



Annual Review

April 2014 – March 2015



The Braveheart Association



Our vision is to see the burden of chronic and long-term health conditions reduced for both the individuals who might develop them and those already living with them and, ultimately, see real health improvements across the Forth Valley community as a whole.

The Braveheart Association provides a variety of health services and support for adults living in Forth Valley who have a chronic or long-term health condition such as coronary heart disease or diabetes or who are at risk of developing such a condition.

To help create a more active, fitter and healthier community, our services are also free and open to the wider population.

From our base in Falkirk Community Hospital, we support people in a realistic, practical way to make changes to their daily routine, which make a real and lasting positive difference to their long-term health and wellbeing.

Our main focus is on supporting people to take regular physical activity, plan and maintain a healthy diet, connect with others in the community and manage stress.

Free, friendly, welcoming and led by trained staff and volunteers, our services include:

- **Optimise Health Mentoring Programme** and **Braveheart Plus** – self-management programmes enabling people to come together to learn about health and support one another
- **Walk with Braveheart** – an extensive guided monthly walking programme encouraging people to take gentle exercise

As a charity, we rely on the help of community volunteers who we train as Health Mentors and Walk Leaders. We rely on our volunteers to deliver much of what we do and pride ourselves in training and supporting our volunteers to the highest standard.

Since The Braveheart Association was established in 1996, we have built up a strong track record for providing effective, active support and encouragement, helping people genuinely improve their health and wellbeing.



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Chairman's Report

This is my first Report as Chairman of Braveheart and I must start by acknowledging the contribution of our previous Chairman, Jim Farquhar, who played a vital role in leading the organisation through some challenging times.

Jim's passion for Braveheart was clear to all and we wish him well in his retirement.

Over the year 2014/15 we have also seen Maggie Cunningham and Fiona Wray step down from the Board.

We have, in turn, welcomed Clare Tucker who, having worked as a doctor, is well aware of the benefits that Braveheart can offer.

I wrote as Interim Chair last year that 2013/14 was a year of creation. In 2014/15 we have taken that creation and achieved many remarkable things.

In October 2014 we started a consultative piece of work that involved engaging with all our stakeholders, staff, service users, volunteers and partner organisations including the NHS. The purpose of this was to build on what we do well, identify what we could do better and explore what activities Braveheart could deliver to help improve the health of the people of Forth Valley. Thank you to the many people who contributed to the success of this project.

We have had many successful funding applications this year, which have enabled us to tackle projects that will help support what we do in the years to come.

Recognition for Braveheart was seen in our successful reapplication for the national award Investing in Volunteers and in our accreditation from the Royal Society of Public Health for the core health mentoring training programme.

We also achieved success in reaching more than 300 people with our Optimise mentoring programme, helping to facilitate healthier lives.

The walking programme has surpassed all expectation in the numbers of walks organised and the numbers of people participating in those walks.

We have established closer working relationships with some of our key stakeholders, including the NHS.

Braveheart has been asked to contribute to the review of clinical services across Forth Valley and were invited to present to the Board of NHS Forth Valley earlier this year. We look forward to a closer working relationship with the NHS in 2015/16.

The Board has also developed Braveheart's aims and objectives in a three year strategy which will ensure that our volunteers continue to be well trained and supported to deliver high quality programmes to meet the developing health needs of the population that we work with.

Gordon Thomson
Chairman



*"This year we have
achieved many
remarkable things."*

A Year to Remember



This year, we took major strides forward across all areas of operation. Key achievements included:

1. Service Effectiveness

Walk with Braveheart

During the year, we led 344 nature themed walks across Forth Valley attracting 4,210 people, an increase of over 10% on the previous year.

A new range of leisurely, half hour walks were also developed for those wanting to build up their basic fitness level.

Participant feedback on the health

and social benefits of the programme echoed new research carried out at Saarland University in Germany which was presented at the European Society of Cardiology (ESC) Congress in August 2015. The research showed that regular exercise increases cognitive function, acts as an anti-depressant and can delay the ageing process. It also showed that a walk of just 25 minutes each day can increase a life span by up to seven years.

Self-Management Programmes

Together our Optimise Health Mentoring Programme and Braveheart Plus programmes reached more than 370 people in Falkirk, supporting people to self-manage their lifestyle and prevent and manage chronic diseases.



