

# Empowering people through physical activity

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# Project context

- 1 in 6 people will experience mental ill health in their lifetime
- 1 in 8 young people have experienced mental health problems
- People with serious mental health problems are more likely to be inactive & have other physical health problems
- Physical activity has benefits for our physical and mental health



# Research questions

- Why do people with mental health problems do less physical activity?
- What can we learn about the barriers to being active?
- What can we do to help people be more active?

# What did we do?

- Using co-production methods we set out to design, develop & test a physical activity intervention for people with severe & enduring mental health problems
- Recruited & trained a team of co-researchers with lived experience of mental ill health
- Worked with key partners to inform the design & delivery: NICHS, Platinum Training Institute & the Recovery Colleges



# What did we do?

- Recruited participants through Praxis Care services – almost 60 people in 6 sites across Northern Ireland
- Co-researchers visited each site to meet participants
- Participant screening – NICHS ‘Well Check’ & PTI Physical Activity Readiness Questionnaire (PAR Q) ➡ GP approval





# What did we do?

- Experienced team from PTI developed a 12-week universal programme informed by initial data collection at each site, 3 levels of ability/intensity
- Staggered delivery in 5 of the 6 sites supported by co-researchers in each setting
- Positive feedback – 31 regular participants over the 12 weeks

# Data collection & analysis



- Initial meet & greets at each location – preliminary data used to inform intervention
- Physical health & readiness checks – NICHS & PTI
- Qualitative interviews with participants conducted by co-researchers
- Participatory approach to analysis using ‘Participatory Thematic Elicitation’
- Report write up day – key recommendations discussed & agreed







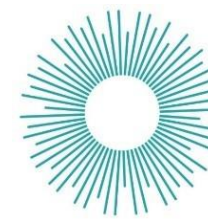
# Barriers

- Participation rates affected by lack of GP approval (n=25)
- Other potential barriers – time of day, self-esteem/perceived ability, equipment, regular commitment – managed well

# Facilitators

- The social aspect was key for most - motivation, belonging, expanded social networks
- Unique skills & qualities of the trainers
- The role of the co-researchers?

# Co-production in action



**drill**  
Disability Research on  
Independent Living & Learning



Not just a  
word, a  
concept

People get  
together to  
influence the way  
services are  
designed,  
commissioned &  
delivered

2-way  
reciprocal  
relationship

Everyone has a  
vital contribution  
to make to  
improve quality of  
life for people

People who use  
social care &  
health services  
have knowledge &  
experience to  
make services  
better

Breaks down  
barriers  
between service  
users &  
professionals

Equal  
partners &  
co-creators



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# Co-production works



- People with mental health problems are interested in their physical health & ways to improve it
- Even low level intensity activity has benefits & is accessible to everyone
- The social element of physical activity is really important
- Promoting physical activity is a core responsibility of health & social care provision even where there are severe & enduring mental health problems
- There are highly skilled & experienced partners within the sector to support this work (NICHS & PTI)
- Co-production is an effective & rewarding way to engage service users & explore in-depth issues that affect people's lives