08 November 2017 at 2.00 pm

Sevenoaks
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Health Liaison Board

5. **'Up and Running' Presentation** (Pages 1 - 12)

Additional information

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Recreational Running for Physical and Mental Health

- Up and Running was set up in February 2010 by Harriet Heal (clinical psychologist) and Shona Campbell (running coach)
- We have delivered the course 20 times, to an average of 6 to 8 participants each time
- On three occasions over those years, a piece was published about the group in SDC's In Shape magazine, and on 2 out of 3 occasions the number of attendees increased significantly (to 15, 8 and13)
- Our biggest problem is reaching the people we would like to help, so we are constantly looking for ways to promote the group and encourage people to try it.

What is Up and Running?

Originally set up with support from SDC, since autumn 2015 it has been run by the two facilitators with no outside support or funding. Our only source of income is the £2 per week we charge to attend (which we waive if participants are unable to pay), and we use that to pay for flyers, advertising etc.

Our group is a 10 week beginners' running course (but not a standard 'Couch to 5k' programme), designed for women who have issues with mental wellbeing and who are not currently runners but would like to learn. It is open to all women over 18 who have experienced mental health issues.

The programme starts with brisk walking and a small amount of jogging, and the duration of the jogging then builds up gently over 10 weeks in line with the facilitators' assessment of what the participants are able to cope with both physically and mentally.

At the end of the course we hold a run for all current and former attendees, so that the current group can chat to people who have carried on running after the course and benefit from their experience of what worked for them and what didn't. It also allows us to maintain ongoing contact with former participants if they would like that.

Up and Running is not a therapy group – it is an exercise and mutual support group facilitated by a psychologist and a running coach, and that means that participants can talk about their difficulties within the group if they wish, but there is no obligation to do so.

The two key elements to the group are the exercise and the social support provided by the group. Both elements are individually recognised to be helpful, and we believe bringing them together with a third element – being outdoors in green space – gives a potentially powerful combination which helps to make exercise more sustainable in the long term.

What about Physical Health?

I also coach a recreational running group open to all women (www.shonasrunners.co.uk), specialising in complete beginner and intermediate runners. Although it doesn't have the particular mental health focus of Up and Running, we do discuss mental wellbeing (some of the members are people who previously ran with Up and Running) as there is clearly and interplay between physical and mental health. My focus is on small, supportive groups where women can feel nurtured and encouraged.

My experience of coaching women over the last 10 years is that the physical challenge of running can be very beneficial for self-esteem, confidence, and mood. Many runners tell me they find it very

helpful in dealing with stress. There is a lot of research evidence about the physical benefits of running too, and I would be very keen to work with agencies to promote the message that recreational, social running can be immensely beneficial to your mental, emotional and physical wellbeing.

Just a little more detail as an example of the sorts of benefits of running for physical health, though this is by no means an exhaustive list:

It can improve your blood pressure.

Runners are less likely to get blood clots and varicose veins.

It makes your bones stronger and denser.

Runners suffer fewer disabilities in later life

Running delays age-related disability by up to two decades

Runners are seven times LESS likely to require knee replacement

Runners suffer fewer cancers and neurological problems

Runners are half as likely as non-runners to die early.

Runners are up to 36% less likely to develop dementia

Postscript – some evidential detail in case it may be of interest

It is a popular belief that running is bad for the knees, but in fact our joints are highly tolerant of running, and for most people the health benefits of running far outweigh any potential risks. Weight-bearing exercise such as running helps prevent osteoporosis and can be positively beneficial for the knees because it strengthens the muscles around the joint and makes the tendons and ligaments more resilient to stress, making them less likely to tear or sprain. Indeed various studies have indicated that running can actually increase the volume of cartilage and decrease cartilage defects in the knee, which is important in preventing osteoarthritis - one large study of older runners found a lower occurrence of knee replacements compared with a non-running peer group (Medical studies in this area www.npr.org/assets/news/2011/03/28/effect-of-physical-activity-on-knees.pdf and http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2556152).

In addition, regular running can slow the effects of ageing, according to a study from the Stanford University School of Medicine that has tracked 500 older runners (aged over 50) for more than 20 years. Elderly runners have fewer disabilities, a longer span of active life and are half as likely as ageing non-runners to die early deaths, the research found. The senior author of the study said "The study has a very pro-exercise message. If you had to pick one thing to make people healthier as they age, it would be aerobic exercise." The subjects, now in their 70s and 80s, have answered yearly questionnaires about their ability to perform everyday activities such as walking, dressing and grooming, getting out of a chair and gripping objects. The researchers have used national death records to learn which participants died, and why. Nineteen years into the study, 34 per cent of the non-runners had died, compared to only 15 per cent of the runners.