Optimise Health Mentoring Programme

- 326 local people participated in Optimise during the period
- Following a thorough redesign and update of content, our Health Mentor Training Programme became the **first** voluntary sector health training programme in Scotland to be accredited by the Royal Society for Public Health (RSPH)
- We also expanded our self-management options for local people during the year with the addition of flexible Optimise sessions

These bespoke workshops for local community groups are designed to meet their particular needs

- Internal evaluation of our Optimise model indicated that participants became more confident about making positive lifestyle changes because of taking part in the programme

Braveheart Plus

Our groups for people with long-term health conditions such as diabetes and coronary heart disease in Camelon and Stenhousemuir continued to flourish.

2. Funding

We are grateful to the following organisations, which awarded funding to enable key activities during the year:

- **Falkirk Partnership Innovation Fund** which enabled us to continue our Optimise Health Mentoring Programme
- **Supporting Communities** which allowed us to develop a stakeholder consultation
- **The Robertson Trust** which enabled us to continue Walk with Braveheart for a further three years
- **Voluntary Action Fund** which allowed us to redevelop and accredit our core Health Mentor Training Programme
- **Sons of the Rock** which enabled us to buy a new photocopier
- **The Saturday Hospital Fund** which made a significant donation to Braveheart funds

Staff and volunteers also took part in a sponsored walk for Braveheart funds.



3. Staff and Volunteers



During the year we welcomed new people who joined our existing committed and talented group of volunteers and staff. New and existing volunteers received high quality training and support, which culminated in a thank you barge trip from The Falkirk Wheel.

Key achievements included:

- Establishing an **Investing In Volunteers Development Group**. The new group updated the Volunteer Handbook and prepared for the Volunteer Assessment process
- Our Walking Development Officer achieved **Paths For All Cascade** trainer status enabling her to train new Walk Leader volunteers
- Core health mentor training materials were developed with volunteers to RSPH standard
- Volunteers were involved in the consultation process, the Investing in Volunteers assessment process, the development of the weekly and monthly walking programme, the redevelopment of the health mentor training programme, the RSPH assessment process and in many other aspects of the organisation

4. Partnership Working

Partnership links with the NHS and wide range of Forth Valley organisations were strengthened during the year. Our staff and Board, for example, were involved in a number of Health and Social Care Integration planning meetings and the NHS Clinical Services Review. We now look forward to working with the NHS and other key partners into 2016 and beyond.

5. Marketing

A new Braveheart website was developed with support from **Voluntary Health Scotland Digital Inclusion** programme. New marketing material for Walk with Braveheart (including weekly and monthly 'walk cards') and Optimise was also developed and incorporated into our regular promotional mailings to local organisations, health centres and community centres.

Thank you to our wonderful volunteers, Board members and staff team who make Braveheart the fantastic organisation it is to be involved with. I look forward to working with everyone ensuring Braveheart continues to go from strength to strength and 2016 is another successful and memorable year.

Anne Black
Manager

Developing A New Three Year Strategy



During the year, we began the process of developing a new strategic plan for 2016 – 2018 to ensure that we continue to deliver our aims and objectives and work towards the realisation of our vision.

Meeting Need

Our new strategic plan recognises that we must sustain the growth and development achieved this year if we are to help meet the increasing health challenges faced by society at large and people living across Forth Valley.

These challenges are very real and pressing. The Scottish Health Survey 2014, commissioned by the Scottish Government, revealed that as many as 46% of Scots now live with one or more long-term health condition(s). Diabetes Scotland also recently reported that approximately 276,000 people in Scotland have been diagnosed with diabetes with another 45,500 estimated to be unaware they have Type 2 Diabetes.

Added to this, The Scottish Health Survey reported that the prevalence of long-term conditions increased with age in 2014, from a quarter (25%) of adults aged 16-24 to three-quarters (77%) of those aged 75 and over.

Given estimates suggest that the number of Scots aged over 60 years will rise by 50% between 2010 and 2033, we therefore anticipate a significant increase in the number of people at risk of developing one or more long-term health conditions with the additional pressures of social isolation these conditions bring.

Consulting Stakeholders

To help inform our new strategic plan we held a major consultation with over one hundred key stakeholders during this annual review period.

