

Read me & Pass me on

ActivLives Changes Lives

October - December 2025
Newsletter



**Marking the year
with impactful milestones**



Cooking with fresh ingredients for Harvest Celebration



Celebrating Felixstowe Disability Pride



A year of awards and recognitions



ActivLives. A Company Limited by Guarantee, registered in England and Wales No.7672809 Registered Charity No. 1147615

Brightspace, 160 Hadleigh Road, Ipswich, Suffolk IP2 0HH Tel. No: 01473 345350

activlives.org.uk

We need your support

Well, as I said in the last edition, the cold dark nights, the wind and the rain will soon be here, and I wasn't wrong. However, I do love this time of year, the beautiful colours of autumn and the frosty mornings. Hopefully, not the floods again!!!

As you can see from the Newsletter, lots of things have been happening... We had a fantastic day supporting the Felixstowe Disability Pride Event in Felixstowe. It was lovely to see so many people taking part in the parade, led by the Samboomba Samba Band plus the entertainment and stands at the Felixstowe Leisure Centre. A BIG THANK YOU to Ian Bell and Clare Lucas, the organisers, and for the donation to ActivLives.

We also organised a fundraising campaign called 'How Far Can You Go' to support August Wellbeing Month and many miles were walked to help fundraise. Thank you to everyone who took part and ActivLives groups who supported the campaign.

Funding and Fundraising is our main focus at the moment. We know from the feedback we get from members, volunteers, carers and families how much our services, activities and projects are valued. To keep these services running we have to apply for grants, fundraise and ask people, local businesses and supporters for donations.

SO WE NEED YOUR HELP - We are seeking 1000 people who could donate £100 or more (or what you can afford) to help ActivLives become more sustainable and able to continue the brilliant work we do in the community. If you can't afford £100, could your family / friends club together to donate something, do you or your family have links with local companies who might like to support us. Please help us promote this appeal by talking to your friends, family and neighbours, local business, anyone who you know who might be able to help.

We will keep you posted on reaching our target and other fundraising events that we will be organising in the near future.



Julie Stokes
ActivLives CEO

ActivLives is a local independent charity working in Ipswich and across Suffolk to keep people active, connected and involved with their local community through accessible sports and exercise, courses, learning new skills and volunteering opportunities.



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DONATE TODAY

In 2025, charities are under more financial pressure than ever before, and ActivLives needs your help **NOW**.

ActivLives needs donations that will make a difference to our charity this year and to make us stronger as a charity.

How can you help?

We are seeking 1000 people to donate £100 or more (or whatever you can afford) to help us reach our target

£100,000

TO DONATE, visit our Donate Now page on <https://activlives.org.uk>, or scan the QR code to donate.

SCAN ME



If paying by cheque, please make it payable to **ActivLives** and send it to **ActivLives, Brightspace, 160 Hadleigh Road, Ipswich, Suffolk IP2 0HH**

Your donation will enable us to continue delivering our wide range of inclusive activities that make a real difference to people's lives, living in Ipswich & East Suffolk.

You may be a regular attendee, family member or a local business wanting to help a local grassroots charity. So, **PLEASE DONATE TODAY**.

Preparing Your Garden for Winter: A Seasonal Boost for You and Your Wellbeing



Ian Hirst
ActivGardens Operations Officer

As the days grow shorter and the air turns crisp, many people think of winter as a time to retreat indoors and let the garden sleep until spring. But the colder months are the perfect time to prepare your outdoor space -not only for the health of your plants, but also for your own sense of wellbeing. Setting up your garden for winter is about more than protecting soil and plants - it's about creating a nurturing space that supports resilience, calm, and mental health through the darker season.

Creating a Space for Winter

Even when many plants lie dormant, your garden doesn't have to feel empty. Adding evergreens, winter-flowering plants like hellebores, or a bird feeder can bring colour and life. A few outdoor lights or reflective surfaces brighten grey days and make your space inviting. A well-prepared garden encourages you to step outside, even briefly, to notice frost patterns, hear birdsong, and enjoy small moments of calm.

Community and Connection

For those who share garden spaces, winter preparation is also about connection. Gathering to put beds to rest, share surplus crops, or plan for spring builds bonds and helps ease loneliness. These shared rituals are especially meaningful when the colder months make us more likely to feel isolated.



Looking Ahead

Winter gardening is about hope as much as protection. Planting bulbs or hardy vegetables is a reminder that brighter days are coming. Each action you take now is a promise to yourself - that the effort will bring colour, nourishment, and joy in the months ahead.

By caring for your garden, you're also caring for yourself. The soil is replenished, the plants are sheltered, and you are giving yourself moments of calm, purpose, and connection in a season that often challenges our wellbeing.

So, this winter, don't see your garden as dormant or forgotten. See it as a partner in resilience - quietly preparing, resting, and waiting for the light to return. And in tending to it, you may just find that you've also tended to your own mental health.

