



**fitmums**<sup>TM</sup>  
and friends

## Get Set to Go

### End of project report

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## Get Set to Go - a Fitmums and Friends First

### 1. Introduction

At the beginning of 2019 Fitmums and Friends were successful in an application to deliver a 12-week programme as part of the Get Set to Go initiative, in conjunction with Hull and East Yorkshire MIND (HEY MIND) and Active Humber. The aim of the programme was to encourage those with low to moderate mental health issues to participate in exercise and to continue exercising once the 12 weeks had been completed.

Fitmums and Friends is a registered charity and affiliated athletics club with 11 clubs in Hull, East Yorkshire, NE Lincolnshire, South Yorkshire and North Yorkshire. Each club is organised by volunteers, uses trained run leaders and unique systems of support to particularly support beginners to exercise or those anxious about becoming more active.

### 2. Background

Hull and East Yorkshire HEY MIND did some initial advertising, including an advert on Radio Humberside which attracted the first referral within minutes of going live on air - much to the joy of the gentleman who referred himself! People who were already using the services of HEY MIND were able to refer themselves directly onto the scheme. All other referrals also went through HEY MIND initially, before coming to the Fitmums and Friends project lead. Referrals came in from the last week of February and initial phone calls to prospective participants started from March 4th 2019. Initially 15 referrals were received.

The 15 referrals reduced to 10 following initial discussions, as for varying reasons some people could no longer make a session, with another gentleman gaining full time employment which was a huge achievement in itself. Once everyone had received an initial phone call, a suitable location and time to meet was identified the following week to talk through the programme, complete some paperwork and to discuss the group taster session which was a key part of the beginning of the programme and a great chance for the new participants to meet each other and get a feel for Fitmums and Friends & Friends.

### 3. Programme Structure

Table 1 shows the overall structure of the programme devised by Fitmums and Friends.

**Table 1**

<b>Programme element</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>Referrals organised by HEY MIND and sent to F&amp;F Project Lead</b>	Referrals were accepted from people already supported by HEY MIND as well as people not known to them. But all referrals had to go through HEY MIND.
<b>Initial phone call by Fitmums and Friends Project Lead to participant</b>	This was to introduce the programme, gauge interest to continue and book a face to face meet up.

<b>1-1 meet up &amp; assessment with F&amp;F Project Lead</b>	Mood validation carried out at this point, referral to In the Pink if required and the most appropriate local club identified for weekly exercise sessions.
<b>Group meet up 1 and exercise taster</b>	This provided a chance to meet the other participants and enabled a physical activity assessment by walking 1-lap of parkrun route
<b>In the Pink meet up</b>	For those who chose this extra support, a meet up took place in local café with their Volunteer Supporter.
<b>Commencement at local Club</b>	Participants started at their local clubs the week after the first group meet up (with or without In the Pink support).
<b>Group meet 2 up at 6-weeks and activity</b>	Two laps of parkrun course undertaken.
<b>Group meet up 3 at 9-weeks and activity</b>	Three laps of parkrun course undertaken.
<b>Finale parkrun</b>	Total parkrun course completed.
<b>1-1 meet up</b>	Post mood validation completed and qualitative evaluation.
<b>Celebration event</b>	Organised by HEY MIND 11 months later

The group meet up was a key part of the Get Set to Go programme, an important opportunity to explain and demonstrate how Fitmums and Friends systems work and to show the new participants that exercise could promote emotional well-being when combined with fresh air, friendly people and social interaction. It also enabled us to achieve some important goals before the actual course began:

- Gathering the group together in a relaxed environment, to chat and have a drink together helped reduced anxiety levels and helped participants realise they were not alone in their mental health challenges
- enabled the group to meet and chat to some key leaders on the programme
- discuss the overall aim of the programme as a group with completion of a Parkrun as the end goal of Get Set to Go - how did everyone feel about this? Was it a realistic goal?
- ensure that everyone understood that they would be taking things at their own pace and would always be supported by the programme leader, run leaders and wider members of the group.

The Taster Session was held at Warners Gym in West Hull chosen because we planned to use the nearby Peter Pan Parkrun as a template for sessions. We started off doing one lap (approximately 1.5km) of Peter Pan Parkrun ( normally a 3 big lap & 1 small lap course ). This walk covered a distance that many of the participants had not done for some time. The fact that we used the Fitmums and Friends principles of going at your own pace, shepherding and chatting meant that we covered the distance fairly quickly and it was an enjoyable experience, despite windy and cold conditions. Participants felt amazed that they had walked and talked themselves through their first Fitmums and Friends mile and actually enjoyed it! The idea of completing three laps in 12-weeks time suddenly felt like a possibility.

By the time the Taster Session came to an end, everyone had exercised, socialised and had a warm drink with their new team and had been able to meet the leaders who would help them on the next step of their journey - the first session at their chosen club. We felt positive and enthused.

#### **4. Additional support**

Two additional features within Fitmums and Friends proved helpful for participants in this programme.