For runners the onset of disability started 16 years later than non-runners. Not only did running delay disability, but the gap between runners' and non-runners' abilities got bigger with time. The senior author of the study said "We did not expect this. The health benefits of exercise are greater than we thought". In the runners in this study, not surprisingly, running has reduced deaths from cardiovascular disease. However, it has also been associated with fewer early deaths from cancer, neurological disease, infections and other causes.

And finally, researchers examined the relationship between cardiovascular fitness and loss of brain function, using data from The Cooper Center Longitudinal Study, a database of patient visits to the Cooper Clinic in Dallas, Texas, which has been previously used to link greater fitness to longer life-expectancy and a lower risk of stroke, diabetes and other diseases. Researchers in the new study compared the midlife fitness levels of 19,458 generally healthy people to the number of those people who were diagnosed 19 to 30 years later with dementia. Fitness levels were measured by a treadmill test. Compared to the least fit people, those with the highest level of conditioning had a 36 per cent lower risk of developing any form of dementia.

HAPPY FEET

If you suffer from depression, running could be the natural step to recovery. Liz Hollis investigates

Think positive

Why running boosts your mood...

- Running releases chemicals in your brain that affect your mood and make you feel happier.
- It counters feelings of hopelessness and boosts your confidence and self-esteem, because you feel a sense of achievement.
- It improves how you look and feel about yourself, and gives you something to focus on and aim for.
- It increases what psychologists call 'coping self-efficacy' – the belief that you can cope with your depression.
- It gives a sense of greater control over your life, which is associated with increased wellbeing.
- Exercise helps you meet new people, stopping you feeling isolated and unsupported.

When your mood is low, the last thing you feel like doing is going for a run – but research shows that may be the best remedy. Study after study reveals that as well as improving your heart and lung health, and keeping you in shape, running boosts the feel-good chemicals in your brain. This can improve your self-esteem and help you stave off or manage depression, and the effect is instant.

'Depression is such a complex and widespread condition,' says Emer O'Neill, chief executive of the Depression Alliance (www.depressionalliance.org), which advises on non-medical interventions, such as exercise. 'The stigma is lifting, but the number of people with the condition is on the rise – it's now the second most common reason for visiting your GP. There is no single magic solution. However, all the research and anecdotal evidence shows that exercise is a vital part of a complex jigsaw of treatments. Along with a healthy diet, social support and counselling, it's part of a spectrum of non-drug interventions that can really help.'

A NATURAL HIGH

Running increases beta-endorphin (a natural opiate) in the brain, as well as serotonin and norepinephrine – neurotransmitters that affect mood regulation. Drug antidepressants also boost levels of the same chemicals, which gives a clue as to why exercise can be such an effective treatment.

Olympic sports psychologist Dr Barry Cripps says running has a positive physiological effect on the brain. 'Exercise can increase feelings of wellbeing, due to the endorphin effect,' he says.

Indeed, a report published in the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* found that adults who did 30 minutes of aerobic exercise three to five times a week had reduced depressive symptoms by almost 50 per cent. Analysis of 80 studies by psychologist Dr Penny McCullagh found that exercise was a beneficial antidepressant both immediately and in the long term. It is most effective in those who are less physically fit to start with; the older the people were, the greater their decrease in depression; and the more they exercised, the greater the effect. The analysis also showed the most powerful antidepressant effect occurred when exercise was combined with psychotherapy.

ON THE RISE

Any exercise that raises your heart rate can help with depression, but running is one of the quickest and easiest ways to increase your heart rate and keep it constantly pumping for the required 30 minutes. Dr Cripps says exercise can leave depressed people feeling a lot better than talking therapies, such as psychotherapy or cognitive behavioural therapy. 'However, the effect may be short-lived, which is why exercise needs to be part of a regular routine of at least three half-hour sessions, three times a week,' he says, ideally combining exercise with counselling.

Exercise is available on prescription for depression and the Government recommends it instead of drug

treatments for mild symptoms. However, it may need to be used in combination with antidepressant drugs for more severe cases. 'You can ask your GP for an exercise prescription,' says O'Neill. 'However, the provision is patchy around the UK.' Your local council or employer may offer free exercise and wellbeing sessions – ask at your local library or council office for more information. However, exercise doesn't simply combat depression by boosting brain chemicals – the effect is more complex.

