



An Active Future with Dementia:

How Sport & Physical Activity Can Connect Us

Summary and Evaluation

By

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Scotland





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Summary and evaluation

On Monday 17th and Tuesday 18th May, Sporting Memories Foundation Scotland supported by Life Changes Trust hosted an online learning event exploring what sport and physical activity looks like for people living with dementia and unpaid carers post Covid. We heard from some inspiring projects who have continued to support their communities to be active throughout the pandemic and looked at what their plans are for the future.

We saw how each project has benefited people with dementia and unpaid carers and how they will continue to inspire and support communities in providing opportunities to be active in a safe, friendly, welcoming space.

This document is a brief summary of the event, which we hope will provide opportunities to share further learning on this area of work.





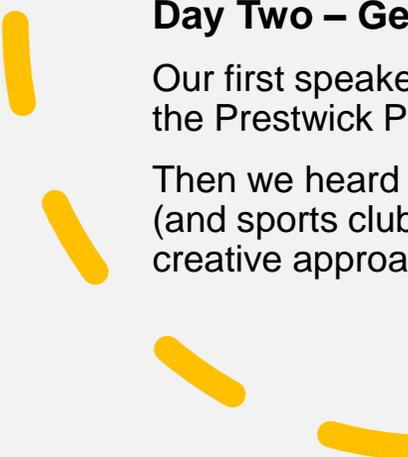
Summary of the event

Hosted by Sporting Memories Ambassador Stephen Halkett, we heard from projects who have innovated and transformed their delivery model so that they could continue to support their members to be active during the pandemic and look at what their plans are for the future.

Day One – Staying Active at Home

Our first speaker was Elaine Convery, Dance Development Officer representing Scottish Ballet's Time to Dance project. Elaine explained how they have continued to support their participants by adapting their delivery to Facebook Live sessions and weekly Zoom classes. Elaine then demonstrated a fantastic ballet themed exercise session with the group.

Next up, Sporting Memories presented the KIT bag, a new resource designed to encourage and aid activity at home. We saw how members have been using the KIT and the difference it has made to them.



Day Two – Getting Outdoors and Inclusive Sports Clubs

Our first speaker was Julie Twaddell, from Dementia Friendly Prestwick. Julie talked about the weekly dementia health walks along the Prestwick Promenade and the support received from Paths for All in making it an inclusive, safe experience for local people.

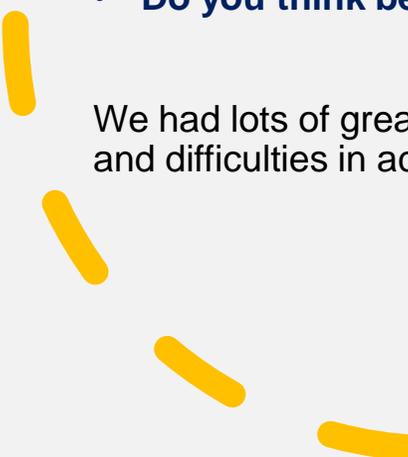
Then we heard how Bowls Scotland, Age Scotland and Sporting Memories are working together to demonstrate how bowls clubs (and sports clubs) can open themselves up and encourage participation from the wider community by adopting an inclusive and creative approach.



A wee chat

Each day we set up the breakout rooms to have a wee chat with participants about the importance of being active, both physically and socially, and any barriers they might have faced in accessing activities where they live. There were around 3-4 people in each room with a host facilitating conversation by asking the following questions:

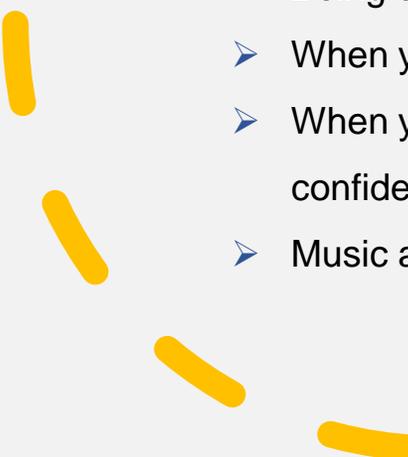
- **How important is being active/or supporting people to be active to you?**
- **Do you face any challenges where you live to keep active/support people to be active?**
- **Have you been a member of a sports club, or watched sports in the past but stopped attending?**
If so, what do you miss about it?
- **Do you think being socially active encourages you to be more physically active?**



We had lots of great feedback and examples of creative, meaningful activity as well as some recurring themes around challenges and difficulties in accessing information. We have summarised the feedback into two categories.