- The “In the Pink” scheme which offers more intensive short term 1-1 support to enable people to access sessions.
- The Mental Health Champions structure provides ad hoc volunteer support at sessions for anyone feeling a little low or in need of a chat.

In the Pink support has been an integral part of Fitmums and Friends & Friends since its launch in 2012 when a small grant enabled the development of a scheme to support vulnerable people, initially those suffering from post-natal depression. Mood validation soon proved that this type of 1-1 support to become more active had an enormous impact on emotional and physical health. It soon became apparent that the model would likely work with people facing a wider variety of issues (not just PND) in essence anything that was creating a barrier to exercise. Hence it expanded with the simple aim of supporting anyone who for whatever reason was unable to attend alone. We could enthuse about Fitmums and Friends and its benefits as much as we liked but for some people, walking through the door for the first time was just too daunting and meant that the many benefits it had to offer were simply out of reach for them. A volunteer team of supporters offer this support and the scheme has the following features:

- people could refer themselves onto the scheme or be referred by a friend or health professional
- they would then be matched up to a volunteer by the volunteer co-ordinator and the volunteer supporter would call them and arrange to meet up in a café to talk through what they hoped to achieve.
- they would attend three sessions at their chosen club with the volunteer supporter by their side. This would mean they would have a friend alongside them to walk in for the first time - the first time is always the most nerve-wracking! After three sessions together, the hope is that the new participant will have made some new friends and feel confident to attend on their own in the future.
- the participant completes some mood validation documents at the initial meet-up to assess how they are feeling and describe their mood. The same paperwork is completed following the final supported session. This validation usually demonstrates how exercise, social interaction and fresh air have helped to boost their mood.

In the Pink support was explained at each of the initial meetings with prospective participants and most were very keen to take part and receive that added level of support.

## 5. Costs

Funding received from HEY MIND amounted to £1455 and Fitmums & Friends contributed £784 to the project (see Table 2 below). In kind contribution came from the venue for the group taster sessions – <https://warnershealthclub.co.uk/physio/>. The project needed input prior to the 12-week commencement and afterwards. These additional costs were supported by Fitmums & Friends.

**Table 2**

Cost	Nature of cost	Funded by
£1200	Project Co-ordinator 5 hours per week for 12 weeks	HEY MIND
£150	Taster session	HEY MIND
£105	X7 Club tops	HEY MIND
£400	In the Pink expenses	Fitmums & Friends
£324	Membership x9	Fitmums & Friends
£60	Refreshments x2 group meetings	Fitmums & Friends
[£75 in kind payment]	Venue hire – Group meetings	Warners
<b>TOTAL £2314</b>	<b>Per person = £257</b>	

### Notes

The 12-week programme ran from April to June but work began prior to this (in February) to recruit and assess participants. Work also went on beyond June in order to wrap up the programme in terms of evaluation. This was funded by Fitmums & Friends.

In the Pink costs are £35 for full programme of support i.e. telephone call, meet up in café, then x3 supported visits at a session. Not all participants had the full support as they attended less club sessions.

Unlike many running clubs, Fitmums and Friends members tend to wear identifiable pink/blue tops even at training sessions. We quickly realised having a top would help participants feel integral to the club. HEY MIND kindly provided additional funding to enable the purchase of a club t-shirt for the participants.

The way membership works is that it enables members to attend any Fitmums and Friends session anywhere, not just at the club they most regularly attend. We included membership as part of the programme in order that participants had ongoing access to supported activity beyond the end of the GSTG programme. Rather than being just a 12-week programme, this offered 52 weeks of support instead. Thus the cost above per person is not just for a 12-week period of intensive support but potentially up to 52 weeks of support.

## **6. The halfway point**

Although not initially planned we decided to meet up at week 6 to walk 2 laps of the Park Run route – around 2 miles. This enabled us to gauge how everyone was doing in terms of fitness and also give us an opportunity to meet socially and catch up on news. The group surprised themselves again by walking and talking their way through 2 miles with ease. After a warm drink in the cafe, we talked about how everyone was finding the programme so far and there was some encouraging feedback. The general consensus was that it was going well, they had managed to find and get to the sessions with ease, they were able to think more clearly and felt that the sessions had been good for their emotions, helping to keep them balanced. Two participants became quite emotional about how much Get Set To Go had helped them in the space of 6 weeks. They felt so much better and loved having something to look forward to each week. They felt that their breathing had improved along with their fitness and that they had started to interact socially and make some friends. The feeling at this 6-week meet up was so great - everyone was happy to see each other, there was so much encouragement and a real feeling of togetherness and 'we can do this!' The group asked at this point if they could meet up again at week 9 ahead of preparing for the finale challenge. It became clear that these group meetings were beneficial to the participants.

