

Livewell clients set to make a real difference for Derby people

Derby City Council's healthy lifestyle service, Livewell has launched a new volunteer programme to enable its clients to give something back to the service and their community.

The volunteers will work with the Livewell team through a variety of roles where they will share their experiences to help inspire and motivate new clients joining the service.

Paul McGinty, Livewell Coordinator is leading the scheme and said:

"People that have been through the Livewell programme themselves have first-hand experience of the challenges that come with trying to improve your health, fitness and lifestyle. They are in an excellent position to help guide new clients through similar challenges.

Volunteering is a great way to develop new skills, meet new people and get some valuable experience. We're eager to hear from more clients who'd like to join our programme."

Five of the volunteers share their personal accounts of the positive impact Livewell has had on their lives and why they've chosen to get involved....

Annamarie's story

Annamarie Winter (30) from Littleover is one of Livewell's former weight management clients and has become a volunteer to pass on some of the tools that have helped her to get fitter and healthier. She said:

"When I started Livewell I was extremely overweight, I smoked over 20 cigarettes a day and didn't have any sort of active lifestyle. I was suffering with low moods and low confidence.

Livewell introduced me to exercise and taught me the importance of a healthy diet and what this actually looks like. With the constant support and encouragement of my Livewell advisor I lost weight and successfully incorporated exercise into my lifestyle. I found my moods lifted and my confidence returned. I made friends at the classes and also found the courage to enter numerous sports events. I found something that I enjoyed doing and that benefited me both mentally and physically.

Life is completely different now....

Life is completely different now - I enjoy it, I am happier and I have achieved things I never thought possible. In a year I have completed numerous 5K runs, four 10K events, two beginner triathlons, competed in a prestigious 24 hour cycling event in France, joined a running club and booked a half marathon for 2018. I also secured a promotion at work, which would not have been possible before Livewell. I never thought I would be capable but Livewell taught me how to work hard through exercise and nutrition and this determination and control is now part of my personal and professional life.

Livewell gave me the tools and support to set me on my way to becoming the person I always wanted to be and to help me achieve goals I never, ever thought I could.

I got so much support from all members of the team but especially from my advisor, Stephen. He could empathise and it just made a huge difference. I would love it if I could help give this feeling to others and



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to help even just one person to have the positive and life changing experience I have had would mean so much to me.

It will also be a personal challenge. Before Livewell I was very shy and lacked confidence, even being around large groups of people was intimidating for me. To be within a group of people and offer advice or support if needed would be a huge achievement. It's another step on my journey to self-confidence."

Annamarie is running with the Couch to 5K groups, writing a blog for the Livewell team and is helping at the first meetings for new clients.

Norman's Story

Norman Todd (62) from Chellaston is one of Livewell's biggest success stories having lost half his body weight (10 stone) to become a fitter, healthier and more positive person. He joined Livewell two years ago following a mild heart attack and was supported by a Livewell cardiac rehabilitation specialist who introduced him to gentle exercise and healthier eating habits.

The retired teacher moved onto Derby County Community Trust's Active Supporters Physical Activity programme last year and has built his fitness through walking, badminton and circuits. He now participates in at least two exercise sessions a day and has completed two 5k races. Norman is keen to give something back and said:

"I enjoy talking with people and taking part in the Livewell classes. There is always an opportunity to encourage someone who is starting out or is already on their own journey."

I come from a design and education background and I'm interested in the influences that have an impact on people's lifestyle which result in health related issues. I'm getting involved in the Activation sessions and will continue with the classes I already attend along with the Couch to 5K course. I'm also interested as to why the approach adopted by Livewell seems to be more successful than the traditional approaches that we are all familiar with but have such a low impact on changing things for the better."

Lisa's story

Helping other people achieve their goals is the key reason Lisa Fairbrother from Allestree has signed up to be a Livewell volunteer.

The 49-year-old's weight had rocketed after stopping smoking which prompted her to join Livewell. With Livewell's encouragement, Lisa found a new love of exercise and made some healthier meal swaps to enjoy a more balanced diet without feeling hungry.

Two years on and Lisa is living a completely different lifestyle and is eager to reassure others that they can make similar changes.

"Initially I concentrated on my diet and went to the gym on an ad hoc basis – having never done any exercise I really struggled to find the enthusiasm to go. I lost over two stone which gave me the confidence and energy to try out some of the Livewell classes. Some were not for me but others I loved. I made some great friendships and we all support each other. I continued to lose more weight and have maintained this which is mainly down to the exercise I regularly do now. I love the feel good factor afterwards and cannot imagine going back to a life without it."

It will be a rewarding experience to support other clients to reach their goals. And it has the added bonus of keeping me motivated to maintain the lifestyle I now enjoy.”

Michelle’s story

Wanting to be fitter at 40 than in her twenties was Michelle Wheatley’s impetus to join Livewell almost three years ago. Not only has Michelle achieved that goal but thanks to her determination and advisor, Chris’s support, she’s shed an impressive three and a half stone as she explains:

“I went from being a couch potato to doing two 5k races. I always hated exercise but now I love it and do on average 9 hours a week of different types of activity. Through Chris’s advice I learnt most foods are OK in moderation and he suggested an app called My Fitness Pal which boosted my weight loss.”

Michelle would like to give the same encouragement and support to other people that she received herself. She added:

“I have gained so much from being a Livewell client that I want to help others. I think it can be very daunting to walk into something new and I want to be part of a team that can put people at ease and give them the help, encouragement and enjoyment that I had on my own journey.”

Both Lisa and Michelle are welcoming new starters at their first group meetings.

Sarah’s story

33-year-old Sarah Stannard from Breadsall Hilltop joined Livewell back in 2015 and has not looked back. Going from complete exercise novice to long distance runner, Sarah quit smoking, shed a staggering five stone and developed a new lease of life through distance running, picking up healthier life-long habits along the way. Sarah’s now ready to encourage others to achieve the same success by sharing her journey along with its highs and lows. She said:

“Two years ago I was very overweight, didn’t exercise and knew very little about nutrition. Through Livewell I learned about a healthier lifestyle, stopped smoking and found a new love for running. After losing five stone, I completed the Derby Ramathon, which is 13.1 miles – a massively proud moment for me. Now I really enjoy exercise, eating healthy is the norm and most importantly, I’m happy!”

“I’m looking forward to giving people the same motivation I received from Livewell by reminding people how far they’ve come in deciding to change their lifestyle and that it’s OK to have a bad day.”

Sarah is helping at Activation sessions, the Lose Weight Feel Great course and at various classes.

A range of opportunities....

Livewell offers a range of volunteering roles including meeting and greeting new clients, supporting clients to stay smoke free, helping at the 8 week Lose Weight Feel Great course and even becoming a walk leader.

Interested? Walk leader opportunities are available to everyone but the other roles are only open to existing and former Livewell clients. For more details (no volunteering experience needed) contact paul.mcginty@derby.gov.uk