IT'S GOOD TO TALK

Dr Cripps says the social element and self-esteem boost from running are crucial in easing low mood, because research shows that feeling socially supported is another weapon in the fight against depression. So, to maximise the feel-good effect of running, join a club, or train with friends or family. 'Meeting and talking to other people can raise your spirits and help ease depression, so this may be an important element of how exercise can help,' says Dr Cripps.

Running outdoors in the park or countryside, rather than in a gym, is best if you can – the natural sunlight and interaction with nature can also help you feel better. O'Neill thinks this is a particularly good approach if you suffer from seasonal affective disorder (SAD) – where lack of light triggers a low mood.

'Exercise is highly effective for people with mild depression,' says O'Neill. 'While it's the last thing you probably want to do, it's one of the best solutions, so even if you can only run or fast walk for a few steps, try it. Make a start and gradually build towards feeling better.'

O'Neill states that running won't lift you out of a deep depression – and you definitely need to see your GP if you feel you are suffering from the condition – but it will help you recover. And you don't have to run a marathon to feel the positive effects – a gentle 30 minutes to increase your heart rate will do it.

'Running is the most positive approach you can take to dealing with depression, as I know through experience,' says Shona Campbell, a running coach who helps women combat depression through exercise. 'Start slowly – five minutes is better than nothing. If you're a beginner, try running for a minute, walk for a few seconds, run for another minute and gradually build up. Keep it regular, but be realistic. Dig out your running clothes the night before you exercise. When you wake up, put them on and keep them on until you've been for a run!' ■

You don't have to run a marathon to feel the positive effects – a gentle 30 minutes to increase your heart rate will do it'

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The prescription

How often should you run – and when might you need more help?

Running isn't a stand-alone cure for depression, but it can help alongside talking therapies, improving your diet and increasing your social network. Doctors suggest that this approach may be better for treating mild to moderate depression than drug intervention. More severe clinical depression is likely to need drug treatment too, but exercise can help recovery. Studies show that to benefit, you need to run three times a week, for at least 30 minutes. Increasing the length and frequency of your running will bring increased benefits – but don't overtrain, or you will negate the positive effects. Give yourself at least one rest day a week and intersperse running with other exercise, such as yoga and swimming.

[REAL LIFE]

Shona Campbell, 50, from Kent, says running has changed her life

'Running has helped me manage my depression without medication, which has changed my life. I suffered from recurring depression for years and took medication. But eight years ago, I joined a women's running group. It was suggested by another mum at my children's school who told me it was the reason she was suddenly in such good shape and so happy. She looked amazing and I thought I'd give it a go. I struggled at first, but persevered because it helped my mood massively. I found I could gradually reduce my medication, whereas before I started running I became depressed again if I stopped taking it. I already worked out in the gym, but it had never had the same effect, because a running group is more sociable and it's outdoors. I loved it so much I trained as a running coach and recently teamed up with a clinical psychologist to set up a running group for women who suffer from depression or anxiety (www.upandrunningin sevenoaks.org.uk).'

Up and Running

Harriet

For me, the Up and Running group is a wonderful way to bridge my work - helping people improve their mental health through psychological therapy - and my running, which is a very important part of my own life and wellbeing.

At work, I spend hours with people carefully unpicking the ins and outs of their history, their thinking, their coping strategies, and how they work or don't work. It's fascinating and fulfilling, but it's all "in the head". Of course, our brains are a part of our bodies, not some separate entity, but I've often felt that a wholly 'in the head' approach is missing something.

With Up and Running, we just show women how, with the right approach, they can run too: a completely different route to psychological wellbeing. It was a very powerful experience for me, to discover what an amazing mood booster running could be.

The word to describe how I feel when I run is 'joy', nothing short of that (even though – and maybe partly because - it's often difficult too). It is a physical, visceral feeling of elation and an extended period of boosted emotional wellbeing afterwards.

If I run in the morning, I feel better for the whole day, whatever else is going on. Nothing else works the same way for me.

So to share that with other women and to say "try this, it works" is really exciting for me. It's so simple and it's so effective. I think many women know that exercise can help them, but find it really hard to motivate themselves and to keep going long enough to reap the benefits, especially if they're feeling low. I think this is where Up and Running really works. The social support of the group means that women can keep their motivation going, and get much needed camaraderie.

At a very practical level, if you have told a friend you will be there to run, then you turn up, and you go out. There are other psychological benefits too. Discovering they can do something they maybe never thought possible can be a powerful challenge to negative beliefs that women hold about themselves, and Shona is particularly good at persuading beginners that they really can.