## **7. The Finale challenge**

The finale challenge was on a beautiful sunny June day, nerves were evident but everyone felt ready for the challenge ahead. They had been looking forward to this moment for 12 weeks. HEY MIND had funded a Fitmums and Friends top for each participant so they truly felt part of the Fitmums and Friends family. It was a busy day at Peter Pan Parkrun but the atmosphere was buzzing as always and we set off ready to complete those 3 miles! The support from fellow Fitmums and Friends and the other Parkrun participants was just phenomenal - there was so much cheering, many kind and supportive words and an envelope of care for each person taking part. I realised that although it's not a race, Parkrun is such a busy event that it could be really intimidating for the group. However they handled themselves brilliantly however and really used the lovely network of support to get through the event. Receiving a time at the end of the event was also something that most participants had not experienced before and we were able to talk about what an achievement this was and how they could look to build on this the next time they took part. We were able to talk about what a supportive community Parkrun was, something they had also found at Fitmums and Friends and how they could perhaps volunteer here in the future - a great way of giving something back, something that we are aware is very positive in terms of mental health. Several of us stayed on after the Parkrun for celebration tea and cake!

Five of the main group of 8 participants completed the Parkrun with one lady cheering on from the side-lines. Due to a funeral of a family member the day before, she did not feel up to taking part but found that cheering us all on made her feel great! Another gentleman

was injured and another lady was at her new job. We discussed the possibility of meeting up at Parkrun at regular intervals throughout the year.

In July at the Fitmums and Friends annual awards evening, one of our Get Set to Go participants was nominated for an award – for people achieving in the face of adversity. Although the person nominated didn't win, the nomination comments were shared with the participant which had a great impact on him. The fact that someone had thought him a worthy winner and taken the time to vote for him meant a great deal.

## **8. The Participants**

The following sections outline the journey of participants from first meeting up to the completion of the 12-week programme and contact beyond this.

### **a) Participant 1 (In the Pink sessions attended – 2)**

Participant 1 is a 55 year old male and an avid walker, walking for hours each week covering many miles. He is not keen on public transport and doesn't drive but has found he enjoys walking and the health benefits it brings plus allowing him to get from A-B. His goals for Get Set To Go were to meet new people, keep fit and lose some weight and he was keen to have the support of In the Pink. He used to run but due to osteoarthritis had found that walking was more achievable, not to say that running was not possible in the future. We decided that walking for fitness would be his preferred method of exercise and that the Boothferry group would be his closest Fitmums and Friends club. He was very happy to aim for the Peter Pan Parkrun at week 12 and I was encouraged by his enthusiasm. I must mention that this person was the first referral onto our scheme after he heard the advert on Radio Humberside, mere minutes into the launch day of Get Set to Go!

This participant attended Boothferry for 2 weeks with his volunteer supporter and then felt confident enough to attend on his own. He really enjoyed the social aspect of Fitmums and Friends and loved the atmosphere at the club. He also attended Peter Pan Parkrun on his own and loved the atmosphere there and the ethos of the group, something that he wouldn't have done without the boost of Get Set to Go. Unfortunately he had a fall at one of the Fitmums and Friends sessions in early April and this set him back a little due to an injury to his knee.

On completion of the programme, Participant 1 was full of praise for In the Pink and his volunteer supporter - he loved having a friendly face to welcome him and said that was one of the best parts of the programme. He enjoyed the social interaction and the friendliness of Boothferry and spending time with the Coach who he found inspirational plus the other members there. He loved supporting others and thought that shepherding was a wonderful idea - as a fast walker he would do plenty of shepherding and found the feeling of encouraging others as he did this really special. He would recommend the Fitmums and Friends Get Set to Go programme readily to others and without the ongoing support he would not have continued. He found that the group meet-ups worked really well and that Park Run was a great goal to aim for and something that was achievable too.



He has continued to attend sessions and has a good relationship with several members of the club. I feel a really positive outcome for this gentleman.

**b) Participant 2** (In the Pink sessions attended – 3)

Participant 2 is a 35 year old male and such a lovely, warm person. He felt confident to try walking at a session but hoped to try a run if he felt up to it at any point. His main goals were to meet people and gain confidence - he finds meeting new people rather difficult but felt this would be a real benefit to him. He hoped to improve his fitness and lose some weight too. He heard about Get Set To Go via his support worker at HEY MIND and felt encouraged to try. He had been undergoing some counselling therapy and CBT since the end of January and found this quite useful in dealing with everyday life. Part of his goal was to find more work in the near future so hoped, with some improved fitness and confidence, that this would happen. He was very keen to work with an In the Pink supporter as he found the prospect of attending the first session alone rather daunting. He attended the Boothferry group to begin with but found that the Cottingham group was just as easy to get to and actually worked better for him in terms of how many people he could exercise with in the 1-mile group.

He attended three sessions with his In the Pink supporter and this worked really well for him. To his amazement, he ran the whole of the 1-mile route on his first ever session! His support worker described his feeling on competing this as “elation”! It certainly gave him the confidence to keep trying each week and he realised that his basic fitness levels were much better than he had initially thought. As there were four people in total from Get set To Go attending Cottingham Fitmums and Friends, this provided a lovely support network and they could look out for those friendly faces each week. Cottingham continued to work well for this gentleman and he has also picked up some extra shifts at work and attended a 6 week 'Ways to Wellbeing' course with HEY MIND which proved very helpful. He felt confident that Park Run at week 12 was achievable and an appropriate goal to have in mind.

