LIVE LONGER BETTER.
in Cumbria

Project Background

The national Live Longer Better programme is supported by Sport England and delivered by Active Partnerships. Here in Cumbria, we aim to encourage older adults to take part in activities that challenge the body, brain, and mind. This will help prevent loss of fitness or regain fitness that has been lost due to inactivity and ill health. We have further information on our website: https://www.activecumbria.org/behealthybeactive/live-longer-better/

We are fortunate in Cumbria to have secured some financial resource to support our aims, which is available through the Reconditioning Fund.

About Yoga4Health
https://www.yogainhealthcarealliance.com/yoga-for-health-program/

The Yoga4Health programme was commissioned by West London CCG as a Social Prescribing intervention. Specifically designed to enable individuals to improve their physical and psychological wellbeing, it aims to address risk factors for non-communicable diseases including cardiovascular disease, diabetes, anxiety, depression, and social isolation.
Over the ten week in-person programme for 10-15 participants, each two- hour session includes:

- Exercise in the form of simple yoga postures which can be performed from a chair or a yoga mat,
- Breathing practices,
- Meditation and mindfulness,
- Relaxation,
- Group discussion.

Developing a home-practice is strongly encouraged from the start of the programme. Detailed course manuals and online easy to follow practice videos via the Yoga in Healthcare Alliance website (free to all course participants throughout and beyond the course), support participants in building up their own unique yoga toolkit and daily home practice which is key element of the sustainability of the intervention.

Reconditioning Fund Project Summary

Margaret secured funding to deliver a 10 week Yoga4Health course in one of Active Cumbria's Priority Places as listed in our 5 year Development Plan.

Margaret Beck is a Qualified Yoga Teacher with several years experience of teaching varied groups. She has completed the Yoga4Health training which is accredited by the Personalised Care Institute (PCI) established by the Royal College of GPs and NHS improvement to accredit training in the sector.

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About the Participants:

- The participants were all white female, predominantly aged 65+.
- They were referred via link workers, social prescribers and the Joy app, some self-referred. - Twelve participants were recruited.
- During the course one lady contracted covid and was unable to return, another had a bad fall and was unable to return. –
- Of the ten who completed some had prior experience of yoga (40%), others were complete beginners (60%).

Monitoring & Evaluation

The intended outcomes of the course for participants include:

1. Improving Physical Health
2. Elevating sense of wellbeing
3. Increasing patient activation measures (PAM)
4. Reducing anxiety and depression.
5. Reducing stress levels
6. Increasing social connectedness.
7. Enabling individuals to build their unique Yoga tool-kit
8. Supporting individuals to develop a daily Yoga practice at home.

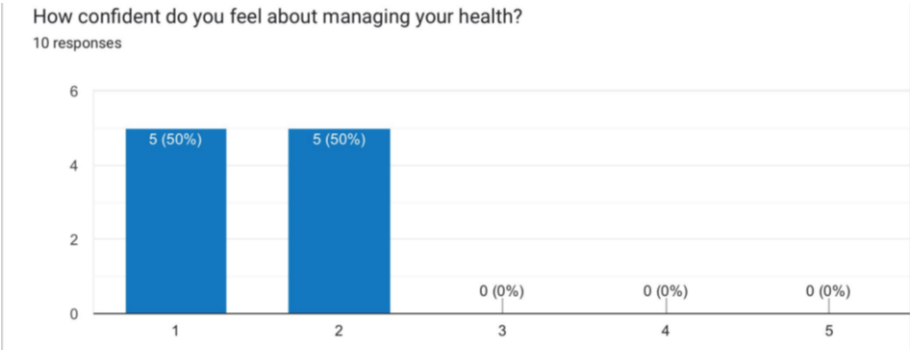
Each participant completed a questionnaire to self-assess aspects of health at the start and end of the programme, with the key results shown below.