Protecting Your Garden's Future

Tidying and preparing your garden now makes a big difference come spring. Clearing away fallen leaves, spent crops, and weeds prevents pests and diseases from settling in. Adding a layer of compost or mulch enriches the soil, locks in moisture, and provides insulation against frost. Tender plants can be lifted, potted, or wrapped to keep them safe until warmer weather returns.

It may feel like a small act, but winter preparation is an investment in the future. Come March, your soil will be healthier, your plants stronger, and your spring tasks lighter.

A Seasonal Rhythm

Gardening in autumn and early winter helps us connect with the natural rhythm of the year. While spring and summer bring growth and abundance, the colder months remind us of rest and renewal. Simple tasks - pruning, planting bulbs, covering beds - offer a steady, calming routine. These jobs don't need to be rushed; they invite you to slow down, breathe the cool air, and find peace in mindful activity.



Mental Health Benefits

The benefits of winter gardening go beyond the practical. Spending time outside, even in short bursts, boosts mood, improves sleep, and reduces stress. Natural light helps maintain vitamin D levels and regulates body rhythms - both of which can dip in winter and affect our wellbeing.

Never mind the weather - members celebrate summer in style!

More than 70 ActivLives members gathered for our annual summer celebration at the People's Community Garden in August.

Despite the downpours, everyone enjoyed exploring the garden which staff, volunteers and participants had worked so hard to prepare.

Meanwhile, the ActivSheds stand did a brisk trade in commissions for sausage dog planters and garden pagodas designed and made by members of the team.

Community garden volunteers Jay and William cooked a fantastic barbecue – with food donated/ funded by Asda and Tesco - while Cynthia stepped out of her finance role for the day to serve up!

Meanwhile we were serenaded with favourites by singer Phil Jackson, while enjoying tea and cakes courtesy of CEO Julie and her team.

We also had a chance to open our new polytunnel, funded by the Asda Foundation, as well as our storage container - funded by Ipswich Rotary.

Thanks to all our funders, supporters, volunteers, friends and members who came along to make the day as special as it was!



Volunteer Paul assists Asda Community Champion Teresa Davidson in opening our new polytunnel



Keep calm and carry on barbecuing - Cynthia, William & Jay cook up a storm under the rain

Families enjoy a bumper harvest as part of our local food project



Fresh produce harvested from the community garden



Ian Hirst, ActivGardens Operations Officer, with Grow Well Eat Well volunteers at the People's Community Garden

Our 'Grow Well Eat Well' project has gone from strength to strength over the summer, with a huge amount of veg going out each week to St Peter's Top Up Shop – visited by more than 60 families.

Meanwhile, we have welcomed new volunteers from the local community, while a family and a group of childminders have taken up plots with us and are busy growing their own food with their young children. We have encouraged residents to grow on their windowsills and balconies with activities at St Peter's and Downside Close – giving away free seeds and plants.

Forty primary school children have enjoyed and learnt about gardening, growing and beekeeping in visits to the community garden.

We have also promoted cooking from scratch with fresh veg: Project Officer Phoebe attended the Top Up Shop with unusual bakes such as courgette cake, while a slow cooker course run by Realise Futures proved hugely popular. Everyone enjoyed soup made with veg donated by volunteer Pat from her plot, before taking their free slow cooker home.

continued overleaf...



Volunteers Mary and Faye participating in the Harvest Meal



The cost of a jar of honey
 12 months of beekeeping TLC
 Hives, frames, foundation.
 Jars, lids, labels, buckets.
 Insurance
 Harvesting tools and equipment
 Treatments and winter feed
 PPE
 Premises
 Staff and Volunteer costs
 Training



What's all the buzz about? ...

Our project aims to open the ancient craft of keeping bees to as many people as possible, enabling them to gain an understanding of these fascinating creatures and how to help them thrive, alongside improving their gardens and their local environment for the benefit of nature.

Around 30 volunteers and more than 300 people have helped out and taken part in looking after the bees and harvesting the honey this season.

We have hosted primary school visits, groups of childminders and their children, and welcomed young people – including those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.

Volunteers from local business have been wowed by the project and families and groups have come along for a Beekeeping Experience, led by Lead Beekeeper Ian.

To get involved or to book a Beekeeping Experience next season – please get in touch with Ian ian@activlives.org.uk Mobile 07599 951060

The honey has landed!

Jars of our delicious honey straight from ActivHives are now on sale at £5 for a 227g (8oz) jar and £10 for 454g (1lb) jar.



Young children amazed by bees at childminders visit



Photo volunteer Lynne Clements

A bee at work in our pollinator-friendly planting schemes

Visitors and members enjoying the food at the Harvest Meal

More than 25 families had fun at our 'Pizza Non-Express' evening - collecting toppings around the garden for pizzas baked in the clay oven.

A huge thank you to Chantry Walled Garden volunteer Mark, who cooked a delicious harvest meal in our outdoor kitchen for us all to enjoy!

Next Grow Well Eat Well event: Halloween Wednesday 29th October 11am to 2pm at the People's Community Garden – pumpkin carving, food, and other fun activities. Come dressed for the occasion!

