

VANGUARD: Better Care Together

Case study:

Furness Wellness Days



Purpose:

What is the purpose of the initiative?

The purpose of Furness Wellness Days is to give the people of Barrow in Furness the opportunity to identify, participate, and lead, in various activities which promote their health and wellbeing.

The project aims to:

- Bring people together in a bid to reduce social isolation in Barrow in Furness
- Improve residents' general health and fitness
- Ensure people stay healthy and independent for as long as possible
- Support people living with illnesses to achieve happiness and independence
- Teach people across the town about the importance of staying well and looking after their own health
- Enable local people to be empowered to deliver, if they choose to, wellness sessions within their own community

**Context
(preparation, processes
and conversations)**

Barrow in Furness has a population of approximately 68,000. Life expectancy within the area is lower than the England average for both men and women. Additionally Barrow in Furness is in one of the 20% most deprived districts in England. The Department of Health has linked social inequality with social isolation and health. There are suggestions that feeling alone and vulnerable can lead to depression and a serious

decline in physical health and wellbeing.

Barrow-in-Furness has two Integrated Care Communities (ICCs); this initiative sits within Barrow Town Integrated Care Community. Key statistics include:

- **The overall population of Barrow Town ICC is 33,661.**
- **There is a higher number of emergency admissions than the England average with a higher number of emergency admissions for patients with Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease and respiratory illness**
- **The patients over 65 years identified as frail and vulnerable are 5,102 with many more experiencing signs of being frail much younger**
- **The communities are affected from hard labour and years of working in local industry causing many to live long lives with disability**
- **There is a significantly higher number of hospital stays for self-harm and alcohol related self-harm than the England**
- **In 2015/16 there were 79,004 outpatient appointments, 12,134 A & E visits, 5,743 unplanned and 5,167 planned admissions**

Local volunteer; Paula Palmer delivers care within the community as part of the Warden service across Walney Island which forms part of the town of Barrow in Furness. This role involves being called to patients homes to provide care assistance. It became clear that an increasing number of patients were accessing the Warden service due to **social isolation** rather than to obtain medical advice.

Research has found that:

- More than 2 million people in England over the age of 75 live alone, and more than a million older people say they go for over a month without speaking to a friend, neighbour or family member.
- Social isolation in older people is associated with increased risk of death from any cause in the UK
- Feeling alone and vulnerable can lead to depression and a serious decline in physical health and wellbeing.
- Lacking social connections is as damaging to our health as smoking 15 cigarettes a day
- Social networks and friendships not only have an impact on reducing the risk of mortality or developing certain diseases, but they also help individuals to recover when they do fall ill
- Efforts to reduce the social isolation of older people are likely to have positive outcomes for wellbeing

Consequently Paula approached Burnett Edgar Medical Centre on Walney Island to highlight the issue of social isolation in the area. Following this Dr

	<p>Jeelani and Dr Amin from the Medical Centre began working with Paula to look at the ways in which to tackle this increasing issue. Following a series of conversations Paula agreed that with the support of the GP Surgery, she would be happy to coordinate a wellness programme within the community.</p> <p>The unused building attached to Burnett Edgar Medical Centre known as 'Walney Cottage' was identified as an appropriate venue for the Furness Wellness Days and Dr Jeelani gave Paula permission to use the venue on the condition that it was refurbished.</p> <p>Led by Paula, local people came together to refurbish the building using donations from the Walney charitable group, the rotary club and members of the community.</p> <p>During this time, Better Care Together submitted an application for 'Health as a Social Movement' funding provided by NHS England. This grant was awarded and meant that funding could be used in the setting up, promotion of and running the initiative</p> <p>Once the extra funding was available Dr Amin contacted the 'World Health Innovation Summit' who agreed to provide trainers to initially lead activities to promote health and wellbeing, with a view to train community volunteers to deliver the sessions in future.</p> <p>Once all of these arrangements were in place planning began for the launch of the Furness Wellness Days.</p>
<p>How it works, setting out the steps:</p>	<p>Once Walney cottage had been refurbished and could be used as an appropriate venue to deliver the wellness sessions, the Furness Wellness Days could be promoted.</p> <p>Dr Amin made contact with the North West Evening Mail who published an article advertising the Furness Wellness Days to its readers. Posters and leaflets were created and displayed within GP surgeries across Barrow in Furness and within third sector organisations such as Age UK. Prior to the beginning of the programme a local volunteer also hand delivered a promotional leaflet to every house on Walney Island. Along with these different methods of promotion, GPs at Burnett Edgar Medical Centre informed their patients of the Furness Wellness Days.</p> <p>Local people of all ages are welcome to attend the Furness Wellness Day between 10.00am – 1.00pm every Tuesday to take part in a variety of activities on offer. Activities include chair yoga, pilates, fitness classes, meditation, reflexology and Reiki. These activities and therapies were initially provided by the facilitators from external organisations including Christine Kay Wellness and the World Health Innovation Summit (WHIS).</p> <p>Along with activities aimed at rehabilitation and improving mobility, Furness</p>

Wellness Days provide a space and opportunity for local people to meet up to chat for example part of a 'natter group' which can also incorporate knitting.

