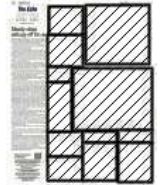


Publication:	The Echo	Media Cost (€):	3208	T 
Date:	Friday, November 13, 2020	Reach	9,449	
Page:	16	Size (Sq. Cm)	401	



Working towards wellbeing for all

Not every healthcare problem is best addressed with a GP's prescription pad or a hospital visit, says EOIN KAAR, Project Lead on WellComm Active at Cork Sports Partnership



A PERSON'S health is frequently influenced by the health of their community, their work environment and pressures, access to the natural environment, and even the extent to which they engage socially.

For example, whether or not there are activities locally for people to participate in, or facilities and open spaces to enjoy, can have a huge impact on individual health.

We are all becoming more aware of personal wellbeing, and, just now, in the midst of a global pandemic, we need to particularly focus on our mental and physical health.

WellComm Active works in the community to get more people thinking about their own health and wellbeing, and to make small positive changes in their lives. We can all lead healthier and happier lives by tapping into what's available locally.

We don't need gym memberships, expensive equipment or personal chefs. Radical changes rarely last anyway, so the focus should be small personal changes that, over time, can have a dramatic effect on our overall wellbeing.

WellComm Active is a com-

munity health and wellbeing initiative, developed in Cork, which empowers people to manage their own health to a large extent. Different programmes help individuals with exercise, co-ordination, weight management and healthy eating.

It is a collaboration of Cork Sports Partnership (CSP) and Cork Kerry Community Healthcare and is funded by the Government through the Sláintecare Integration Fund.

Group classes and one-to-one programmes have been developed and run at dozens of locations across Cork city and county, in local community centres and sports halls.

Older adults and inactive individuals are most encouraged to take part, and there is information online at Cork Sports Partnership and from GPs and community health professionals. <https://www.corksports.ie/WellCommActive> Participants are encouraged to make healthier choices in supportive, fun community environments, with courses run by specially trained local tutors.

Staying Fit for the Future is a specifically designed exercise programme for older adults, promoting healthy ageing through gentle physical activity that also improves strength, balance and co-ordination, helping people stay steady on their feet. The social aspect alone of this fun class for older adults is a true tonic, with fantastic encouragement from helpful trainers.

Project WeightLoss classes involve a 12 week weight management programme, developed by health and fitness professionals, where inactive and overweight participants get a supervised and structured exercise re-

gime, as well as advice and practical supports. It encourages lifelong behaviour change through participation and education.

Inactive individuals with low motivation are supported in becoming physically active with Made2Move, one-to-one mentoring that can be done in any location. The eight week programme helps develop simple exercise as a long term habit, boosting both physical and mental wellbeing.

Healthy Food Made Easy is a six week nutrition education programme, developed by HSE community dietitians, to promote healthy eating and build simple cookery skills. By im-

proving nutrition knowledge and the eating habits of participants, the course helps the whole family with diet-related chronic conditions like cardiovascular disease, obesity and diabetes.

Although Covid restrictions and the current lockdown, in particular, have impacted WellComm Active programmes, great efforts are being made to complete all activities for the current season. While level 3 restrictions were in place, many groups took their morning exercise regimes outdoors to local parks, and trainers were in contact with participants on simple daily routines to perform at home.

In lockdown, the four key programmes are now running online, with participants being put through their paces from the comfort of their own homes.

We are lucky to have such an amazing group of community tutors who are proactive in supporting our older adult groups. They have worked tirelessly to get face-to-face classes back up and running indoors, after the first

lockdown, they have adapted indoor classes to outdoor settings, and are currently providing phone support and liaising with family and friends so that older adults can access Zoom classes and stay part of Wellcomm Active.

For some people, these classes are an important social event in their week too, where they meet friends and neighbours, and enjoy the 'buzz' of some light exercise in a friendly environment that does them a power of good.

Group exercise and personal development is motivating and fun, where communities encourage and support each other. By actively engaging with people who need support, we improve their quality of life and give them tools to manage their own health and wellbeing.

Feedback from course participants is excellent too; which is all the more motivation for WellComm Active to keep classes going now, even if it is remotely, and to actively plan our new season of community wellbeing activities for 2021.

With an ageing population and growing waiting lists, the more health and care initiatives we can embed in communities, the healthier the outlook for everyone.

■ Eoin Kaar is the WellComm Active Project Lead at Cork Sports Partnership. He can be contacted at wellcommactive@corksports.ie or by telephone (021) 434-7096.



Morgan Buckley, Chairperson, Cork Sports Partnership, Michael Fitzgerald, Chief Officer of Cork-Kerry Community Healthcare, and Eoin Kaar, WellComm Active Project Lead Cork Sports Partnership, at the WellComm Active Initiative launch, at UCC Campus, Cork.