He did brilliantly in the Park Run and was so well supported, not only by the Fitmums and Friends team but also by his very proud parents who clapped and cheered us all around the course! He felt happy with his time and did not find the number of people daunting (something that we were worried about). His parents really enjoyed the morning and his mum was even inspired to try a bit more walking herself! He was encouraged to branch out and do more exercise on his own as well as part of a group and felt that the programme was greatly beneficial for his mental health. He noticed how much he enjoyed being in the fresh air, listening to and spotting nature and the social aspects of the course. He found his volunteer supporters from Fitmums and Friends really inspiring. A fantastic outcome overall for him.

\*update - this gentleman has now gained more work which was one of his initial goals. This has been great for him in terms of confidence. He has also been walking more, especially enjoying walks at the coast. He has also felt confident to get involved in some evaluation of this project by speaking to Active Humber about how Get Set To GO has worked for him, which indicates how his confidence has grown. Gaining extra work has meant that it is now

more difficult for this gentleman to attend Fitmums and Friends but he hopes to go along on a Wednesday evening whenever he can.

**c) Participant 3** (In the Pink sessions attended – 3)

This 46-year old lady joined Get set To Go having heard about it via HEY MIND. She suffered from anxiety and depression and gave up both alcohol and cigarettes in the month prior to starting this programme. Her goal for the 12 weeks was to get fitter and meet some new people - she felt that exercising as part of a group would be much nicer than being alone. Although she had some back trouble in the past, she was keen to exercise and although intended to walk initially, her hope was to try running as the weeks continued. She attended Boothferry Fitmums and Friends to begin with but, as with participant 2, felt that the Cottingham group worked better for her in terms of location, plus it was nice to attend with other Get Set To Go members. This lady was very keen to access In the Pink support and this worked so well for her. As a chatty and fairly confident lady, she was boosted by that little extra layer of support and soon felt confident to attend her Fitmums and Friends group alone each week. She took advantage of the full 3 In the Pink session.

This lady did manage to run and took on a run/walk plan, taking advantage of the shepherding system to encourage her as she went along. I think she surprised herself at how well she was able to complete the 1 mile route, week after week, especially finding that if you chatted a little along the way, the time passed rather quickly! At the 6-week meet up she did so well, completing the 2 mile route with ease and being a great support to other group members. She made firm friends with another lady, also part of Get Set to Go - they lived close to each other. They decided to do a walk together in Pickering Park each weekend as well as their Fitmums and Friends sessions. This was fantastic to hear as it meant they were thinking about progressing, trying new things and getting out and about more which is so positive. Even though this lady had to miss a couple of weeks of the programme due to having nerve block injections in her back, she was in regular touch throughout. In Mid-May, at a catch up and 1 mile run, she chatted to me about healthy eating and adding more exercise into her routine - she felt she had come through the initial fog that she felt when giving up the alcohol and cigarettes and felt ready to move forward again - a very positive step for her. A brilliant outcome has been that this lady gained employment, having completed an intensive training course to become a carer. Her warm and chatty nature will suit this role really well and we are delighted that Get set To Go has played a role in her new achievements.

**d) Participant 4** (In the Pink sessions attended – 3)

This 63 year old lady was referred via HEY MIND and had a number of issues which affected her ability to exercise regularly - she suffered from anxiety, depression and panic attacks, had diabetes, an underactive thyroid and also Meniers Disease, which causes an imbalance in the ears. Despite all of this she was keen to take part, with goals of losing weight, improving her fitness and being able to walk without getting breathless. This lady loved the idea of In the Pink support and was referred through to the volunteer co-ordinator immediately. She started off her sessions - first at Boothferry and then moving along to Cottingham with three of her Get Set To Go pals. This lady struggled most out of the whole

group, not only with her fitness but also with the trials of everyday life living with poor mental health. At the taster session, she found the mile really tough and did not complete the full lap, going back to the cafe early with one of our leaders. On her first supported session at Fitmums and Friends, she completed the mile but was extremely slow and found it very tough. We did wonder whether we could refer her onto 'Walking for Health' who do much shorter walks, in a bid to improve her fitness levels before coming back into the Fitmums and Friends fold. However, she really persevered and said that she was really enjoying the sessions, was sleeping better and also felt more energetic.

The level of support that she was receiving from the group was incredible too - I described it at the time as 'In the Pink Plus' - where our participants were being supported by not only their In the Pink supporter but also the Club Co-Ordinator, leaders, mental health champions and group members themselves - everyone was willing these people to succeed. By April, a mere 3 weeks into the programme, this lady walked a mile really well. By the end of April, a friendship had formed with another Get Set To Go member who also attended Cottingham but lived nearby, so they were in touch to arrange meeting up to travel together to the session. So positive things were coming out of the sessions - not only in terms of exercise - friendships were being built too. A quick phone conversation with this lady on in April revealed that she had been for two walks in one day at Pickering park - once with her son to walk his dog and then in the afternoon with her new friend from Get Set To Go. This marked a real change in behaviour.

