

Positive Spin is an innovative project funded by the London Borough of Lambeth to enable people with dementia and their carers to cycle or return to cycling. The 8-week programme launched on 29th July at Clapham Common with the aim of offering a fun, social activity to enhance the wellbeing of people with dementia and their carers.

A team of 4 cycling instructors (one instructor is a psychotherapist experienced in developing therapeutic interventions for people with dementia) delivered the programme. A selection of bicycles were available including all ability bicycles, working in partnership with Wheels for Wellbeing.

Positive Spin was located in a safe, pleasant environment at the basketball courts by the café in the Common. The programme was promoted extensively in the dementia community, through web presence and social media. The sessions were drop-in with no need to commit or book sessions.



RECRUITMENT & REFERRALS

| Date | Number of participants | Referral source |
|----------|------------------------|--|
| 29.7.15 | | 5 Therapist developing the project Healthy Living @ Lingham Court |
| 5.8.15 | | 4 Therapist developing the project |
| 12.8.15 | | 7 Therapist developing the project Healthy Living @ Lingham Court |
| 19.8.15 | | 4 Therapist developing the project Healthy Living @ Lingham Court |
| 23.9.15 | | 2 Healthy Living @ Lingham Court |
| 30.9.15 | 3 + filming | Therapist developing the project |
| 7.10.15 | | 6 Therapist developing the project Healthy Living @ Lingham Court |
| 14.10.15 | | 4 Therapist developing the project Charleston House |

OUTCOMES

- Social benefits:** Those attending more than once are beginning to make relationships independently of the instructors. Discussion of issues other than cycling. An initial choice to watch leading to having a go.
- Progression through National Standard outcomes:** The clear structure and small steps has been a very useful framework to assess risk and facilitate learning in all participants. For those with a diagnosis of dementia there has been an important role in validating existing skills.

In those people with neurological challenges in finding the pedals and cycling independently, placing the feet on the pedals and passive cycling has led to developing the ability to cycle independently. Progressing through the use of side by side and tandem cycles led to greater confidence and the ability to generalise the skill and initiate pedalling on a bicycle. Skills have either been retained from week to week, or have been regained quickly. Close attention to optimum saddle height had a very significant effect on one gentleman's ability to override dyspraxia symptoms and pedal effectively. At this point his balance on the bicycle also improved.

Disabilities such as disorientation, and their perceived role in cycling were challenged. One gentleman with dementia rode two different three wheelers independently, including during the game follow my leader, without any problem. He talked a lot about how it prevented him going out without his wife, and is very keen to work on regaining his skills on a bicycle.

- Locus of Control:** For those people with a diagnosis of dementia a sense of freedom to move around independently and under their own control was achieved. For one younger person with dementia who has advanced osteoporosis, lives with chronic pain and walks with a stick, it was striking to see him riding a bicycle independently, pain free. Carers were able to engage mindfully in cycling without worrying about their relative, and sharing a joyful experience on equal terms.

OUTCOMES continued

4. **Reminiscence** about cycling, about life, about all sorts of things. Reminiscing about happy times in the past is a validating activity for everyone, particularly so for people with memory impairment.
5. **Support in living with the symptoms of dementia:** Living with the symptoms and diagnosis of dementia is a 24 hour, 7 day a week issue and a lonely experience for the person diagnosed and their family carer. Both those affected and family carers engaged with the symptoms in a different way, challenging some preconceptions about function, and expressing their own pain, grief and frustrations.
6. **Joy & Engagement:** The notion that magic happens when cycling is involved proved very relevant here. Even those who had said they did not like cycling tried out different bikes and forgot their troubles temporarily.
7. **Movement & Health:** there is a great deal of research which points to the benefits of a weight bearing aerobic exercise for general health. It is difficult for people with dementia and their families to access this, and rare for them to be able to enjoy this together.
8. **Cognition:** It would be interesting to explore the effect on cognitive disabilities. Context is very important for people with dementia to function at their best and depression is a known feature of dementia which is associated with cognitive symptoms in its own right.
9. **Increased use of cycling for road/transportation:** One carer has vowed to get his bike out and cycle around the common. Another carer who had previously never ridden a bicycle is now able to ride independently around the common. He is planning to buy a bicycle and develop his cycling skills with a view to taking up cycling as a form of transport. Two gentlemen with young onset dementia are proficient cyclists, and progressed to Level 2 skills on the road. One participant, newly diagnosed with a genetic progressive neurological disease has bought a bicycle, feels more confident in using it on the road, and has been introduced to other forms of cycles which may be more suitable as his condition progresses.
10. **Impact beyond the sessions:** 2 couples attended the majority of sessions, showing great enthusiasm for the project, looking forward to returning the following week and missing it during the break. We await concrete feedback about this by questionnaire.

FEEDBACK

The feedback from trainees, people with dementia and their carers has been without exception very positive. Failure to attend every session has been linked to other challenges and not lack of engagement. A regular trainee who experiences disorientation and coordination difficulties as a result of his condition expressed how much he missed the cycling during the break in the project. They say pictures speak a thousand words and certainly reflect the joy we witnessed. Comments include:

“it’s wonderful to see him so free and happy”

“exercise is the way forward (in living with dementia)”

“he talks about (the cycling) all the time and looks forward to it” “very professional”

“the independence ...” “trying new things” “doing things together” “it’s lovely to be outdoors

NEXT STEPS

- Positive Spin is to roll-out in Spring 2016 in Lambeth and across other London boroughs
- Positive Spin cycle shows to visit day centres in London Boroughs in March/April

THANK YOU

We are grateful to Lambeth Council for funding this pilot project, to Wheels for Wellbeing for making all ability cycles available, and for the support of Healthy Living @ Lingham Court and Allied Healthcare in making referrals to the project.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT POSITIVE SPIN: info@cycletraining.co.uk