Body image often changes too, from a negative 'visual' perspective to a sense that the body can 'do' something amazing. It makes us very proud when we see groups of our 'graduates' out running together.

We know they're doing something that is good for them and for each other, and when they choose to continue long after the ten week course with us is over, then we know it's working for them.

> 'Discovering they can do something they maybe never thought possible can be a powerful challenge to negative beliefs that women hold about themselves.'

Shona

Since my teens I'd suffered bouts of depression which I'd tried to manage with medication and therapy. In my early 40s I took up running in an attempt to get fit and feel better about myself, and after an initial struggle (I'm certainly not a born runner), I found I felt empowered, lifted and more comfortable in my skin as a runner. I qualified as a coach and began coaching adult women recreational runners.

Then I met Harry and we decided to launch a running group for women who experience depression or anxiety. We run ten week walk/run courses for complete beginners, and although the focus is running, it's also about mutual support and understanding.

We often chat about nothing in particular to the group as we run, but just being with people who you know understand and have experienced similar issues to your own can be very comforting, and of course we will talk more specifically about mental health if any of the participants want to.

They value Harry's professional knowledge and expertise and as I'm very open about my own history that opens the door for them to ask me about my experiences.

Women have a wonderful ability to nurture, support and encourage each other, and real friendships have been formed at Up and Running.

The combination of being outdoors, exercising and being in sympathetic company is a very powerful one, and goes some way towards addressing the isolation and hopelessness that often accompany depression and anxiety. We find that for many of the participants, it becomes a useful tool to help them manage their mental health. I know it certainly is for me.

Alexis

What does running mean to me? Well, when I turned up at the usual meeting place this last Saturday morning, I saw about five familiar and friendly faces and a few not so familiar, but also friendly faces.

As we set off, we all joked about aches and pains, how difficult it was getting up on a Saturday morning, how long it had been since our last run and then as we started to splinter off from each other, as we picked up a steady pace, there were loud sighs, heavy breathing and more chatter and laughter.

Running through the Kent countryside, watching deer jump over the path in front of us, with the sun shining through the trees, listening to fellow runners giggling, huffing or in deep conversation, means so much to me.

I love running for the freedom, the fresh air, the steady sound of my breath as my feet pound against the soft earth or grass or as I splash through puddles on the home run. I love running for the friendships I have formed as a result of my regular Saturday runs, with women from all walks of life.

When you are all dressed in lycra, there is no knowing what your background is, and I feel free to speak to anyone who will listen, and listen to anyone who wants to talk. I've solved some tricky dilemmas whilst out for a run and gained in insight into the lives of some amazing women.

I love running for the respect and surprise that shows on people's faces when they learn you can run five whole miles - without stopping - and up hills.

For more information visit http://www.upandrunninginsevenoaks.org.uk or follow Up and Running on twitter @Uprunning7oaks

Her Edit Magazine

Here's how our runners describe their experience with Up & Running...

All these accounts were volunteered by women who have run with us for inclusion on our website

Mary

When I joined the Up and Running group I had had a long period of depression, not incapacitating but always affecting me, making me feel uncomfortable in many situations. I spotted the advertisement for the very first course organised by Shona and Harry. It was starting the next day, so I screwed up my courage and rang Shona. She was lovely and welcoming, and I went along to the initial session. From then on, it was all very easy and fun. Running, which I had never tried before at all, was approached in gradual stages, running just a minute or so at a time to start with, then slowly building up. It was always a good laugh, very sociable, and nobody was made to feel that they were slowing the others down, nor was anybody ever left behind. Nearly 5 years later, I am still running regularly with the same group of women that I started the course with, and still in contact with Shona and Harry and runners from some of the subsequent courses. My depression is pretty much a thing of the past, and I attribute that partly to the support and friendship of the group I still run with, and partly to my improved fitness and to getting regular doses of fresh air and sunshine and enjoying the beauty of Knole Park and other lovely local running places we've discovered. Having a regular group of women to run with is a really good thing – those days when you just don't feel like seeing anybody, or when the weather's awful, if you know you've got a run planned and you go and do it, you always, always, feel better for it.

Jenny

I was 65 years of age, my circumstances had changed. Although I had support from my family and friends I felt lonely and depressed, I needed to find something different for myself. Some days later I saw, on display in an office, a leaflet for Up and Running. I was apprehensive about phoning them but thought I would give it a try. I was concerned that I was too old, that running would damage my joints, I wouldn't be able to keep up with others, after all I could only 'run' a very short distance without getting breathless. I joined, met Shona and Harriet, who were/are friendly, supportive and helped to dispel my worries, always there for reassurance. Four years later I am still running. I have made friends, feel a sense of achievement every time I run, enjoy the

fresh air and countryside. I feel healthier and have come to realise that you're never too old to start something new.