Our aim was to gather the views and opinions of all our staff, Board, volunteers, key partners and community groups as well as past and current service users to help us plan the future direction of the organisation.

As part of the consultation, we also consulted with NHS Forth Valley, Falkirk Local Medical Committee, local general practitioners and Falkirk Council for Voluntary Services (CVS).



Key Findings

What is our role?

There was a clear consensus in answer to this question with stakeholders describing Braveheart as an organisation which aims to promote health and wellbeing by encouraging exercise, providing mentor support and sensible lifestyle advice and also by addressing social isolation through the building of peer support and friendship. Conversely, it was apparent that some of our NHS partners were less well informed about the existence of Braveheart, our aims and objectives.

When our walkers and long-term condition service users were asked to rate Braveheart on a scale from 'excellent' to 'not very good' we were heartened to see everyone rated the organisation 'good' and above with 95% of those taking part in Walk with Braveheart selecting 'excellent' or 'very good'.

What are the most important benefits we deliver?

Service users, volunteers and staff members highlighted that Braveheart helps people to socialise, get fitter, adopt a healthier lifestyle, share information

and overall self-manage their long-term condition(s) and general health. An NHS partner, who is well informed about Braveheart and our activities, suggested that the opportunity for peer support, increased knowledge and networking were most important. Falkirk CVS reported that supporting people in the self-management of long-term conditions was our most vital role.

How could we improve?

Improving our links within the community and with the NHS and voluntary sector was a common theme arising in conversations with our stakeholders. Many felt that improving links would help improve local awareness and visibility of Braveheart, promote referrals to our services, assist with fundraising, help with community support and involvement and also potentially lead to Braveheart services being rolled out on a wider scale.

It was suggested by many people that improving our advertising, marketing and communication policies might help in this endeavour.



What should we do differently?

Our stakeholders proposed awareness raising, improving our publicity, ensuring a continuous programme of volunteer recruitment, working more closely with the NHS, offering other exercise programmes and improving our partnership working.

Additionally, responses from a number of different sources, including the NHS, suggested that we consider developing some services specifically for those with other medical problems such as mental health issues.

The potential problem of adult loneliness in the community was also raised and it was acknowledged that Braveheart recognises, and should continue to recognise, this issue within the programmes we run.

Would people be prepared to donate?

Whilst acknowledging the cost of running the charity, providing transport to walking activities and other required materials and staffing, our service users and volunteers almost unanimously felt that our services should remain free. Many did, however, indicate that they would be willing to make a voluntary donation towards the running of Braveheart.

What next?

The Board is extremely happy that, in the main, respondents were clear about Braveheart's purpose, current services and that there appears to be a good appreciation of our activities. There was also clear recognition of the social benefits of peer support and group activity participation, which can improve an individual's feeling of wellbeing.

The main areas for improvement that were identified focused upon extending the reach of Braveheart, developing our partnership working, promoting Braveheart more widely and effectively and also addressing sources of funding.

The contributions obtained through our consultation have already hugely informed the development of our strategic direction for the coming years and specifically our new three year plan which the Board is currently developing.

As well as our consultation, the new strategy is informed by an internal evaluation of what we have done well in the past and an extensive review of the local and national environment affecting health and wellbeing.

The Board would like, once again, to thank all those who took the time to get involved in this valuable consultation.

To find out more about the consultation, please visit www.braveheart.uk.net



Key Targets for 2015/2016:

Our key targets are:

Organisational

- To finalise the Braveheart Three Year Strategic Plan
- To disseminate the results of the consultation process
- To achieve Investing In Volunteers Accreditation for 2015-18
- To develop an Evaluation Strategy for Braveheart and produce new evaluation materials
- To work with key personnel in the NHS and other key partners to develop closer partnership working
- To recruit a minimum of two new Trustees for the Braveheart Board

Programmes

- To achieve a minimum of 15 weekly walks and 8 monthly health walks
- To recruit, train and support 40 Walk Leaders
- To recruit and train 10 volunteers as Health Mentors to Royal Society of Public Health standards
- To work with NHS staff and Health Mentors to develop a COPD self-management pilot programme
- To support the development of Braveheart Plus groups and their mentors
- To develop new session plans and materials for health mentoring in the community with Volunteer Health Mentors