To book, please contact Phoebe phoebe@activlives.org.uk or call ActivLives 01473 345350

Make a fresh start in 2026 and Grow Your Future in our FREE course!

If you are looking for a new activity to give yourself a boost in the new year - how about getting out in the bracing February air and joining our Spring course at ActivGardens?

Grow Your Future for people aged 16+ will help you gain skills and confidence for further learning, training, volunteering or employment.

When and Where?
Mondays from 9th February – 27th April 2026, 9:30am-2:30pm People's Community Garden, Maidenhall Allotments, Halifax Road, Ipswich, IP2 8RE

Tuesdays from 10th February – 28th April 2026, 9:30am-2:30pm Chantry Walled Garden, Chantry Park, Hadleigh Road, Ipswich, IP2 0BS

These friendly group sessions will include - gardening and horticulture, growing your own veg, working in a plant nursery, nature conservation and beekeeping (optional), and therapeutic/ creative activities.

The course aims to promote good physical and mental health, and help you learn practical skills, in a supportive environment where you can meet others.

OPEN DAYS
 Drop in any time between 10am to 2pm, Monday 19th January 2026 at the People's Community Garden and Tuesday 20th January 2026 at Chantry Walled Garden.



Jemma with the flowers she helped plant

To register your place or to find out more, please contact programme manager Susannah Robirosa on 07530 407302 on 01473 345350 or email susannah@activlives.org.uk or visit our website: www.activlives.org.uk/activgardens

Courgette cake recipe

Ingredients

- 80ml vegetable oil
- 150g light brown sugar
- 2 eggs
- 160g courgette – coarsely grated
- 180g plain flour
- 2 teaspoons of baking powder
- 2 teaspoons of cinnamon
- ¼ salt
- 2 tablespoons demerara sugar for sprinkling

Recipe from BBC Food online

Preheat the oven to 200C/180C Fan/Gas 6. Grease a 900g/2lb loaf tin and line with a long strip of baking paper.

In a bowl, mix together the oil, light brown sugar and eggs until smooth. Stir in the grated courgette.

In a separate bowl, mix together the flour, baking powder, cinnamon and salt. Tip the dry ingredients into the courgette mixture and stir until just combined.

Transfer the batter to the prepared loaf tin and sprinkle the top with demerara sugar.

Bake for 45–55 minutes, or until a skewer inserted into the centre of the loaf comes out clean. Leave to cool in the tin for 20 minutes, then turn out onto a wire rack and leave to cool completely before slicing.

Winterval – ActivGardens will be closed 22nd December 2025 to 2nd January 2026



AUTUMN ADVENTURE ON HALLOWEEN

DATE	TIME	VENUE
WEDNESDAY 29TH OCTOBER	11 AM - 2 PM	People's Community Garden, Maidenhall Allotments, Halifax Rd, Ipswich, IP2 8RE

WHAT'S ON OFFER

- Soup
- Pudding
- Hot chocolate
- Pumpkin carving
- Make an autumnal decoration
- Nature mandalas

This event is FREE to attend. Book your place by contacting Phoebe by email phoebe@activlives.org.uk or ActivLives office on 01473345350

GROW YOUR COMMUNITY SUDBURY & GREAT CORNARD

JOIN OUR VOLUNTEER GARDENING TEAM

Every Thursday 9:30AM - 12noon at Belle Vue Park, Sudbury, CO10 2RG

- Get more active and feel fitter!
- Meet new people
- Improve your environment
- Contribute to your community
- Learn new skills and share ideas

For more information please contact Susannah Robirosa on 01473 345350 or email susannah@activlives.org.uk

Funded by  Suffolk County Council

GROW YOUR FUTURE

If you are looking for a new direction - come and take part in our programme to develop practical skills and build confidence on your way to further learning, training or employment

In this FREE 12-week course, you will learn about gardening, horticulture and nature conservation in our safe, welcoming and inspiring community gardens

Grow Your Future is for anyone aged 16+

When and Where?
Mondays from 9th February – 27th April, 9:30am-2:30pm
People's Community Garden, Maidenhall Allotments, Halifax Road, Ipswich, IP2 8RE

Tuesdays from 10th February – 28th April, 9:30am-2:30pm
Chantry Walled Garden, Chantry Park, Hadleigh Road, Ipswich, IP2 0BS

Open days:
Monday 19th January 2026 – The People's Community Garden, 10am-2pm
Tuesday 20th January 2026 – Chantry Walled Garden, 10am-2pm

To join the course or find out more, please contact Project Manager Susannah Robirosa on 07530 407302 or email susannah@activlives.org.uk or call ActivLives on 01473 345350

This programme is funded by The Henry Smith Charity Improving Lives Grant

ACTIV SHEDS

SOCIALISING, SHARING + LEARNING NEW SKILLS

Do you like working with tools? DIY projects?
Would you like to build skills?
Meet like-minded people?
Develop Confidence?
Get involved in your community?

If so, why not join ActivSheds project!