As part of the second phase of the programme, the external facilitators are now training local people so that they have the knowledge, skills and confidence to deliver the sessions themselves. This involves a period of volunteer training and supervised delivery of sessions with a view for community volunteers to deliver sessions independently in future.

Change elements

1) Collaborative working

The community in Furness and the local NHS have worked collaboratively to set up and run the Furness Wellness Days to support people to achieve happiness and independence. The wellness sessions were initially led by trainers from the World Health Innovation Summit with the support of local carer Paula. Trainers are now in the processes of teaching community members to become volunteers and lead the sessions.

The initiative is supported by Dr Amin from Burnett Edgar Medical Centre who is working closely with the Barrow Integrated Care Community to promote wellness throughout the county.

2) Engagement

Prior to the launch of the Furness Wellness Days, over a period of two weeks each patient seen by Dr Amin at Burnett Edgar Medical Centre was asked for suggestions of what could be introduced to improve their overall wellbeing.

During the conversations, members of the public explained that happiness improves their ability to manage their own conditions. However it was identified that there were no activities on offer within the local community to promote happiness, health and wellbeing.

Overall, patients expressed a desire to take part in social activities and were excited by the idea of the Furness Wellness Days initiative.

3) Implementation of the changes (patient and public communication)

The grant received from NHS England was used to fund the design and production of resources to promote the 'Furness Wellness Days' including leaflets and posters. Posters were exhibited at GP surgery's across Barrow in Furness and the leaflets were hand delivered to every home on Walney Island by volunteers.

The programme organisers made contact with the North West Evening Mail who wrote an article explaining and promoting the project with a view to encourage people to attend.

Dr Amin contacted a variety of local third sector organisations and stakeholders including Age UK to ensure that they were aware of the new initiative and to encourage people to attend.

Ward staff based at Furness General Hospital were also made aware of the Furness Wellness Days so that they could highlight the initiative with appropriate patients at the point of discharge.

Additionally, social media has been used to spread the word about the programme for example via the Better Care Together twitter account.

Although all of these methods of promotion have resulted in people attending the Furness Wellness Days the most effective method of encouraging new attendees is via the word of mouth.

Success so far:

- To date more than 130 different people have attended the sessions delivered at Walney Cottage.
- 300 sessions have been delivered with cumulative benefits of more than 2000 patient encounters (each session is attended by 8-10 people).
- More than 2000 activity sessions have taken place as part of Furness Wellness Days.
- Attendees have reported that they have formed new friendships and social circles due to attending the wellness sessions which reduces social isolation.
- Two community members have completed their training and are now delivering wellness sessions within the community as part of the Furness Wellness Days.
- Seven community members are taking part in the training to enable them to deliver wellness activity sessions in future.
- As a result of attending the wellness sessions, attendees have formed their own outdoor social activities including two rival bowling groups.
- The programme has been found to be inclusive, for example one community volunteer who is registered blind is undergoing the training to deliver wellness sessions at the centre.

Attendee feedback:

Betty Ducie, community member from Walney said: 'Its good fun, its exercise

and we get to meet people!”

Anne Cottam, Community member from Walney said: ‘It’s very good exercise. I haven’t been able to touch my toes in years until I started coming to these classes.’”

Staff feedback:

Dr Farhan Amin, GP at Burnett Edgar Medical Centre in Walney, said:

“We have been overwhelmed with the response we have received from the community following the launch of the Furness Wellness Days. It’s fantastic to see that people are coming forward and want to become trainers and take it upon themselves to deliver the wellness sessions within the community.

“People in other areas have now requested help in setting up similar projects and with the support of our local NHS we hope launch similar days across the whole of Barrow in Furness in 2017.”

Lessons learnt:

- Service user engagement is essential e.g. for researching the requirements and preferences of current and potential service users, and with publicising activities
- Plan how you will evaluate the service from the outset and do this regularly to gauge its impact; qualitative feedback from attendees is important
- Partnership work is essential; this initiative saw collaborative working across NHS staff, volunteers, the Third Sector and forums.
- Staff need to be given the freedom to be innovative and work in new ways.
- Communities have a large number of untapped resources which need to be accessed,; people need to be recognised and celebrated for their gifts of time, motivation and enthusiasm
- It’s great to have a vision but start small in terms of planning the initiative
- Work with the community to co-create the programme to meet their needs – they are the experts in their self-care and wellbeing management
- It is important that clinicians let the community lead on initiatives and take ownership of the programme
- Never underestimate the impact of positively addressing social

isolation to reap the rewards of better mental and physical health.

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