Confidence in Managing Health

(Where a score of 1 is most confident and a score of 5 is least confident)

Pre-Course

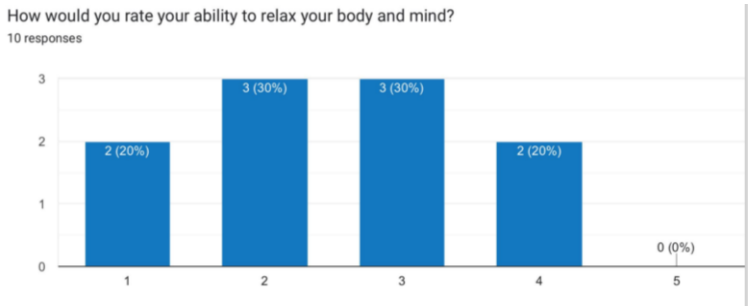
Post Course



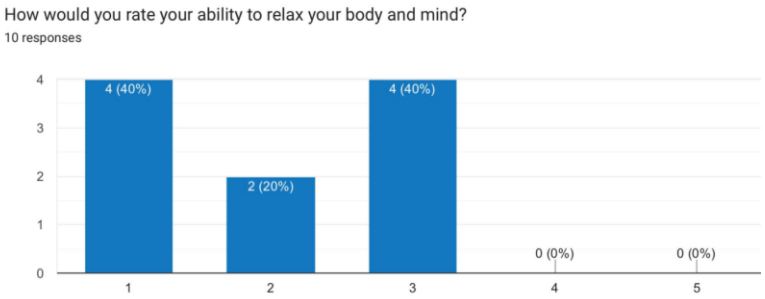
Ability to Relax

(Where a score of 1 is very good and a score of 5 is poor)

Pre-Course



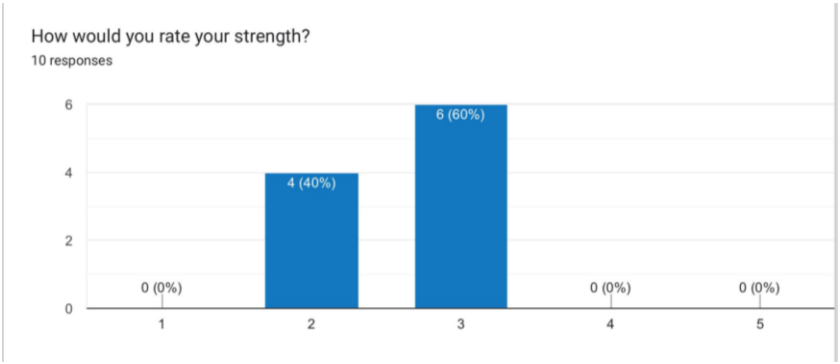
Post Course



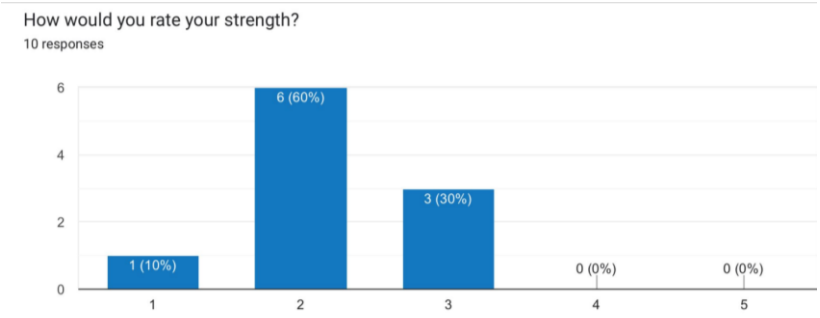
Level of Strength

(Where a score of 1 is very good and a score of 5 is poor)