You can share tools and resources and work on a wide range of projects or get involved in bigger projects such as renovation and building raised beds

Thursday Mixed Gender Sessions
9:30 AM – 12:00 noon & 1:00 PM – 3:00 PM

Friday Men's Sessions
9:30 AM – 3:30 PM

For further information, please contact Susannah on 07530 407302 or email susannah@activlives.org.uk, or ActivLives office: 01473 345350

Sign up for our Keep on Moving Martlesham



Members participating in one of our Keep on Moving sessions in Martlesham

We have more spaces available for our Keep on Moving sessions in Martlesham.

WHEN: Every Wednesday, 10:30am-12 noon

WHERE: Martlesham Community Hall, Felixstowe Rd, Martlesham, IP12 4PB

WHAT: These sessions are ideal if you would like to: stay steady on your feet; improve your balance, strength & mobility; reduce your risk of falling; improve your confidence; stay independent and help you meet and make new friends. All programmes include evidence-based OTAGO (falls prevention) exercise. For people aged 55+

Cost: £6.00

For more information, please call us on 01473 345350 or email jemma@activlives.org.uk.

“ Following a knee operation and a few years of reduced mobility beforehand, my physical health was not good. My goal was to get better movement and mobility. I have seen improvement since joining, although my balance still needs to improve. I now walk daily, attend line dancing classes twice a week and swim when I can. **-Member, Keep on Moving** ”

FREE 12-week Strength & Balance sessions in Leiston



Strength & Balance members in Leiston doing the weekly exercise at the Waterloo Centre

We are offering **FREE** 12 weeks Strength and Balance exercise in Leiston. You can self-refer to join this beneficial weekly sessions.

WHEN: Every Wednesday, 11:15am -12:15pm

WHERE: Waterloo Centre, Waterloo Ave Leiston, Suffolk IP16 4HE

WHAT: If you are aged 65 or over, you may benefit from our Strength & Balance programme. 12 FREE Strength & Balance Sessions, OTAGO specialist qualified instructors, exercises specifically to improve, gait, co-ordination, strength & confidence

Cost: FREE

To refer, you can call ActivLives on 01473 345350 or submit a self-referral at www.activesuffolk.org/strength-and-balance

“ Before I started the classes my physical health was good, but I recently had a broken wrist. My goal was to improve my strength and balance to strengthen my wrist. I have improved in all areas since starting my classes. I now walk daily and try to stand on one leg often. **-Member, Strength & Balance** ”

Meet our ReBalance Team



Jemma Prentice
ReBalance Development Co-ordinator

Jemma has been working with ActivLives on the Re-Balance project since April 2022. She coordinates and develops sessions for older people to help with the prevention of falls and improve their mobility and strength. She loves meeting new people and feels so privileged to work for ActivLives, and offer this vital service to older adults in our community.

She leads sessions in **East Bergholt, Martlesham, Woodbridge and Felixstowe.**

E-mail address: jemma@activlives.org.uk
Contact No.: 07367 418576



L-R: Jemma, Del and Laura



Halstead leading our St Mary at Stoke Church Hall exercise

Laura is a qualified Move It or Lose It instructor, Love to Move deliverer and Otago Exercise Programme Leader. She enjoys working with older adults, having developed a passion for helping people after becoming a carer at a young age. She strongly believes in the benefits of empowering people to improve and maintain their health, mobility and wellbeing, enabling them to maintain independence and reduce the risk of falls and isolation.

She leads sessions in **Saxmundham, Felixstowe and Kirton**

E-mail address: laura@activlives.org.uk
Contact No.: 07481 353107



Laura Lopez
ReBalance Development Co-ordinator



Claire leading our two sessions of ActivSteps in Ipswich



Kim doing the exercise with our members in Holbrook



Del Keeble
ReBalance Co-ordinator

Del has been working for ActivLives since May 2015 and she enjoys her job because she can make a difference to the quality of peoples lives. Before that she worked in the fitness industry as a Personal Trainer at DW Sports and Gym and Trim. Other jobs have been as a Post-lady and a Support worker for Mencap.

She leads sessions in four venues in **Ipswich and Needham Market**

E-mail address: del@activlives.org.uk
Contact No.: 07765 324866

We also have instructors who support us in leading our sessions in different venues across Suffolk. Claire Kynaston conducts ActivSteps sessions in California Social Club and Castle Hill Community Centre. One of our instructors who has been with us for 19 years is Halstead Ottley who is leading the exercise at St Mary at Stoke Church Hall in Ipswich. Kim Bilner is our instructor in Holbrook and Shotley. Our ReBalance programme offers four different activities in different venues in Suffolk:

1) Keep on Moving
- seated & standing (falls prevention) exercises for aged 55+
Locations: Ipswich, Saxmundham, Holbrook, Felixstowe, East Bergholt, Leiston, Martlesham, Needham Market, Shotley, Woodbridge, Kirton and Wickham Market

2) Strength & Balance
- 12-week strength and balance sessions for aged 65 or over, OTAGO - Fall prevention
Locations: Saxmundham, Holbrook, East Bergholt, Leiston, Felixstowe and Woodbridge

3) Love to Move
- seated movement for older people living with dementia, Parkinson's and other cognitive impairment
Location: Walton

4) BreatheFit
- a follow on group specifically for people with a diagnosed respiratory condition/breathlessness
Locations: Felixstowe, Leiston and Stowmarket



Frazier supporting one of the members at our balance class in Leiston

Frazier started his career in the fitness industry at 17, completing a fitness instructor apprenticeship with Ipswich Borough Council. During his time working at Ipswich Borough Council, he became involved in Adult Weight Management working in partnership with what was LiveWell Suffolk. In early 2023, he left his job at the NHS to become an ActivAgeing Officer of ActivLives. He absolutely loves the work at the charity - it is rewarding for him to help all sorts of people reap the benefits of a more active and healthy lifestyle.

