



Andrea discovers a new love of exercise and sheds 5.5 stone along the way!

Start weight: 22 stone, BMI 50

Weight after 12 months on Livewell: 16.7 stone, BMI 37

Weight loss: 5.5 stone

Mum of four, Andrea Wightman wanted to lose weight for her children and be a fabulous mother of the bride.

The 45-year-old from Oakwood joined Livewell in January last year after 20 years of being overweight. Like many mums, her weight piled on in between her pregnancies and with three of her four children diagnosed with Autism, Andrea turned to junk food to have the time to juggle their needs.

With Livewell's help, Andrea steadily gained confidence and with the support of husband, Mark, the pair has shed an astonishing 8.5 stone between them and are fitter than they've ever been.

Andrea shares her amazing story:

"Since having my first child 20 years ago, I've steadily gained weight. I had four babies in four and a half years and put on 7 stone. I tried crash diets but I'd put on more weight after. Due to my weight my pelvis separated when I was pregnant and I lived with constant pain for over 15 years. On days out I would sit and watch my husband playing with the children as I couldn't join in.

In January 2017 I decided enough was enough, I needed to take control and improve my health, so on my doctor's recommendation I joined Livewell.

The first exercise session was tough. I suffer with anxiety and was scared of being able to take part. Luckily my husband, Mark offered to come and support me as my buddy. He has been amazing, supporting me every step of the way and believing in me – I couldn't have done it without him.

My advisor, Antony and the Livewell team quickly put me at ease, they'd constantly reassure me 'you can do this.' I really thought someone of my size could surely not exercise, I was wrong! I'll never forget my first boxwell class, I scurried to the back corner, thinking I can't do the moves they're doing. When Antony said 'plank' I was horrified, I couldn't even get down to the floor let alone get into a plank position but he said I could and I managed a few seconds but getting back off the floor was quite a problem!

I love the Livewell activities, we have made some fantastic friends. My favourite is boxwell - a great work out for the whole body, I partner my husband so we can really go for it with the punches!

Livewell's 8 week Lose Weight Feel Great course gave me ideas and tips on how to reduce sugar, salt and fat from our meals as well as what sensible portion sizes look like. As a family, we now eat three times a day and have fresh home prepared meals rather than quick to grab ready meals from the freezer. I also opt for water instead of fizzy drinks.

My life is now totally different. I do at least 20 hours a week of activity including boxwell, kickwell and circuits, walking and jogging. I don't send the children upstairs to collect things for me any longer, I am happy to run up and get them myself.

My family saying they are proud of me is an amazing feeling. I can't ever see myself not exercising, it's part of my lifestyle for good. Now that my Livewell 12-month programme has ended, I have signed up for Derby County Community Trust's Everybody Active membership and will carry on walking with my husband daily. I have my first 5k coming up and have signed up to more runs later on in the year.

I will not be the fat mother of the bride at my eldest daughter's wedding. I have dropped five dress sizes and my aim is to get down to at least a size 14 which will be the smallest I have been since my wedding day in 1996!

I've told all my friends and family about Livewell and my two daughters and parents have signed up. I encourage anyone to join, it doesn't matter who you are, there is something for everyone. My fellow clients have been so supportive, they have become firm friends and I consider them my Livewell family.

I now volunteer for Livewell to help people the way I have been helped in this past year."

Livewell's 12-month Lose Weight programme supports clients to achieve their health goals through a wide range of free exercise sessions, an 8 week weight management course and weekly meetings and drop ins. To find out more visit livewellderby.co.uk

Andrea before and after her life changing journey