By early May this lady was having appointments with Jobcentre and Weight Wise, looking to improve her diet and job prospects. Sadly, towards the end of the 12 week programme, she had a bereavement and did not attend for several weeks. In her own words, she had a big blip but found the whole experience really useful and shared her feelings with family and friends. As well as Weight Wise and Jobcentre, she had also contacted Connect Well (Social Prescribing Service) and had started using her local Age UK gym and Hydro pool. On the day of the Park Run, even though she felt unable to take part, she came along and clapped and cheered us all around the route and was quite uplifted by the whole experience, taking just as much from encouraging and supporting others as she might have done having taken part herself. It was lovely to see her looking so well and so positive and really enthusiastic about the Park Run. It was evident that it's not always about taking part in the straightforward sense but being in a supporting role too that brings benefit to people.

**e) Participant 5** (In the Pink sessions attended – 3)

This lady, aged 48, had the most complex issues of all the participants, suffering from anxiety, depression and a complex PTSD. At our initial meeting, she cried for almost 2 hours. This aside, she was very determined that she was ready to begin the Get Set To Go programme having worked intensively with a mental health professional for some time. Her goals were to come along twice a week to one run session and one bootcamp session. She was keen to access In the Pink support and was wonderfully supported by one of the team, even though it was nerve-wracking for her to attend that first time. The sense of relief having managed her first mile was palpable. By the end of April she had started to build relationships with her chosen group of Beverley Fitmums and Friends, staying for a drink

after each Tuesday morning run and chatting independently with members of the group. She attended her first Grass Track session in April. This is facilitated by a trained coach and is more intensive and potentially intimidating than a normal group run thus a real success to see her participation in this. She did really well, with the added boost of In the Pink support and her determination to exercise improvement was really showing. This participant continued to go from strength to strength and was often encouraging and supportive of others whilst managing to have maintained great attendance at her sessions and working really hard to improve her fitness.

On the day of Park Run, she was supported by not only the Fitmums and Friends family but by her husband too and she wore her new Fitmums and Friends top with pride. She was calm, cheerful and completed the run with ease, staying for tea and cake afterwards in the sunshine. Her feedback on the programme has been positive and honest - on some days she found exercising a real struggle but felt she was making steps towards being much fitter in general. She has felt the perfect level of motivation (without being frightened off!) and has enjoyed the variety of activity available to her. Meeting new people was so enjoyable and she loved the bootcamp - being able to intersperse running with strength training has been great for her. She has found Get Set To Go to be a great middle ground for her to get going and has appreciated the Mental Health champion network in place for extra support. It has been incredible to witness the improvement that this lady has made - she looked visibly brighter! Park Run came to Beverley for the first time in July where I was a marshal on week one. Imagine how I felt to see this lady come past me, with her dog for company, brave enough to tackle a brand new, super busy and tough Park Run on her own - I don't think she could have done that without the initial boost of the Get Set To Go programme. It was a very proud moment.

**f) Participant 6 (Did not use In the Pink support)**

This lady referred herself onto Get Set To Go having been a previous member of Fitmums and Friends. In her time as a member she had achieved some incredible things, the pinnacle of which was the London Marathon in 2018. However she lost her love for running and with a busy job and family to juggle, and life challenges she found that she had not run for quite some time and had begun to feel quite low. With initial goals to lose weight, pick her running back up and then get that enjoyment of running back again, we felt we could look a little further ahead at the 12-week Park Run followed by Pretty Muddy and Cancer Research Race for Life (both 5k events) in early July. She felt that she had let people down following the Marathon having not come back to the club for some time, but we talked this through and she was keen to get back to her club and pick up where she had left off. As In the Pink was not requested this time, I contacted the Club Co-ordinators and Mental Health Champion team who were on hand to offer quiet support where necessary. They were fantastic and so supportive, offering encouragement at every session this lady attended. Her family were also very active and were there to cheer her every step of the way. As she had a very busy job, working full-time and managing shifts too, it was not possible for her to attend the taster session or the subsequent meet-ups along the way. We kept in regular contact though and met up for coffee and a chat at around halfway.

This lady was a great source of inspiration for the other Get Set To Go participants and was able to offer both support and advice as an experienced runner, often running in the 1 mile group (even though capable of more) with the other participants and shepherding them - thus adding to her mileage but giving support at the same time. After 7 weeks, this lady decided that she would like to add a weight loss element into her plan. We decided to follow the NHS Choices Healthy Eating plan, looking at portion sizes, keeping a food diary and recording activity. It seemed a positive step that she was inspired to add in the weight loss element. This lady was brilliant at park run, supported by her family who joined her on the run and by many friendly faces from her club. I am thrilled to say that she completed the Pretty Muddy event in July too and was considering a 10K later in the year with friends. Get Set To Go was the catalyst she needed to walk back through the door at Fitmums and Friends and take that first step back into running for fun. It has been wonderful to see her back there, supporting others whilst also achieving her initial goals and smiling along the way. She has really inspired me with her determination and honesty and I hope she continues to improve and feel great about herself.

