

Positive Spin

Launched in July 2015, Positive Spin is a groundbreaking project funded by Lambeth Council which looks to enable people with dementia to cycle. A team of 4 Cycle Training UK cycling instructors (including a psychotherapist experienced in developing therapeutic interventions for people with dementia) delivered the sessions.

Initially an 8-week programme at Clapham Common, Positive Spin will roll out in Spring 2016, and will include 'Cycle' shows to care homes in many London boroughs. Cycling is a skill which is learnt and carried out through 'procedural' memory, which is often unimpaired in people with a diagnosis of dementia. Positive Spin assessed the role learning and practising cycling has in acquiring new skills and here are some of the project outcomes.



Client	Lambeth Council
Project	Positive Spin
Date	July 2015 for 8 weeks
Aims	To offer a fun social activity to enhance health & wellbeing for people with dementia Evaluate the benefits of cycling for people with dementia and their families

POSTIVE SPIN 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 has led 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.

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.

Reminiscence Participants talked not only about cycling but about other things. Reminiscing about happy times in the past is a validating activity for everyone, particularly so for people with memory impairment.

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.

Engagement: Even those who had said they did not like cycling tried out different bikes and forgot their troubles temporarily.

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.

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. 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.



Participant and carer comments

"When Richard and Violet went off from the Club in the morning they were a bit nervous, but their sense of anticipation and excitement was palpable. That – the fact that they were to participate in an initiative that aroused their sense of adventure – felt like a good thing in itself. But them coming back, with their faces glowing and so keen to tell the rest of us what they had been up to, was even more delightful to see: what they had been up to had made them feel good and they had felt special." *Simona, HLC Co-ordinator*

"it's wonderful to see him so free and happy"

"exercise is the way forward (in living with dementia)"

"he talks about cycling all the time and looks forward to it" "very professional" "the independence ..."

"doing things together" "it's lovely to be outdoors"