Maeve

Depression isn't something many people like talking about, me included! But when PND struck for the third time after my third baby and after numerous other episodes, I knew I really had to do something. I was miserable and making those around me miserable. I couldn't see any solutions.

I was not a runner in the slightest, in fact I considered myself a rubbish runner but my husband persuaded me to sign up for the Up and Running course. I was terrified. I thought (sorry ladies!) it might be a bunch of miserable, super fit women that I would share nothing in common with. My biggest fear was being left behind and feeling mortified. I was so wrong. Over the weeks we trained, three things surprised me - the group were in fact a jolly bunch and there was lots of laughter, the outdoor exercise made me feel so, so much better and more in control, and I could actually run without feeling like I might throw up after five minutes! Depression is horrible and isolating and miserable but the worst thing is feeling powerless to fix it - making the leap into this kind of exercise made me feel like I was finally doing something about it. Shona and Harriet are both kind and encouraging. The runs were tailored to our group pace; we started off very slowly with Shona & Harry ensuring no one was ever left behind. Some days we chatted to each other about how we were feeling, some days we just chatted about nothing at all. There was never any pressure to talk about 'stuff' but it was nice to know that everyone was in a similar boat and open to hearing about if if you were struggling.

I have been running regularly ever since, in all weathers but a recent three week pause caused by an annoying knee injury (not running related!) has made me really appreciate just how much running outside makes me feel better about life and keeps me sane!

Gwen

Hi, my names Gwen, I joined an Up & Running course a couple of years ago. I'd really like to tell anyone thinking about it to just go for it! I was very shy about phoning up, let alone attending - I had a newspaper cutting about Up & Running for over a year before braving myself to call! But I am so glad I did. I had struggled with depression/anxiety for 20 of my 32 years and I have to say

Up & Running was the most positive thing in my life for years. Shona and Harry were so welcoming and relaxed on the phone, and on the first day really made it easy by meeting us outside and directing the first meeting as well as chatting to everyone, which for me took the pressure off. I was less worried about the running part, but it truly was supportive of any level of fitness. Because we worked up to running in the correct way, by walk/run intervals and being taught about stretching, it was much less hard than you might imagine. I was simply amazed by what we achieved during the course. Aside from the fitness and the great feeling that gave me, being in a group where everyone supported each other and I felt no one judged each other was so helpful for me each week.

I still get depressed and anxious now, but I have managed to keep up the running and I'm sure this helps me manage and cope better. Running for me is a release, it gives me a rush and allows me to relax. It's also helped my self-esteem being fitter, happier with my body and having sense of achievement and more belief in myself.

Lisa

I started running with 'up and running' over 2 years ago following a particularly low point in my life. Not only was I in my mid forties but I hadn't exercised let alone run since I was at school! As you can imagine I was filled with trepidation...'Will I be able to keep up ?', 'What will everyone be like ?' but decided to jump in the car and meet everyone before I talked myself out of it! I'm so glad I did, I was met by the wonderful Shona and Harriet and a group of amazing women, who I am still friends with 2 years down the line!! Shona is an amazing supportive coach who guides you at a pace that suits you, plus the runs are relaxed and fun too! Up & Running is a great way to meet like minded people and engage in an activity that is so good for your wellbeing .....Its a win win situation in every way!

TC

In 2012 I was having a particularly rough time. Around Sevenoaks I kept seeing flyers for UP AND RUNNING. In the end I lifted a postcard advertising their course and used it as a bookmark. Finally I plucked up the courage and contacted them. They were so welcoming when I turned up at the leisure centre.

The support was great, every Wednesday lunchtime. The running did not come naturally to me, however I felt better. I then started looking forward to it. Up and Running is a breath of fresh air. My personal life has been very difficult again more recently. I approached Shona and Harriet and they welcomed me back.

I have to now admit that I think I may have become a runner. It's the best thing that has happened to me in ages!
I came across my Up and Running bookmark recently and smiled.

Kaye

I was very nervous about joining the Up and Running group. I am overweight and in my late 50s. Could I run, would I be able to keep up, would I fit in with the rest of the group? My family laughed when I said I was going running. The welcome I received from Shona and Harriet calmed my nerves and whilst chatting to the other ladies in the group I found that we all had the same worries. Joining Up and Running was one of the best things I have ever done. I can't thank Shona and Harriet enough. I love running and it is a great form of exercise. I would advise you to go along and see.

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