**g) Participant 7** (In the Pink sessions attended – 3)

This 32 year old gentleman was referred to the scheme via his support worker at HEY MIND and initially felt that he would benefit from an In the Pink support worker, as his confidence levels were low. He hoped to walk, perhaps run but was most keen to participate in the Bootcamp sessions at Beverley as he liked the sound of the session and was also attracted to the daytime offer. Although coming to Beverley meant that he would have to catch a bus and then a train, the thought of travelling to an evening session was too daunting for him due to fears surrounding being out at night on his own.

This participant suffered from depression, anxiety and paranoia and occasionally self-harm. He also suffered from migraines. His hopes for the scheme were to build up his confidence and trust people again, plus have faith in himself and his ability. He completed 3 sessions with his In the Pink support worker and then continued to attend the Bootcamp session independently, forming positive relationships within that group and working hard with the Coach to improve his techniques each week. I attended the Bootcamp with him, just before the final Parkrun date and he felt quite unwell, suffering from a headache and feeling a bit wobbly. He had to sit down following a floor exercise as his head was hurting and other members of the group were genuinely concerned about him, getting a chair for him plus water and a supply of jelly babies! He was very flattered that people were concerned about him and when I explained that it was because he was a valued member of the group and people enjoyed his company and cared about his wellbeing, he became quite emotional. He said he felt flattered that they cared about him. I think this is one of the tremendous points about Fitmums and Friends - the support and care from fellow members and the genuine desire for them to succeed. I think the other Bootcamp group members could see how hard this participant worked and how far he had to travel just to take part and this meant that not only were they rooting for him to succeed, it was inspirational for them too.

This gentleman coped well with the final Parkrun at week 12, although he felt a little nervous and got a little carried away, finding himself a bit out of breath. He had a little sulk (his own words!) but then carried on and completed the run with a fellow Get Set To Go colleague, crossing the finish line together. On reflection, he really enjoyed the Parkrun and the support on the day. He was not daunted by the number of people due to the support he received from fellow Fitmums and Friends. He has ambitions to do more Parkruns and to continue with the Bootcamp sessions as these have really suited him. He would certainly recommend the Get Set To Go plan to others.

\*update - this participant has continued with the Bootcamp sessions, attending most weeks apart from the school holiday sessions and feels confident to attend on his own. I met him recently and we attended Bootcamp together. I was so proud to hear that he has registered to start a GCSE maths course and has booked flights to see his close friend in America, organising tickets, travel and vaccinations himself - such an achievement! The Maths GCSE is a really positive step and although this will mean him spending two hours each Friday morning at school, he plans to come straight from this to the Friday Bootcamp so he does not miss his weekly session. He is also working with the Goodwin Trust who are helping him to look for voluntary allotment work. He loves nature and wildlife so would like to find voluntary work in this sector if he can.

**h) Participant 8** (Did not use In the Pink support)

This 43 year old lady was a previous attendee of Fitmums and Friends but due to depression, anxiety and Borderline Personality Disorder had found it very difficult to attend on a regular basis. She also suffered from arthritis. Her goals for the 12 week Get Set To Go programme were to lose weight, improve core strength and gain muscle, do a 'proper' run and feel better in general. Although she had issues with her back and a trapped nerve, she was happy to exercise and had been advised to do so by medical professionals. This lady was interested in walking, running and bootcamp and lived close to the Leisure Centre in Beverley, so travel was not a barrier. Although it was suggested, this lady did not feel that she needed the support of In the Pink. I think that this may have negatively impacted on how much she attended, as her attendance was lower than that of other participants. This lady referred herself onto Get Set To Go along with her husband as they both felt they needed to exercise and socialise more and that a group session might aid them to do this. Due to living close by, this participant was able to attend both daytime and evening sessions at Beverley Fitmums and Friends, joining the one mile group to run-walk the distance. She also attended the Bootcamp session on a Friday on several occasions and this meant she had a rounded experience of the Fitmums and Friends offering.

Her journey over the 12 weeks was not an easy one, with a lot of persuasion and encouragement on my behalf to nudge her to attend the sessions, which she did not manage to do every week. A busy home life and a husband with complex needs also provided a barrier for her. I hoped that she would attend the final Parkrun at week 12, though she felt slightly disconnected from the group, having been unable to attend any of the group meet-ups that took place. I was delighted that she did attend the Parkrun with the rest of the group and I know that this was a nerve-wracking experience for her. She

wore her pink Fitmums and Friends top with pride and received so much support from the team of Fitmums and Friends attending on that day. Although she walked some of the course, she came in well under an hour to cheers from her fellow group members. I think she was touched by the support even though she found it a tough Parkrun. On reflection, I would be more insistent on In the Pink support for both this lady and her husband if they took part in Get Set Too Go again, as I think it would have provided that extra boost to attend sessions and keep focus.

\*update - this participant has now gained a job. I know that she has worked so hard for this, doing many hours of voluntary work and attending interviews which have been so daunting for her, so this is great news. I don't know how much Get Set To Go may have impacted this but I hope it played a part in enhancing her self-confidence and feeling of 'I can do this!'

