

Case Study



Carers Garden Party

Project

Swansea Carers Project

Organisation

City and County of Swansea

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Contact

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About the Organisation

The Swansea Carers Project is managed by the City and County of Swansea. The partners in the project are the Swansea Carers Centre, Swansea Council for Voluntary Service, Countryside Council for Wales, the National Partnership, Sports Council for Wales and Council departments.

The relationship with the Swansea Carers Centre provides a strong platform to work from as they are a partner on the steering group and they are in direct contact with carers in the city daily.

Project overview

The project has developed since the beginning but it has not changed in terms of its core aims.

The aim is simple – to get carers more physically active. One of the main changes is that the project team itself has increased due to the success of the project. The project has established itself well and has made good links with carer groups. The groups do indoor activities initially and then move onto activities outdoors. None of these groups existed before Mentro Allan.

The initial feedback from beneficiaries was that the options people wanted were yoga, tai chi, Pilates and dance. The project team decided it was better to give the beneficiaries what they wanted in the first instance and then gradually steer the groups into doing activities outdoors.

What was achieved?

The main achievement was providing carers with what they wanted and that provided a legacy, there are now regular faces that can be seen at different activities. Relationships have been built. The project is making a significant difference to the carers' lives and that makes it all worthwhile for the project team. One carer commented at a walking group, "Mentro Allan is now a part of my life".

The groups benefit both mentally and socially as there is more friendship in their lives and a ready-made support group that understands their lives as carers. Friendships have been formed within the project and they do activities together separate from Mentro Allan. One member has trained as a walk leader and now organises walks independently from the project.

The project believes it is successful but acknowledges that it is only scratching the surface with the carers in Swansea. There are 27,000 carers in Swansea and 230 on their database. There are five groups of people that have been attending since the very beginning. There are usually six to eight people in any activity which is a good number. Quality and not quantity is seen to be important.

How did the project get people involved?

Initial contacts with organisations were made through work that had already been done by the steering group before Mentro Allan was set up. The project team went to established groups first that catered for carers and from then it has been an organic process.

It is a user led project where beneficiaries are involved in the development of the project. Every six to eight weeks each activity is reviewed and any changes are discussed with the participants.





What was innovative and what worked well?

Every activity starts at a community centre or café as the primary meeting point. This ensures that there is still a social aspect to the meeting even if the weather is bad and prevents the group from going outdoors.

The project links in with other local events. These include the Race for Life, 10k run and the Santa Run. Project staff also try to attend community events and Open days. This opens up other activities to participants and markets to the project to the wider community.

The project co-ordinator had previously worked in a similar role and had established relationships in the sector. The two original staff members had worked together previously and worked well as a team. This helped establish the project and there are also still strong links internally with the council.

The National Partnership gave on-going support and organised quarterly meetings for project co-ordinators. This was seen as a very positive thing and a way to network with other project co-ordinators.

The future...

The project will keep going and fund itself by using the Operational group who are meeting monthly to come up with relevant ideas. These ideas then go to the steering group and they decide on the viability and appropriateness of the ideas.

There is a need to constitute the different groups, get individual bank accounts and get them to apply for funding themselves, perhaps from community chest funding and this would enable them to pay instructors. Certain individuals are also going to be trained as walking leaders.

Identifying and training individuals will hopefully carry on after the project finishes. There are four people on the project team so the project has more people to generate and discuss ideas.

Were there any unexpected outcomes?

Friendships have been formed within the group and they also do activities separate from the Mentor Allan group. One member has trained as a walk leader and the group can therefore conduct groups independently.

Lessons from the project

The Swansea carers project in Cardiff has worked successfully to engage with carers. There are lessons that can be taken from this project and these are listed below.

- Work with existing organisations. This project was able to target participants through existing organisations that were trusted by the beneficiaries.
- Understand the needs of the participants. It is important to understand the issues that the target group face and try to address these.
- Include a social element to activities. Activities often meet in a cafe or a community centre to start. This gives a more relaxed environment for people.
- Piggyback on other events. The project has been involved in a number of local events. This means that participants feel part of their local community and are taking part in physical activity at the same time.