He leads exercise sessions in **Leiston, Felixstowe and Stowmarket** and coaches **new age kurling in Felixstowe and short-mat bowls in Ipswich.**

E-mail address: frazier@activlives.org.uk
Contact No.: 07869 148012



Frazier Seager
ActivAgeing
Development Officer

ActivLives Men's Breakfast Hub 3rd successful year, with a new hub opening in Woodbridge in 2026.... Join us!

Well here we are nearly in September; the summer seems to have flown by... at the Men's Breakfast hub in Ipswich. The weekly Breakfast Hub has become an important date in people's calendar's, and it leads to other activities and members meeting up with each other, socially outside the group.

We had very hot weather in July and were very please to have a visit from the president of the Ipswich Bonsai Society Chairman, Dave Fryer, together with a small collection of his own magnificent bonsai trees. Fascinating talk, and the attendees loved it.

Here are some of the comments from our regulars:

"I didn't realise how big they can grow."

"I always thought they were small, and grew inside."

"Wonderful talk, really interesting, so many different trees and shapes."

In August the group met at a member's house, who has a very large garden, a massive fish pond and an allotment as well. Al fresco dining, lots of chat, garden walks and feeding the fish in a very sunny Ipswich, a perfect day out.

We now have a core group of very friendly, regulars, who share news, discuss local issues, explore hobbies and enjoy the wonderful bacon breakfast rolls we have to offer. Lots of chat, laughter and a great social activity.

We have a few spaces, which are still available, we meet on a Wednesday Morning at 10 am, at the Cress Pavilion, Halifax Road, Ipswich, IP2 8RE, which is adjacent to our Peoples Community Garden. There is parking available outside the venue and it is on a regular bus route.

So, if you want to join us in Ipswich or want more information about the Woodbridge Hub contact Alison Pearson, Project Lead on 01473 345350 or email alison@activlives.org.uk

Men's Hub members participating in the different exciting activities last Summer



ActivFriends a weekly Community Hub with music, laughter and much more...

The weather through the summer was a real mixture and ActivFriends enjoyed a range of activities through until September. The Hub is based at Whitehouse Baptist Church Hall, Waterford Road, Ipswich. IP1 5NW. There is plenty of parking and it is on a regular bus route.

We meet on a Friday, and offer a weekly opportunity to make new friends, take part in fun activities and enjoy a freshly cooked 2 course meal supported by regular volunteers.

In July we had a wonderful session with a local Elvis Tribute act (Simon Goldsmith) who has an Elvis tribute act with a difference, songs and wonderful comedy, the members really loved it and enjoyed every single minute of this act.

"Wonderful session today, really enjoyed it, great singing and brilliant entertainment."

"Made my day!"

We also celebrated a number of members Birthdays, with cards, cake, candles and chocolate and lots of birthday singing.

ActivFriends is a very welcoming group and we have some places, now, for new members, and you can be sure of a warm welcome, plenty of laughter and lively discussions and friendship, love and support, because that is key to what ActivFriends is all about.

Our team of 7 volunteers are at the heart of the group, with a weekly raffle table, and the wonderful food, created from scratch on the day, from the Church Hall kitchen, where our kitchen team of great volunteers, led by Pat and Bob, create a wonderful 2 course meal for our very hungry members.

We have regular favourites like Cottage Pie, Sausage Casserole, and Beef Cobbler, plus summer homemade quiches with salad grown on our volunteers Pat and Bob's allotment. Plus, Pat's famous homemade rice pudding, and sweet jammy sponge bakes, using jam made from the allotment, lashings of ice cream and Pat's fruit compote.

So, if you are caring for a loved one who is aged 60+, are a former carer or feel isolated at home, this may be the group for you and we do have some limited spaces available now.

Volunteers are also a really important part of ActivLives so please do get in touch if you are interested to find out more, or if you are interested in attending the Hub, please call Alison Pearson on 01473 345350 or email alison@activlives.org.uk for more information.



ActivFriends members participating in new activities and 90th birthday celebration of Kathy



ICare Connect – A carers project when you need it most



Pictures from Canva

ICare Connect project has now been running for nearly 2 years, and so far we have had 40 direct beneficiaries of the grant who were unpaid carers including husband/wife, family members or friends/neighbours and carers in transition, with loved ones in care or that have passed. Given the time of the project, some experienced the whole change, from being an unpaid carer, to becoming a carer in transition, and then sadly an ex-carer.