Funding

- To submit an application to The Big Lottery Investing in Communities Fund and to the Integration Fund to use our high quality model of self care, delivered in local communities by trained volunteers, to reach new groups of people such as single parents, unemployed, carers and the homeless and communities where poorer health is more prevalent
- To apply for funding to support Walk With Braveheart and Braveheart Plus groups
- To continue to seek to secure appropriate funding streams to support other existing and new developments
- To continue with the development of the Finance and Fundraising strategies in line with outline plans developed in February 2011

Marketing

- To continue to raise the profile of Braveheart by producing and disseminating a new quarterly newsletter, programme leaflets and an Annual Review
- To maintain and keep the Braveheart website and Facebook page up to date
- To promote the work of Braveheart by producing regular media releases and articles

Programme Overview: Walk with Braveheart



"I've been a Walk Leader with Braveheart since 2006 and find it very fulfilling. I believe Braveheart helps people adopt a healthier lifestyle and encourages social interaction. I've seen many new walkers integrate into the groups and make new friends as well as improving both their mental and physical health through it."

Ian Parker,
Walk Leader

*"Many of us have
made lasting
friendships on the
walks."*

Walk Leaders

Walk with Braveheart is designed to encourage people to become more physically and socially active. Our free weekly and monthly walks on the paths and in the greenspace across Forth Valley give people of all ages and walking abilities the opportunity to get fit in a safe and friendly environment.

With financial support from Scottish Natural Heritage, new partnership working with many local groups and organisations such as Living it Up and Inner Forth Landscape Initiative and the hard work of our Walking Development Officer, Eva Finlayson, our walking programme flourished during the period.

Key Achievements in 2014/2015:

Attracting Record Breaking Numbers



- 344 walks delivered across Forth Valley
- 4,210 individuals joined our walks – over 10% more than last year
- New record of 50 walkers on our monthly walk to Dalgety Bay and weekly walk numbers significantly increased on many of our walks
- Two evening walks, in Polmont and Middlefield, continued to grow in popularity

Developing a Broad, Flexible Walking Programme



"We enjoy the company more than anything as well as the fresh air and being able to exercise. We wouldn't normally walk in the rain but when you're meeting as a group, the rain isn't an issue."

**Jim and Anne,
Walk with Braveheart participants**

- New staff lunchtime walking programme developed for both Falkirk Community Hospital and Forth Valley Royal Hospital
- New 45 minute walk option incorporated into four of our one and a half hour monthly walks allowing more people to take part
- New partnership working with Inner Forth Landscape Initiative allowed us to offer three additional monthly walks throughout 2015 for those who would not be able to manage the full walking distance of our main walks

Creating 'Illuminating' Walking Events



- Thirty walkers joined in our 'Put a Spring in your Step' sponsored walk at The Falkirk Wheel raising £400 to help with essential development of Braveheart projects. Thank you to everyone who was involved
- We staged 'Luminate', an exhibition of visual art from Braveheart volunteers, service users and community members inspiring everyone to enjoy our natural environment and enjoy freshly foraged food after a walk with Floramedica's Anna Canning

"We always have a laugh and that's the best medicine of all."

Nurturing Dedicated Walk Leaders



"I enjoy walking and leading walking groups gives me a good reason to take exercise in convivial company with like-minded people. Through the interesting folks I have met on the walks, I have learned a lot about the history of the area along with local attractions and entertainment. The way the friendship and encouragement develops within a group of walkers is also fascinating to see."

Brian Robertson, Walk Leader

Our committed and supportive Walk Leaders are the heart of, and key to the success of, Walk with Braveheart so special thanks go to our 18 Walk Leaders. We look forward to welcoming six new Walk Leaders in late 2015.

Braveheart was able to provide our Walk Leaders with fantastic new Walk Leader clothing and equipment, partly funded by Scottish Natural Heritage.

Our Walk Leaders attended several training courses over the year. Many updated their Heart Start Training, provided free by Forth Valley College, an essential course for the individuals we support on our walks.

Two of our Walk Leaders also took part in **Paths for All Strength and Balance Training**. This course, which is led in partnership with Falls UK, uses simple exercises to effectively improve strength and balance of older people.