**i) Participant 9** (Did not use In the Pink support)

This 45 year old gentleman was very keen that he should attend the Get Set To Go programme. His goals at our initial meeting were to lose weight, stop smoking, increase his fitness levels and feel better mentally. He had Aspergers Syndrome and suffered from depression and anxiety. His aim was to begin a walk/run session with the 1 mile group and although he found it challenging, he came along to the first session with his wife, waiting outside the venue until the warm up began. He enjoyed the mile and managed to run a short distance though mainly walked. He talked to the rest of the group about the architecture it proved to be a very informative session! Unfortunately, following the session, he fractured his lower left rib and was advised to rest and let it heal. This was the end of his Get Set To Go journey. I was able to recommend the Stop Smoking app on the NHS Choices website and he agreed to take a look at this. I hope that if we engaged in this programme again, that we could encourage this gentleman to come back and participate.

**j) Participant 10** (Did not use In the Pink support)

This 26 year old lady was full of enthusiasm for the Get Set To Go programme, being a volunteer at HEY MIND at the time of the programme. She was taking part in a 24-hour hike in the Scottish Highlands and this was her goal to get in training for the big event and potentially try some running too. Bootcamp was also of interest. This young lady suffered from anxiety, depression and a complex PTSD. She attended the Taster Session and completed the initial 1 mile walk on this date with ease, getting on well with other members of the group and the Fitmums and Friends team. Sadly, following on from the Taster Session, things became difficult and she felt unable to attend any sessions. We spoke on several occasions and she explained that getting to the venue from her home was too much for her to cope with.

We looked at all of our options but agreed that the Get Set To Go programme needed to be sustainable for her and would not be if she could not get to the sessions. We felt really sad about this but hoped that she may attend again in the future if she felt able to. We since heard from this lady that she had run the Hull 10k and in an amazing time! She said she was going to try her local Parkrun too. I invited her along to our final Parkrun but she was

unable to make it. As with the other participants, I plan to keep in touch on a regular basis and hope that we can work together at some point in the future.

### 9. Outcome measures

Participant data was collected at baseline and at 3 months by Fitmums and Friends and 6 and 12 months by National Mind. Volunteer data was also collected by Fitmums and Friends at Baseline and National Mind at 6 and 12 month intervals. All data returned to HEY MIND for evaluation.

#### a) Mood Validation Scores

All GSTG participants completed a PHQ9 and GAD7 questionnaire prior to the start of the programme at their 1-1 meet up with the project lead and again at the end after the final challenge. See Table 3 below.

The PHQ9 is a measure of depressive symptoms and can be repeated to monitor change over time. A score of 11+ is considered to be within the clinical range (symptoms of a moderately severe to severe depression).

The GAD7 is a measure of anxiety symptoms and can be repeated to monitor change over time. A score of 11+ is considered to be within the clinical range (symptoms of moderately severe to severe anxiety).

Both questionnaires are screening tools designed to be used as a measure of symptom presentation and are NOT diagnostic when used in isolation. Below are the pre and post scores presented in a table format.

**Table 3**

Participant	Pre-GAD 7	Post GAD 7	Pre- PHQ 9	Post PHQ 9
A	14	14	16	8
B	16	9	16	16
C	7	7	9	8
D	19	DNC	21	DNC
E	15	Not completed	21	Not completed
F	10	6	16	6
G	14	10	16	12
H	14	Not completed	20	Not completed
I	17	Not completed	14	Not completed
J	6	DNC	13	DNC

The results above suggest that of the four participants who completed the programme, the majority reported significant improvements in symptoms (see yellow highlighted areas).

Five participants did not complete the programme and therefore the post intervention questionnaires. Those who did not complete had higher initial scores in either the GAD7 or PHQ9 or both, than those who completed the programme. This may suggest that



participants with higher initial scores may not have been suitable for the programme due to their higher levels of anxiety/depression.

The programme was aimed at people in the low to moderate category so it possible that participants who appeared to be more closely aligned to the moderate to severe category were less suitable for this type of initiative. Early screening is essential to determine those who might benefit most.

#### **b) Qualitative Feedback**

Here are some examples of feedback from participants:

*"I have found everything really helpful, it has been really good for me"*

*"In The Pink was a great way of doing things and the people were really encouraging"*

*"The programme worked really well - the group meets to combine walking and social time - the Parkrun worked well as an end goal to the scheme and I really looked forward to this"*

*"It was nice to be in contact with people - I have suggested Fitmums to a few people I know"*

*"In The Pink was very important - it was brilliant! There was a lot of support and Laura kept in touch throughout"*

*"I have stopped socially isolating myself"*

*"I can't imagine going back to not wanting to exercise or socialise"*

*"You should continue to have a Get Set To Go programme every year to build a network of participants that can support each other and also change ideas that people have about those with mental health difficulties"*

*"Everyone has been really supportive - it's been a lovely group of people"*

*'I really enjoyed it and would recommend it to others as I wasn't really into the other Get Set To Go sports'*

*'I thought that shepherding was a great idea!'*

#### **10. What have we learnt?**

- It appears that the extra support afforded by the In the Pink scheme has been an essential feature of the programme and made a huge difference to the outcomes of those who used this versus those that didn't.