Pre-Course



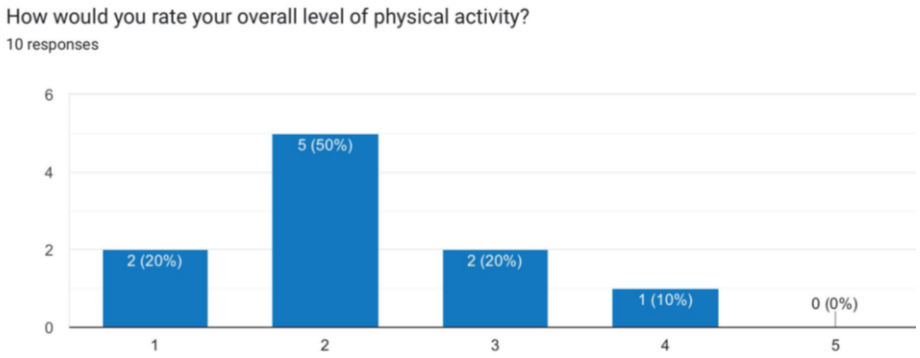
Post Course



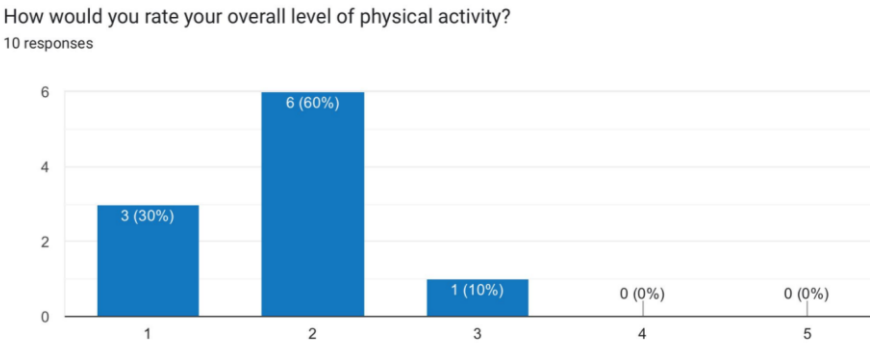
Level of physical activity

(Where a score of 1 is very good and a score of 5 is poor)

Pre-Course



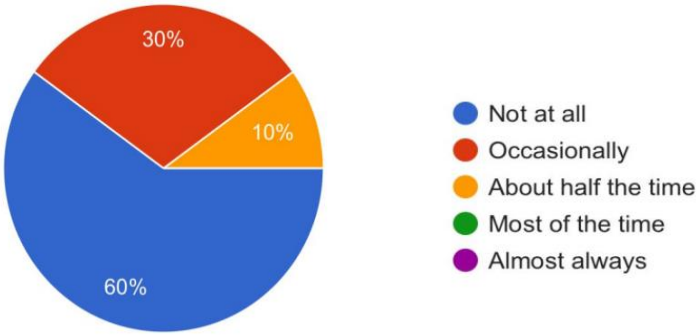
Post Course



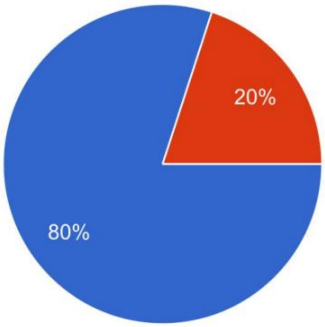
Isolation and loneliness impact physical and mental health. The questionnaire asked people about their feelings of being connected.

Feeling Connected to others

Pre -Course
I felt alone and friendless



Post Course
I felt alone and friendless



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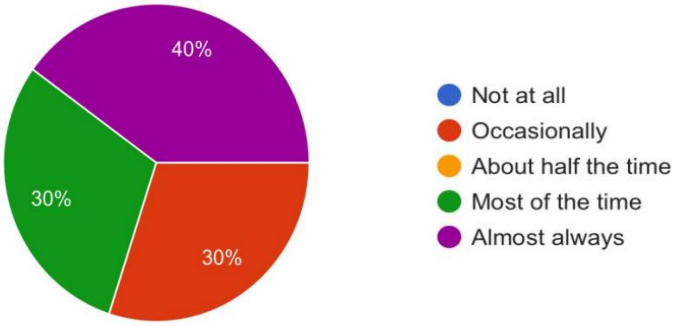
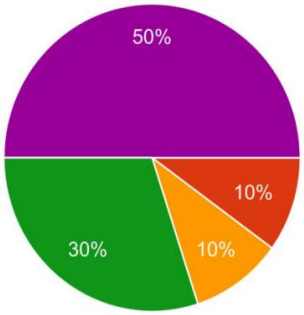
Connecting with others