The project is there to provide a listening ear and offer support to carers at various stages of their journey. All carers are spoken to individually during the project to ensure that they felt included and listened to. We also include their families and we talk about their concerns, both in person and on the phone and meet up for coffee with other carers.

We can help to look at immediate worries and work in partnership with Suffolk Family Carers and Suffolk County Council and can assist with the guidance of obtaining a carers assessment.

The project addresses physical, emotional and wellbeing needs through conversations, support and encouraging people to revisit or explore old or new hobbies/interests and make new friends.

With Autumn here, please do reach out to Alison Pearson, Project Manager, on 01473 345350 or email alison@activlives.org.uk and discuss your caring concerns.

Movement in the community



Apart from our own weekly on-going sessions, we also support other organisations, to widen our reach and deliver exercise sessions to different groups, care homes and communities. This enables us to promote the importance of movement to people who can't access ActivLives services.

We visit community groups, such as WI groups, support groups for people who experience Fibromyalgia, Stroke, Parkinson's Disease and Dementia to inform people about the work of ActivLives and to show people how seated / standing exercise can help with upper/lower body strength, stamina, balance and co-ordination and can improve mood. Some instructors incorporate seated / standing dance routines to music in their sessions, which are always popular. Movement can be fun.

We also provide more regular sessions to other groups such as the Britannia Ladies group, Oddfellows in Ipswich, McCarthy Stone and the Bangladeshi Support Centre Multicultural Services - Carers Project.

We give presentations and warmup demonstrations at AGMs, festivals, health days and events to spread the word about the importance of MOVEMENT.

If you want us to visit your group, contact Julie on 01473 345350.

St Mary at Stoke Lunch Club



The Lunch Club started at St Mary at Stoke Church Hall in November 2007, as part of the Town & Bridge Project (which later became ActivLives) and in partnership with the church. Anita Bimpson, a member of the church volunteered to help establish the Lunch Club, alongside the CEO of the charity, which is still running today with an amazing group of volunteers and a paid cook. Anita has now hung up her apron and has become a member, but still enjoys her Tuesday hot two course meal and seeing all the people she has supported over the years.

It started with 8 members and now we cater for up to 30 people every week. Tina the cook and volunteers Pam and Rose – Tina's Angels - help prepare and cook the hot two course meal every week. Congratulations, go to Tina and the team for being awarded 5 stars from Ipswich Borough Council Environmental Health team for Food Safety again.

Linda West now heads the team of seven volunteers and ActivLives thanks all of them, including Tina the cook, for their dedication and passion in supporting often very lonely and isolated older adults and making sure they have an enjoyable experience together, a healthy meal, support and friendship.

Lunch Club volunteers have a variety of roles setting up the tables, welcoming members to the exercise session and lunch club, helping prepare and cook the meals, serving the lunch and tea / coffee, washing up and clearing away and chatting to our members.

In November 2025 we will be celebrating 17 years of delivering community meals at St Mary at Stoke Church Hall on a Tuesday morning. This is a great achievement and a huge thank you to all our past and present volunteers and cooks for making this happen. We couldn't have done it without you.

A big thank you also goes to Halstead Ottley who has been the exercise instructor at St Mary at Stoke for all those years and for the thousands of weekly 'dad' jokes – what would we do without them.

If you would like to volunteer with ActivLives please contact the main office on 01473 345350.

FYI

Health Walks Schedule at Christchurch Park

We meet inside the Soane Street gate in Christchurch Park, Ipswich, IP4 2BG (in front of the Mansion).
Contact 01473 345350 for more information.

2025

13 & 27 October

10 & 24 November

8 December

2026

5th & 19th Jan

2nd & 16th Feb

2nd, 16th & 30th March



ActivSport's Mike McCarthy wins BBC Radio Suffolk Active Award



Picture from BBC Suffolk Facebook page

Mike receiving his award at the BBC Make A Difference Awards ceremony

Mike McCarthy, ActivSport Development Officer, has won the Active Award of the BBC Radio Suffolk Make A Difference Awards at a ceremony in Trinity Park on 17th September. He was recognised for using physical activity or sport as a way of improving the lives of those in their community.

Mike is a strong advocate of inclusive and accessible sports in Suffolk who for the past year led several inclusive sports tournaments in the county. As ActivLives Development Officer, he successfully organised inclusive badminton and boccia tournaments in Suffolk supporting athletes who have intellectual/learning disabilities in partnership with local organisations. He also leads different sports sessions across Suffolk every week including new age kurling, bowls, boccia, badminton and yoga.

He's been working with the charity since 2014 and continues to promote the importance of accessible and inclusive sports in local communities.

**ActivSport Profile:
Nicola Taylor, Boccia Athlete**

Nicola won bronze medal (BC1 classification) in the National Boccia Championships on 31 May 2025.

"I started attending the ActivLives boccia sessions with Mike in September 2023 in Stowmarket. Then in November 2024 I switched to attending the ActivLives boccia sessions with Evie Edwards-Hill in Ipswich.