- The structure of the programme which included a 1-1 assessment, activity taster sessions and regular group meet-ups worked well. We hadn't initially planned for three group meet-ups but the group found them so helpful they were added in and it was beneficial to do so.
- As we imagined linking participants to their nearest/most accessible Fitmums and Friends group from the outset was important in easing them into a structure of support which meant they had ease of access for the future. So even though the programme was only 12-weeks long they had in effect 52 weeks of support due to membership being included as part of the programme. This has supported their participation in the longer term.
- Including an ultimate end goal was an important focus and participants commented that it was great to have a realistic goal to aim for. Parkrun was chosen specifically because it exists as an activity that participants could continue beyond the life of the GSTG programme.
- The vetting of participants for the programme in terms of anxiety and depression is essential. All referrals were managed by HEY MIND but no pre assessment of mood was carried out until they became part of the Fitmums and Friends programme. Mood validation scores suggest that some of the clients were potentially not suitable for the level of support offered by the programme.
- The assessment of participants for the programme in terms physical capability is also essential. One lady in particular found the 1-mile group very challenging to begin with and may have benefitted from a referral to a more gentle walking group in preparation for Fitmums and Friends.
- Feedback was so positive about the initiative with many people recommending it to friends and relatives, and health professionals also asking when the next course is.
- The positive outcomes have extended beyond improved mood and have included improvements in confidence and self-esteem enabling participants to take up paid employment or voluntary work. Participants have also seen improvements in confidence with day to day tasks or getting out and about socially or exercising more independently.
- The group support has been instrumental in helping participants, who although still struggle with their mental health, have made a significant improvement in so many aspects of their life.
- Onward referral to other agencies took place and so important for a project such as this to understand those referral routes. In particular referrals were made to local stop smoking services, walking to health schemes and the social prescribing service.

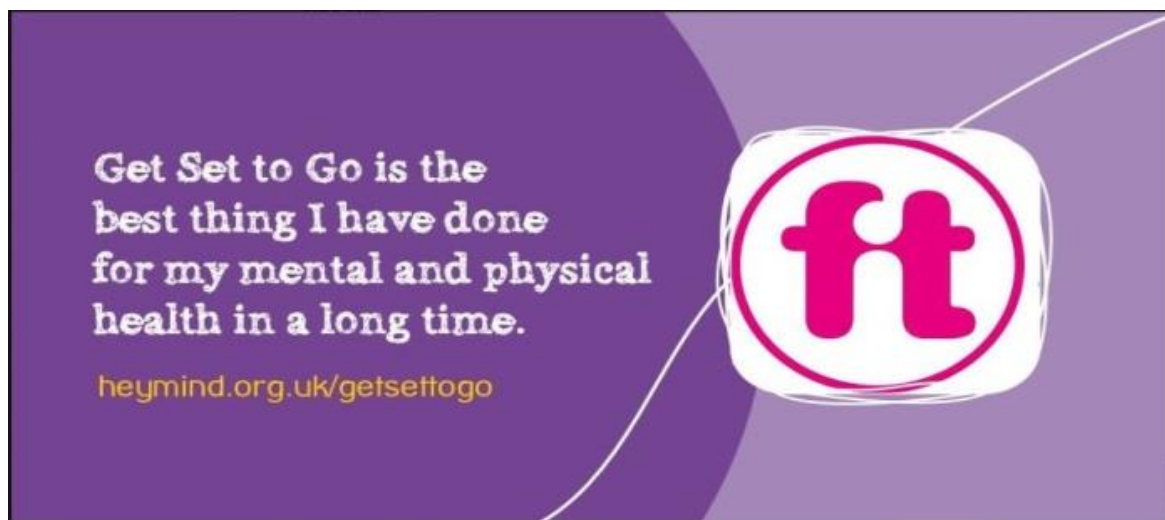
- As with many pilot projects the nature of the scheme evolved in response to the needs of participants. It was good that we were able to flex to this need but this was very much due to volunteer input. The allocated budget did not cover costs but as an organisation we felt it important to test out our ideas to find the most effective model. We can now cost this programme realistically given the knowledge gleaned from this pilot.

### **11. Summary**

There are so many people living with mental health issues and but so many great things happening in communities which could support improved health and wellbeing. A simple walk, some fresh air, a warm drink and some social interaction can make such a difference to someone struggling with poor mental health.

We believe the model we created to deliver Get Set To Go has been an effective means of supporting people with low level mental health issues to become more active and thus reap the physical and psychological benefits as a result. We believe it to be a cost-effective means of using a third sector organisation to provide a quality service with effective outcomes.

We also believe the model is transferrable to any other type of activity and is therefore a useful pilot which could be used to implement many such community programmes. In doing so there is great potential to reduce the burden on NHS mental health services.



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