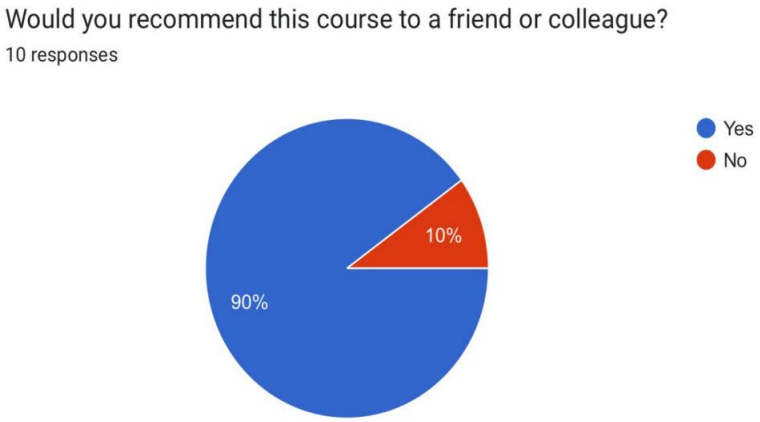
Pre -Course
I found it easy to get in touch with others when I needed to



Post Course
I found it easy to get in touch with others when I needed to



Course Recommendation:



What have been the main benefits of participating in the Yoga4Health programme?'

''Improved flexibility and reduced back pain. Also improved blood pressure due to breathing exercises.''

''Being with other people and learning new techniques for relaxing and improving breathing. My balance has definitely improved.''

''Increased flexibility, balance, and stress management.''

''Meeting up with like-minded people and being able to train myself to set aside time each day to carry out an hour's yoga practice.''

''Feeling more flexible, happier and relaxed. I am sleeping better. I can now cut my toenails on my left foot.''

''More relaxed.''

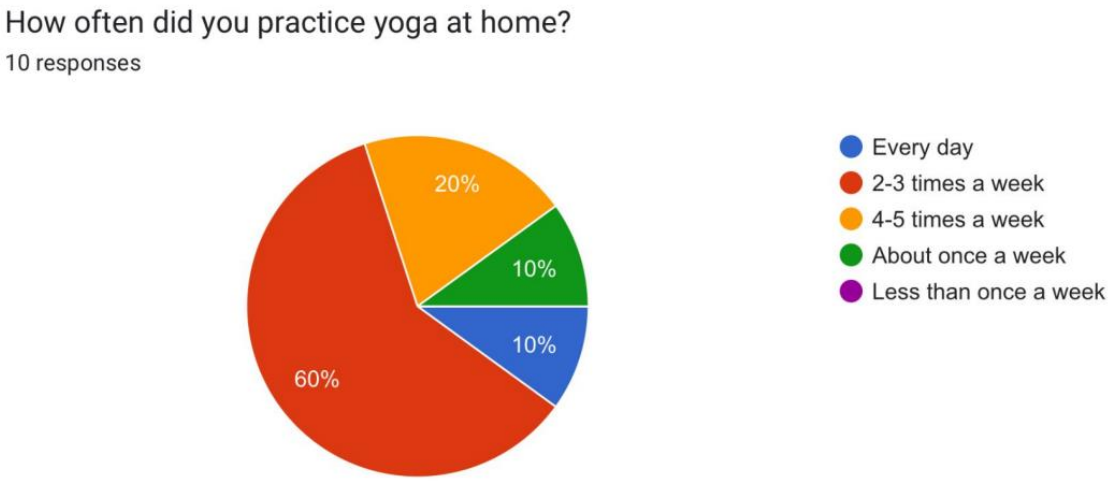
''Enjoyed meeting others and feel calmer.''

''Ability to relax/remain calm.''

Project Sustainability

One of the main aims of the course in terms of helping participants build physical activity in to their lives, was the development of a daily practice at home.

The results show that alongside the class, all participants are practicing at home as well as attending class.



Will you continue with home practice and if so, why?

"Yes. Flexibility and relaxation."

"Yes, breathing and exercise to keep blood pressure low and improve back flexibility."

"I will continue to practice, also this has given me the confidence to begin attending yoga at my local gym."

"Initially yes, however I would like a face-to-face class that is age appropriate."

"I will continue to attend yoga sessions on zoom and for yoga to be an important part of my life."

"I will continue to do home practice and hopefully keep up the level i am at now with my practice."

