

## Come Outside! Case study

### Increasing awareness of and providing training in outdoor activities to expand opportunities offered under the National Exercise Referral Scheme

Area  
Swansea  
The group  
National Exercise Referral  
Scheme  
Supported by  
Come Outside! Regional  
Coordinator

#### ABOUT THE GROUP

The group consists of Local Authority officers charged with delivering the National Exercise Referral Scheme (NERS) in Swansea.

The group had attended physical activity workshops as part of Public Health Wales. The Chief Executive of NRW was there and was keen that Come Outside! linked with exercise referral activities delivered by the NERS group in Swansea.

The NERS client groups range in age from 16 to 90 years olds. Their client group are generally mobile but with various medical conditions.

Most NERS clients are referred by a health professional – referrals can be for a variety of reasons, many are referred due to obesity, but also for conditions such as heart disease and other cardiac issues, strokes, and diabetes, as well as for more general physiotherapy purposes. Most NERS clients are overweight.

The NERS team are qualified to health and fitness industry standards. Training is focused on specifics such as cardio and pulmonary rehabilitation. However, no matter what the condition is, the key is to educate and enthuse people to take part and sustain activity.

The NERS group wanted to increase physical activity delivery outdoors, having tended to do delivery indoors using predominantly gym based activities. One of their biggest challenges is to get people to an initial consultation and then on to sustained activity. A key issue raised at the outset was the need to provide appropriate exist routes to clients after 16 weeks on the NERS programme.

Previously, the NERS team had received training from Fitness Wales in TIDE (Training in Different Environments) but it was never really utilised in practice as much of it was too high intensity for their client groups.



## What the NERS officers said

“It was very informative and as you could see from the discussion it really got the team thinking about the benefits of outdoor P.A and the opportunities available to our groups”

“Because [outdoor activities are] free and at sociable times it is very accessible – your family can go, your dog can go, your children can go. If they’ve got a baby and want to go to the gym, they have to find a babysitter. If they go for a walk it’s inclusive to all”

“It’s a more friendly service – more laid back, less hard learning. You can be open and honest in the sessions. Kate did her best to help us ... Kate gave her contact details. Often training doesn’t have that after care element to it”

Their NERS National Coordinator had also requested that schemes in Wales be more diverse in what they are offering. They had previously delivered some walking activities but outdoor delivery was limited.

As a result the NERS officers wanted to increase their understanding of what physical activity sessions they can deliver outdoors. They wanted to be able to show their clients that they could get exercise by going out and having fun – doing a walk or other easily accessible activity without the need for specialist equipment or significant cost.

### COME OUTSIDE! ACTIVITIES

The Regional Coordinator from Come Outside! delivered an initial half-day training session for the Swansea NERS team. They were delivered with an indoor format for planning and risk assessment, engaging with communities and what sorts of things they needed to conduct the activities.

They then went out and did some geocaching and a woodland walk – from that they identified that walking-based activities was something that they wanted to develop. The Regional Coordinator then delivered a subsequent geocaching workshop for the team.

### IMPACT ON THE TEAM

The NERS team were clear that the Come Outside! support had improved their skills set and knowledge.

Come Outside! support has given the staff motivation as a team to think and do things differently. As a result of the support they have discovered new areas of potential activity, and they are more aware of what can be done outside without much equipment and in ways that make activities fun and easy for their beneficiaries to engage with.

As a result of the support they reported that they felt better equipped to develop a greater variety of sessions in their programme.

“The input we’ve had from Kate has been spot on - there’s absolutely nothing we could have hoped for to be different”

“[This makes] it fun, so that beneficiaries don’t know they’re exercising”

“I didn’t have a clue what this was all about but now I can see how this would really interest some of my groups”

“Very few of our client group had heard about geocaching”

“This is great, I really enjoy it and would love to be doing this every day”

Whilst the NERS service users do not directly benefit from Come Outside! support, the NERS officers group are confident that they will benefit indirectly as a result of a more skilled NERS team providing a wider range of accessible, fun outdoor activities that are easy for all beneficiaries to engage with.

In contrast to other training they have received, the Come Outside! approach was considered by the NERS team to be more suitable and accessible to their client groups’ abilities and interests.

### IMPACT ON THE ORGANISATION

The support provided by Come Outside! to date is sufficient to change the NERS team’s approach and will be embedded in their working from now on. There are other outdoor activities that it would be useful to have similar support for e.g. cycling, though the Come Outside! support has encouraged the group to look at and think about a range of different options for outdoor activities. Whilst the training to date has left a legacy, there is also scope for more to provide further knowledge and breadth to their options.

A direct result of the training has been the establishment of weekly geocaching walks in Swansea Bay delivered by the NERS team.

The group is keen to develop this further and would welcome further support were the programme to continue – it is clearly evident that the programme, via a talented and respected worker, has provided real added value to the team.

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