I really enjoy the ActivLives boccia sessions because they're a really friendly, sociable and fun environment to play boccia without any pressure. It's brilliant for everyone to be included and I particularly enjoy the team games we play each week. I always leave the sessions feeling better than when I started - definitely a sign of a great activity!

I love playing in teams in boccia - utilising everyone's strengths, supporting team mates and making tactical decisions to outwit your opponents - so the opportunity to do that within the ActivLives tournaments is brilliant! These tournaments are also just such 'feel good' events; they're so much fun, so friendly and inclusive that you just have a brilliant day, whatever happens with the score!

In preparing for the championships, the ActivLives sessions help and I have weekly training with Evie and she's the most amazing and dedicated coach who has enabled my success. I also train independently several times a week. On competition days I've had up to 5 matches in a day. Each match is about an hour, and I need to warm up before each match, so that's a lot of boccia which is pretty exhausting (both mentally and physically) - I need to have put lots of hours training in beforehand so I don't run out of energy!



It felt great to come home with a medal at the National Championships, this was my major goal of the 24/25 season so I'm really pleased to have achieved it. It was great that all of my hours of training came off; I played some really good matches and was able to put lots of the things - for example different types of shot - into practice.

I'd like to say a massive thank you to Evie for all her efforts coaching me! Boccia is both a physical and mental game (having the right mindset is vital) and Evie is brilliant at managing both aspects - without her I'd certainly not be achieving medals at national championships!"

Inclusive Badminton athletes win medals in Walsall competition

Members of the ActivLives 'Inclusive Badminton' group, who play weekly in Ipswich, did us proud as they flew the flag for the Special Olympics Eastern Region recently at a National Special Olympics Badminton Tournament held at the University of Wolverhampton Sports Campus in Walsall. The team of 7 players from Suffolk, did a brilliant job of representing our county and region, winning a host of medals across the range of singles, doubles and mixed doubles events.

"Our team competed against athletes from across England and Wales. The competition was tough, but our players stuck to the task and produced some excellent performances. It was also really pleasing that our athletes received several complements for their sporting and friendly attitude", said Mike McCarthy, from SO Suffolk and ActivLives. "All of our players were a real credit to Special Olympics Suffolk and ActivLives".



ActivLives 'Inclusive Badminton' group receiving their medals at the National Special Olympics Badminton Tournament in Walsall

A big 'thank you' to the volunteer coaches and supporters who made the weekend possible.

ActivLives continue to deliver weekly inclusive sessions in Ipswich, in partnership with Special Olympics Suffolk.

ActivLives celebrates National Boccia Day with a festival in Ipswich



ActivLives celebrated 'National Boccia Day' in style with a Boccia Festival held at Gainsborough Sports Centre in Ipswich on 26th September. Sixty-six players participated with the brilliant support of staff and volunteers, as well as individual players there were participating groups from Avenues East, Leading Lives Stowmarket, Suffolk Rural College, Suffolk One and Papworth Trust.

The event was particularly targeted at players with an intellectual, sensory and/or physical disability. No previous boccia experience was required to get involved.

The day started with four groups taking part in skills challenges. Team challenges were the main theme throughout the day. There was also an individual "Control the Roll" challenge in the afternoon.

Feedback from the players has been brilliant with comments such as:

"I hope to do this again next year – Happy National Boccia Day to all". "I love it that all ages and abilities come together to enjoy boccia".



"Fabulous – so inclusive, we feel very happy to be part of it". "A very welcoming and friendly day. Lots of different games – we loved it!"

ActivLives would like to thank all of their partner organisations for their support with this event, particularly Special Olympics GB, Special Olympics Suffolk, Boccia England and the Suffolk Community Foundation.

If you are interested in finding out more about boccia and how to get involved, email mike@activlives.org or call the ActivLives office on 01473 345350.

Leiston BreatheFit celebrates 2nd Anniversary



On Wednesday 3rd September ActivLives BreatheFit members hosted a tea party following exercise celebrating 2 years since the project began. Thank you to all our members who contributed on the day.

‘Since this project has started we have grown as a group. We have a real mix of different ages, abilities and health conditions. It’s so important that these members get the support they need to keep active and well. Exercise can be a wonderful therapy for managing long-term health conditions and the psychological impact of these conditions. It’s satisfying to see new friendships forming within the group and abilities improving. This is what the project is all about!’

The Leiston Livewell Hub is such a vital resource in this community and it is used by various organisations and providers. This can mean that referrals and additional support can be offered to our members. Each week Livewell Hub Co-ordinator Celia Leggett produces a timetable of the various activities on offer and she is always on hand to provide information and further support navigating services as needed.

The Leiston Livewell Hub is also located next door to the Integrated Neighbourhood Team, linking closely with local NHS services. Student physiotherapists and student occupational therapists are offered placements to come along to ActivLives sessions to meet with our members and support the group activity. Students learning about what support is available in the local community is so important. It can help them refer patients, also meeting with members gives them valuable insight into local issues and concerns. This arrangement is helping to bridge the gap between local NHS services and the community setting.