"Hopefully, to establish a daily routine."

"Yes, and after my holidays i intend to join a zoom class with Margaret."

"Yes maintained flexibility."

"Yes I will continue the ocean breathing on a daily basis. It has helped me enormously. I had 4 family bereavements this past 3 years, This ME time is helping me sleep a bit better too.''

Case Study 1
About the person My name is Linda, I am 74 years old. I am married with one daughter, 3 grandchildren and six great grandchildren. I used to be a fit person for my age, I walked on the high fells, cycled, went to the gym, and loved to swim. I lost a lot of confidence during Covid. My mother died and I couldn't look after her due to my husband having Myeloma. I was told not to walk with friends but just to walk in the garden. This impacted on me. I had two falls during Covid and fractured my ankle and my back.
About the Situation/their circumstances I am on two medications for High Blood Pressure that is under control. Medication for gastric reflux, high cholesterol, two meds for Asthma. I also have painkillers for a fracture in my spine, curved spine and arthritis in my spine, knees, hands, and feet.
The impact the outcome has made to the client. My arthritis had become a lot worse due to not moving about. My movement has improved a lot. My right knee was extremely stiff when walking downstairs, I am now beginning to bend it a bit more. I couldn't cut my toenails on my left foot, but I can do that now. I was shouting a lot at my husband, even though I know he is ill. After the eighth week I asked him if he had noticed any difference in me, he said "I am a lot happier". I am sleeping much better too. I find the Yoga so calming and relaxing. I am hoping that by keeping up with the Yoga I will be able to come off some of my medications. It has also been good to meet new people, I was feeling lonely after Covid. Yoga4health has helped me to become a much happier and relaxed person. My stress levels have decreased resulting in me enjoying life.

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Case Study 2
About the Person I am a 71-year-old female. At start of the Yoga for Health10 week programme I was 18 months post right total hip replacement. Physically active prior to developing hip issue attending regular bi-weekly yoga classes, fell walking, dancing, swimming, and jogging.
About the Situation/their circumstances Despite excellent recovery from hip replacement, I was unable to carry on with my usual fitness activities. Yoga has been part of my life since I was 18 years old, and I could not attend a yoga class due to lack of strength transitioning from sitting/standing asana's and had restricted flexibility in my new hip, lower back and other hip. I also had issues with re-alignment of both hips. I began doing beginners Pilates to replace my yoga however I missed my yoga classes very much but could not even participate in a regular beginner's class. So, when the opportunity arose to participate in this 10-week yoga course arose I was delighted as it addressed the obstacles I was experiencing, namely being of a certain age and having lost physical strength, flexibility and needing re alinement after the surgery. It appeared to offer me a safe environment to get me back to practising yoga in a group setting with a knowledgeable teacher.
The impact the outcome has made to the client: I have re connected with my love of yoga due to practising at a level that suited my physical, mental, and emotional state. I have gained muscle strength, increased flexibility from the weekly classes. I have felt fully supported in practising safely protecting my new hip and finding a new way of including yoga into my daily life. The on-line routines supported the weekly class allowing me the option to deepen my re introduction back into doing yoga. The different breathing techniques have been really beneficial as focusing on the breath eased of the desire to achieve perfection. The face-to-face class interaction with other attendees who have shared their thoughts on this journey could not be replicated on a remote class. The challenge after week 10 will be finding a class that is age and ability appropriate as joining a regular class will not be an option for this group. Margaret has demonstrated patience, empathy and amazing direction during and out of class. Her skills and expertise are greatly appreciated and the fact that she is making a positive difference to people's health and wellbeing in the over 65's is greatly appreciated. My personal health and wellbeing has taken a giant leap forward.

Thank you to Margaret Beck for all the work to implement this project to improve the health and wellbeing of the attendees.

You can contact Margaret for more information via email at mbeck.yoga4health@gmail.com

Or For further information on this project please contact:

Anna Larden Project Officer for Eden, Carlisle and South Lakeland Localities

| Active Cumbria | Public Health & Communities | Cumberland Council (hosted)

m: 07785 637431

e: Anna.Larden@cumberland.gov.uk

www.activecumbria.org.uk