is set to have on young people and their families, over 20 16-18 years old are being recruited as casual sports coaches from colleges across Tameside as well as those identified as not in education, employment or training (NEET).

Dan Higgins, manager of the trust's Everybody Can programme which provides services and provision for children and adults with additional needs and disabilities who is helping to oversee the Fuel 4 Fun programme, said: *"Fuel 4 Fun is a fantastic initiative that allows us, along with our key stakeholders within the local authority to support young people using sport and physical activity as an engagement tool whilst educating them around healthy eating.*

"Great emphasis is placed on the holistic development of all, improving both their physical and mental wellbeing."

Link4Life Love Exploring App

An interactive mobile app has helped Rochdale residents discover the great outdoors as part of a new trail on the Love Exploring app at Hollingworth Lake and Country Park.

Link4Life, the Rochdale-based culture and leisure charity, has launched new walking routes on the free Love Exploring app to support members of the local community to stay active and healthy. During the current Covid-19 pandemic, spending time outdoors and being active has never been more important.

The route is based around Hollingworth Lake and Country Park in Littleborough and visitors of all ages can download the free app to discover self-guided walks, learn more about the places they're visiting, enjoy digital treasure hunts and even use augmented reality to bring some added excitement to the route.

Families could enjoy a dinosaur trail using augmented reality to catch dinosaurs, as well as being able to pose for photos with their newly captured prehistoric friends.

There was also a Halloween-themed trail walk which took place between 26 October and 1 November and involved augmented reality skeletons, witches, mummies and zombies. Covering 3.5 kilometres, the walking trail was an ideal distance for families and individuals. During that week, which was also the October half-term holiday in the local area, the route was downloaded more than 1,400 times. Based on two people walking the route per download (one adult and one child), that's almost 10,000 kilometres of walking.

Claire Costigan, manager of Hollingworth Lake and Country Park at Link4Life, said: *"Love Exploring is a fantastic, free way for people to learn more about their parks and open spaces and we're really pleased to see so many downloads of this wonderful walking route. Our aim was to encourage people in the local area to get outdoors and exercise, and our results show that we've achieved exactly that."*

"With covid-19 restrictions preventing people from doing many of the things they love, it's important to remain upbeat and continue connecting with loved ones wherever possible. Our trail route offers an opportunity to do this safely, with a walking route that is suitable for families and individuals of all ages."

"Outdoor exercise should be an important part of everyday routines, now more than ever, and we're hopeful that by partnering with Love Exploring, we can encourage more members of the Rochdale community to make exercise a priority."

Wellbeing Leisure, The Friday Club

Wellbeing Leisure, part of Oldham Community Leisure (OCL), has taken its weekly Friday Club online to help combat loneliness whilst its leisure centre doors remain closed due to coronavirus.

The Friday Club, which usually takes place every Friday 10am-2pm at Oldham Leisure Centre, is an inclusive community-based group for those looking to make new friends and become more active with like-minded people. It offers a variety of different activities for locals to try including indoor curling, badminton and table tennis. The group runs specialist workouts, often welcoming guest speakers and instructors, and incorporates a sociable lunch.

The community-based project, funded by Oldham Cares, aims to use physical activity to reduce levels of social isolation within the community – 10 percent of Oldham residents identify as being lonely, which has a detrimental impact on health, quality of life and life expectancy.

Mark Woodcock, Health and Wellbeing Advisor, Wellbeing Leisure, says: *"The Friday Club members are a great bunch; we welcome people from all backgrounds, abilities and ages – our youngest member is 23 and our oldest is 93!"*

"We had to find a way to continue Friday Club during lockdown so we adapted to make sessions digital, using an online platform, Zoom. Overcoming isolation and loneliness has always been our goal, and in these troubling times it's even more important to keep connected and to keep active."

"We're very fond of our Friday Club members and, when the lockdown was first announced, we took steps to phone them all to make sure everyone was okay. We've continued to keep in touch and explored whether each member has internet access and the means to meet up online."

The virtual Friday Club is continuing to 'meet' every Friday, at its usual time of 10am. The technology allows everyone to have a chat and is followed by an exercise class lead by Mark. *He concludes: "The feedback has been extremely positive and we welcome new members to join in the conversation. The Friday Club format is very relaxed, there is no pressure, and we adapt our activities depending on who is participating. We have been setting our regulars small exercise challenges and fun activities around the home."*

One Friday Club regular says: *"I look forward to meeting up with my friends online. It's great to see so many friendly faces. I'd never used Zoom before, but with the help of staff, all my fears were overcome."*

In conclusion, our case studies illustrate how well placed and key culture and leisure trusts will be in addressing the medium to long term implications of Covid 19 on mental health and wellbeing.

More case studies from our members can be found on:

<https://communityactive.org/case-studies>