ActivSport hosts summer lawn bowls

Over the summer ActivLives hosted 12 weeks of Lawn Bowls at Kesgrave Community Centre.

We had fantastic attendance this summer at Kesgrave Bowls Club. It was joy to see so many improving their skills and meeting up with new people. We welcomed new members who wanted to try Bowls as a new sport, which is really encouraging to be a part of. I want to thank our members for the wonderful support they have shown ActivLives over summer.

I would like to give special thanks to Kesgrave War Memorial Community Centre and the Kesgrave Bowls club for their continued support of our Lawn Bowls sessions here at ActivLives. The facilities are brilliant, the lawn was kept in pristine condition throughout our time here and the staff very helpful and accommodating. Thank you.

Our final session of Lawn Bowls was held on 2nd September. We have now returned to Short-Mat Bowls indoors at Gainsborough Sports Centre where weekly sessions will be held on Tuesday’s 10.30-12.30.

Pictures at Summer Lawn Bowls in Kesgrave Bowls Club and the Short-Mat Bowls at the Gainsborough Sports Centre



How Far Did You Go!



August was National Wellness Month and to celebrate this here at ActivLives we held a “How Far Can You Go” campaign.

The challenge was for people to take part in some form of activity; sport, dancing, gardening, walking, climbing, swimming or anything else, as all activity helps promote health and wellness.

We gave people the option of recording their steps over the course of the month and even had a special calculator to convert wheelchair activity into step equivalents. Everyone was encouraged to get sponsors to help raise money for ActivLives.

There were some fantastic efforts with people completing thousands of steps over the course of the month and unusual ways of doing so, including two climbing enthusiasts who did all their steps as ‘vertical steps’ counting all those completed whilst climbing walls, rocks and mountains! The highest number of steps recorded was an amazing 487,400, that’s over 16,000 steps every day of the month! Well done Joy Derbyshire!

We are still counting up the final amount raised by the campaign but at the time of writing the total is over £1,600. Well done and thank you to everybody who took part or made sponsorship/donation contributions. All the monies raised will go to the continued support of our activities in local communities.

If anybody still has sponsorship monies to hand in, or if anybody would still like to make a donation to the campaign, its not too late! Please pass your donation to any member of staff or call us and we can arrange how you can make your payment.

“You’ve Got To Be In It To Win It!”

We are pleased to announce that we are launching an ActivLives ‘100 Club’. This will both raise funds for ActivLives and give participants the chance to win up to £250 from each monthly draw. The odds of winning £250 in the National Lottery are over 73,000 to 1 but only 100 to 1 in our club! If you would like to become an ActivLives 100 Club member for £10 per month then please call us on 01473 345350 or email colin@activlives.org.uk and we will send you details of how you can sign up to take part.

Good luck! It could be you!

The ActivAble Project



ActivLives charity is developing the new ActivAble Project working with local residents and shareholders to help direct the project and establish new fun and social activities to prevent loneliness, social isolation and support people to improve their health and wellbeing in the Sizewell C area. The project has been funded by Suffolk Community Foundation - Sizewell C Community Fund for a period of 3 years.

Alana Sewell is the new ActivAble Development Officer who will be facilitating meetings with local residents and groups to see what type of activity people would like to see developed in the area. She is also working with Thorpeness Croquet Club to encourage participation and increase their membership.

If you would like to be involved in the project, or would like Alana to come and meet and talk to your local group or you would like us to organise a taster session, please contact Alana on alana@activlives.org.uk or contact the main office 01473 345350.

Alana will also be supporting our 3 existing exercise sessions held at the Waterloo Centre on a Wednesday in Leisto and 2 sessions held at the Fromus Centre in Saxmundham on a Monday.

Felixstowe Disability Pride attracts over a hundred participants, supporters

The Felixstowe Disability Pride hailed a success after over a hundred people showed up to support people with disabilities and celebrate the power of inclusivity. The event on 11th July featured a seafront parade, inclusive performances and a disability-focused business roadshow. It was organised by Ian Bell – Founder of Suffolk Mobility Solutions and Clare Lucas – Founder of Ducks In A Row and supported by various local partner organisations. £1000 was raised for ActivLives.



ActivSingers Ipswich moves to a new venue, new members are welcome

The ActivSingers Ipswich group recently moved to a new venue at the CRESS Pavilion, Halifax Road, Ipswich, IP2 8RE. On 12th September, a Bring a Friend free event was held to start the first session of the group in the new venue. There are more spaces available to join the singing group. **Call Julie Stokes on 01473 345350 for more details on how to join as a new member.**



ActivLives joins One Big Multicultural Festival in Ipswich

ActivLives participated in the One Big Multicultural Festival at the Alexandra Park on 31st August. The charity welcomed guests of the event and shared information about its programmes and services in Suffolk.

To raise funds for the charity, a Name the Sleeping Bear raffle was also drawn. Congratulations to Steve for winning the raffle. He named the bear Trampuss.