A. How does being active benefit people living with dementia and unpaid carers.

- Supporting people to be active gives you a sense of purpose and value. Knowing you can make a difference makes you feel so much better.
 - Being part of a group brings self-identity, validation, and even new skills. It gives that person meaning and purpose.
 - Teaching or showing a person how to do an activity for themselves can give a sense of empowerment and self-worth.
 - Even the smallest of movements every day can help someone maintain their strength, balance, and independence.
 - Meaningful activity is very important to keep people engaged and motivated, plus ensuring that there is something for everyone.
 - Being connected socially makes it less intimidating to try something new.
 - When you are part of a group you look forward to seeing the same people every week and it builds friendships.
 - When you are part of a club it creates routine and regularly seeing familiar faces encourages participation and builds confidence.
 - Music and sensory activities are effective in engaging people living with dementia.
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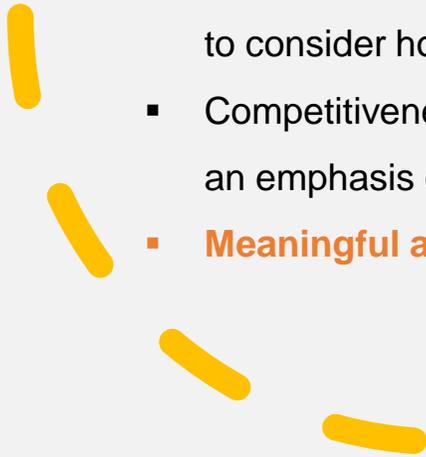
B. What are the challenges people living with dementia and unpaid carers encounter when looking at being active.

- It can be difficult to maintain motivation and interest. Trying new activities can be intimidating.
- A lack of access to toilets and benches to sit down in public parks can create barriers to people getting outdoors.
- There can be a lack of understanding in group activity settings about how dementia can affect a person's participation and contribution.
- It can be difficult for carers to access information when they don't have social media. A lot of local information tends to come via the church which is difficult if you don't/can't attend.
- Many have self-excluded from playing sport because it has become too competitive. It can be difficult to integrate older people, and people with dementia as it's too intimidating.
- Unpaid carers simply have a lack of time to look for groups and activities taking place in their area as there is no 'one stop shop' for information.
- People with dementia who once played sport miss the social networks and lack confidence as a result.
- Covid will bring continued difficulties with the loss of socialisation and interaction with others. There will be a lethargy from a lack of stimulation and routine. Group dynamics could take a long time to recover.
- Continued Covid restrictions will impact travel to groups particularly in rural areas where social distancing requirements are still in place on public transport.
- Sheltered housing complexes face difficulties as indoor group activities for residents remain restricted due to Covid rules.



We hope the feedback will help you to plan and inform future activity in your area. To help you further and make change happen from this learning we have pulled together some key points to consider when planning activities for people living with dementia and unpaid carers.

- **Facilities** are important. Ensure your venue or route has sufficient toilet access, ramps and quiet spaces. Everyone enjoys a **social cuppa** afterwards so make sure you have access to a kitchen or local café.
- **Adapt your activities** to ensure they are inclusive for all ages and abilities. Think about seated, walking, slower or shortened versions. Or what about making your activities **intergenerational** so that people from different ages can join in. Be patient!
- The message about physical activity is changing with strong links to **socially active and reducing isolation**. It's important to consider how you can bring people together in a safe, yet fun environment for conversation as well as activity.
- Competitiveness can deter people who love the activity but no longer have the same ability to participate. Ensure there is an emphasis on fun and **'giving it a go'** and that people with dementia know they can attend and take part.,
- **Meaningful activity** is key to continued engagement and participation.



Watch it back

We are delighted to be able to share the project presentations and fantastic films from our speakers. Enjoy!

[Staying Active at Home](#)

[Getting Outdoors and Inclusive Sports Clubs](#)

Getting in touch

If you have any queries or want to share your views or ideas please do get in touch with the Sporting Memories team – donna@thesmf.co.uk or join in the conversation with us on social media #TalkAboutSport



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