Six of our Walk Leaders also completed the **Paths for All Safety Outdoors Course** learning more about how to keep walkers safe.

Creating New Walking Aids



"I love the walks. I wouldn't go out walking on my own so Braveheart allows me to get out and see so many places on my doorstep. I feel fitter and tell everyone how great Walk with Braveheart is!"

Eileen, Walk with Braveheart participant

We are grateful to **Scottish Natural Heritage**, which enabled Braveheart to produce a new walk card booklet featuring maps and additional information on each of our walk routes.

The booklet, which was designed to encourage more people to join our guided walks and self-direct their own, is also full of local history, points of interest and wildlife information.

Key Targets for 2015/2016:

- To develop a Clackmannanshire walk
- To develop new Falkirk walks
- To train new Walk Leaders
- To evaluate Walk with Braveheart
- To incorporate Strength & Balance exercises into our walking programme

From high seas to calm lochs....

Newly retired, Martin Stewart looked for something active to fill his time whilst his wife continued working. Used to an active role in the Navy, he was attracted by a Braveheart advert recruiting new Walk Leaders and soon after completing his training in Stirling, he took the lead on our Linlithgow Loch Walk. After a few weeks of leading this walk, along with cutting out biscuits and the odd sandwich between meals, Martin has lost 4kg in weight and is feeling great. His doctor says the only thing he will die of is old age!

Programme Overview: Health Mentoring



"Society puts a lot of emphasis on doctors and nurses helping keep people well. Braveheart shifts that emphasis towards the individual. However, this is difficult and Braveheart equips individuals with the knowledge and the skills to allow them to take more responsibility for their own health. Being a part of that empowering process is a great privilege and enriches my own life as well as helping contribute to a better life for others."

David Bremner, Board of Trustees

Key Achievements in 2014/15:

- 326 older people in Falkirk participated in the Optimise Health Mentoring Programme
- Braveheart's Optimise Health Mentor Training Programme became the first voluntary sector health training programme in Scotland to be accredited by the Royal Society for Public Health
- Volunteers contributed 863 hours to Optimise
- 9 Health Mentors received high quality Optimise training
- 2 Optimise participants went on to train as Volunteer Health Mentors
- Braveheart's Investing in Volunteers award was renewed for a further three years

Optimise Programme

"Optimise gave me the tools to take charge of my body to reduce my risk of diabetes, high blood pressure, heart problems and stroke. I completed Optimise more confident about how to best look after myself, not only my physical health but in a more holistic way. Optimise empowers people to take effective control of their health showing how just making small, simple adjustments to our lifestyle can greatly improve our health."

Joan Sannachan, Optimise participant

The **Partnership Innovation Fund** provided Braveheart with funding for our innovative seventeen month Optimise Health Mentoring Programme.

The overarching aim of Optimise was to improve the health of older people in the Falkirk area and reduce their risk of developing Type 2 Diabetes or coronary heart disease by giving free health mentoring support.

Our skilled Health Mentors then adapted the core programme to provide a range of delivery options to best suit the needs of individual participants. This was vital in ensuring that Optimise was as accessible as possible for those who would benefit from the service most.

Now at the end of the project, we are delighted to report that the evaluation strongly indicates that Optimise made a real impact on the health of participants who reported eating more healthily, participating in physical activity more regularly and, overall, feeling healthier.

Most significantly feedback suggests a lasting impact with participants reporting that they have more confidence in their ability to stick to healthier foods and maintain an improved level of physical activity as a result of taking part in Optimise.

Braveheart is therefore confident of the validity of the Optimise programme as an effective and low cost self-care tool, which can help and support older people to improve their health and could be replicated in larger scale across Scotland.

We continue to seek funding to enable us to further develop this successful, health-enhancing programme.

"Great for the golden years!"

To ensure we reached those in greatest need, we targeted two groups in particular:

- Older people living in an area where the general experience of health is poorest
- Older people who are time poor due to caring responsibilities

We successfully recruited a large number of participants through our publicity and through strong partnership working with local organisations, community centres and community workers.

"Prevention is better than cure."

Health Mentor Training

Developing the highest quality training for our Health Mentors is hugely important to the success and sustainability of Braveheart so we were thrilled when we became the first Scottish Charity to have a training programme accredited by the Royal Society for Public Health (RSPH) this year.

