



## **CASE STUDY: MAKING THE CONNECTIONS - SUPPORTING INCLUSION THROUGH SPECIFIC GROUP SUPPORT**

### **BACKGROUND**

A representative from the Vale of Glamorgan Council's Healthy Living Team was involved in a funding workshop organised by the Glamorgan Voluntary Services, which was also attended by Sport Wales. The workshop was aimed at community groups who were potentially interested in developing physical activity opportunities.

During the workshop a representative from the Barry Veterans group highlighted the desire amongst their members to become more physically active. Barry Veterans are a local support and social group for residents who have served in the armed forces and their families. Many of the residents are inactive with reasons provided including a lack of knowledge surrounding local activities that were suitable for them and their disabilities, health conditions or impairments. Some also experienced anxiety around trying new activities on their own, which had been a barrier to participation. During this meeting the Healthy Living Team representative reached out to the Barry Veterans group to offer help with supporting access to physical activity opportunities.



### **AIMS OF THE PROJECT**

- Support armed forces veterans to access sport and physical activity provision in the Barry area, the majority of whom has some form of disability, health condition and impairment, and are 60+.
- Raise awareness of the activity opportunities available within the community and those that could be undertaken within the group setting.
- Introduce the group to new sport and guide inactive veterans on a journey to becoming active on their own terms.
- Transition individuals taking part in taster activities into more regular physical activity by either joining as members or engaging in existing programmes such as Golden Pass or National Exercise Referral Scheme.

## WHAT HAPPENED? THE APPROACH TAKEN

As a key factor of achieving sustained participation is involvement and engagement with the target individuals from the outset, a series of informal in person meetings and consultation was initially held with the group to gain an understanding of the groups needs and wants. This included the Healthy Living Team representative attending one of the groups social breakfast mornings to discuss in an environment where the members felt comfortable, which supported inclusion in the discussions. After establishing the demographic, the majority were 60+ with some form of impairment who were looking to try a variety of activities, it was decided that a mixed approach would be offered. The Council's Armed Forces Liaison Officer was also involved in this project.

There are a number of existing schemes within the Vale of Glamorgan that the members of the organisation can already benefit from, that they were unaware of. Therefore, one element of the approach was awareness raising and signposting regarding these. The schemes discussed included the Golden Pass (60+ Active Leisure Scheme), National Exercise Referral Scheme and the Armed Forces Free Swim Initiative which is available at the leisure centres as part of the Council's commitment to supporting the Armed Forces community through the Armed Forces Covenant. The Armed Forces Covenant is a voluntary pledge that organisations can take to demonstrate their support for the Armed Forces Community. Its principles ensures that those who serve or have served in the Armed Forces, and their families, are treated fairly and with respect.

Alongside the above, a list of existing community activity providers delivering within the local area was provided to the group. It was identified that the group members would benefit from initial support to access an activity of their choosing, and they would like to do this as a group. This would help to overcome the barrier of participating in an unfamiliar group as they could all join in together and become comfortable in a new setting. The Healthy Living Officer approached Millwood about a potential taster day which Millwood were happy to accommodate. Their bowls coach, who is also the club secretary is a veteran himself so had awareness of the varying needs and was very excited at the prospect of welcoming the veterans into the club.

**26 veterans  
attended the day,  
25 of whom were  
over 60 years old.**

***Millwood Bowls Club  
provided coaching, as  
well as tea and coffee in  
the clubhouse, which  
contributed to a social,  
chatty and high-spirited  
day.***



## HOW DID IT GO? WHAT DID WE LEARN?

Barry veterans were very happy to have had the opportunity to become physically active in a safe environment and are now aware of multiple different opportunities available to them. The group had a positive experience surrounding physical activity which enthused them to consider further activity. They expressed their thanks via a thank you letter and highlighted how the veterans had enjoyed the group experience and enjoyed participating in a new setting. Following the taster session, 5 veterans have already signed up for the Golden Pass programme, highlighting their interest in continuing to be physically active. Barry Veterans have offered an open invitation to the Healthy Living Team to attend their breakfast mornings which will enable continued engagement with the members of the group and facilitate provision of further support where requested.

Millwood bowls also provided positive feedback 'It was a brilliant day for all who were involved and the guys and gals from the Barry Veterans were awesome'. The club are hopeful the session has enthused the veterans to continue with participation.

### Learning

- It is essential to choose the right setting, the right club and the right club personnel for the first introduction to activity for those either new or re-engaging with activity after a long period of not being involved – take the time to consult, discuss needs and plan with both the prospective participants and the club personnel to ensure the environment and ethos is right.
- With groups such as Barry Veterans and others who have been typically less engaged in physical activity, it is essential to provide them with options and allow them to make key decisions regarding the types of activities they want to engage with and the format in which they feel comfortable to engage. This empowers the individuals to participate on their own terms and will lead to more engagement as demonstrated with the high participation numbers.
- As the veterans were already part of a social group, the individuals felt more comfortable trying out the new activity within a group environment, having a shared experience. This supports the current way of working in the Vale which includes trying to introduce physical activity into existing non-physical activity, more social based groups such as the veterans. Highlights how peer support and developing opportunities within a group environment can support confidence and motivation to access provision.

- Projects such as this, undertaken in a group format may take a little longer than initially anticipated due to the collective decision making that the group takes - all members of the group would be consulted which may be a longer process than foreseen.
- Whilst the taster session was in one specific activity, due to the positive experience the veterans had within that environment, it provided the opportunity for the Healthy Living Officer to discuss the wider network of activity providers available within the Vale who can offer variety to groups and individuals with different needs.
- It is vital to seize the opportunity to form new connections and take the chance to network at different meetings/settings when a potential opportunity to engage more people arises. By taking on board what other people were saying within the workshop, this led to the development of a new partnership and the identification of a new unplanned project to support inclusion.
- Through engagement and consultation with the prospective participants from the outset, it enabled a relationship to develop and a trust formed which has led to the Barry Veterans group offering an open invitation to the Healthy Living Team to attend their breakfast mornings. This will enable continued engagement with the members of the group and an avenue to provide further support where requested.
- With hindsight, it would have been beneficial to involve the Council's Communications Team in pre-activity promotion to potentially engage other veterans who are not part of the specific Barry Veterans group. This would have had the added benefit of potentially linking more veterans to the support network available and highlight other opportunities such as linking to the Armed Forces Liaison Officer.
- One of the key considerations when choosing Millwood Bowling Club to be involved in the project was due to its accessibility including ramps, flat surfaces and ample car parking. This was important for the group due to mobility concerns.



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