The process began with a successful application to **Voluntary Action Fund**. This award enabled us to employ Development consultant Elizabeth Holden for six months to work with staff and volunteers in developing a core Health Mentor training pack.

As part of their assessment of the new training programme, an RSPH assessor sat in on a session led by Eva Asante, our Development Officer for the Optimise programme.

Well done to Eva and everyone involved in this great achievement.

APPROVED BY



ROYAL SOCIETY
FOR PUBLIC HEALTH

Braveheart Plus

Our monthly Braveheart Plus groups in Camelon and Stenhousemuir, which provide the opportunity for people to participate in a wide range of activities and gain new areas of interest, continued to thrive.

This year we enjoyed a highly varied programme which included an afternoon

of music and song; a session with Canine Partners who told us about the wonderful assistance our well trained four legged friends can provide to people with disabilities and Angus McIvor who vividly described his lifetime of hill walking to us over a nice hot cuppa on a raw March day.

“Many older people don’t get out enough and it’s so good to talk.”

“The group helps me a lot. Sometimes you feel silly asking the doctor about something.”

Developing Volunteering

Falkirk Council for Voluntary Services (CVS) Awards



Seven Braveheart volunteers attended the annual Volunteer Awards Ceremony to collect their awards for all their hard work and commitment throughout the year.

General service and five and ten year service awards were presented and volunteers who were unable to attend received their certificate at a later date.

Our thanks and congratulations go to all.

Volunteer Week Celebrations



Following on from our awards ceremony, our volunteers enjoyed a barge trip at The Falkirk Wheel to thank them for their continuous support and enthusiasm in all they do for Braveheart. Everyone enjoyed hearing more about the history of the Union Canal, taking part in a fun quiz with some super prizes and, of course, a unique trip on the world's only rotating boatlift.

The Big Knit



Once again our nimble-fingered knitters whipped out their wool and needles, unleashed their creativity and let their imaginations soar!

To celebrate a decade of The Big Knit, our budding milliners got really inventive and produced the most delightful miniature woollen hats to ever adorn Innocent Smoothies.

Congratulations and a big thank you to all our dedicated knitters who notched up our target of 1,500 fantastic and colourful creations – every single one a tiny masterpiece.

Thank You!



Thank you to our committed team of Braveheart volunteers who are the heart of our organisation.

Your contribution of time, effort and support throughout the year is greatly appreciated by us all and especially by the service users whom you support and encourage to live healthier lives.

Our special thanks go to Anne Black, Maureen Forbes, Eva Finlayson and Eva Asante who make up our dedicated and talented staff team.

Thank you also to our Board of Trustees, which has been a great support and source of inspiration to us during the year.

Thank you to NHS Forth Valley, Falkirk Partnership Innovation Fund, Sons of the Rock, The Robertson Trust, Scottish Natural Heritage, Voluntary Action Fund, Voluntary Health Scotland, The Hospital Saturday Fund and the Community Development Centre for their support in making the outstanding successes of this year possible.

Thank you to all our partners and local community groups, which we have worked with during the year. Thank you to our wonderful walkers, Braveheart Plus and Optimise group members who took part in our activities during the year. May your health flourish!

Start a Healthier Life

Do you have a chronic condition such as diabetes or a heart problem?

Don't suffer alone. The Braveheart Association offers friendly support and information about how to manage your condition.

Do you want to do something positive for your long-term health and wellbeing, make changes to your diet, activity or stress levels?

Join an Optimise group where you will be supported to make small changes to your daily routine that can make a big difference to your future health and wellbeing.

Do you want to take up regular walking at a pace that suits you alongside friendly company?

Try a Braveheart Walk. We run a range of weekly and monthly walks suited to all abilities.

Get Involved

Could you become a Braveheart volunteer?

Volunteering opportunities include: Walk Leading; Health Mentoring; Fundraising; Administration; Board Membership. Full training and out of pocket expenses offered.

All services are free and delivered by trained staff and volunteers who have together already helped hundreds of people across Forth Valley improve their physical and mental wellbeing and ensure a healthier future.

For further information or to get involved, visit our website or contact the Braveheart team.

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