



Picture Credit to Warren Page, PagePix

ActiveLives CEO Julie Stokes won the Active Suffolk Awards 2024 Activity Champion of the Year



Picture Credit to Warren Page, PagePix

Frazier Seager received the Runners Up- Active Suffolk Innovative Project of the Year award for BreatheFit



Creating Healthier Communities

ActiveLives
Changes Lives ●●●



Empowering People Together



ActiveLives Team at the Active Suffolk Awards 2024



Picture Credit to Warren Page, PagePix



Annual Report 2024/25



ActiveLives received the Highly Commended recognition for "Healthier Lives" Award at the ICS 'Can Do' Health and Care Awards 2024

Mission
To support and empower people to improve their health & wellbeing, create & connect people with their community and provide learning and volunteering opportunities.



What do we provide
We help people to create stronger, healthier and resilient communities and enable people to live full & active lives.



Picture from Sizewell C Community Fund

GOOD HEALTH@WORK
BRONZE AWARD





ABOUT US

We are a local independent charity working with individuals and communities, of all ages, but with a particular focus on 55 plus who live-in hardpressed areas in Ipswich and across Suffolk. We offer a wide range of services and programmes that help people connect, be active, take notice, learn and give through our ActivHubs, ActivSport and ActivGardens programmes and Specialist Hubs. Our sessions provide preventative services to support everyone keep **ACTIVE, HEALTHY and CONNECTED.**

CORE VALUES

We deliver the mission as a team, underpinning our work with a set of agreed core values. These define ActivLives and are as follows:

Honest & Open

Creating trust through taking responsibility, acting ethically and encouraging open debate

Community Focused

Supporting and empowering people to make positive changes to their own lives and the lives of others in the community

Professional & Accountable

Delivering quality, effective, safe and reliable services to our members, partners, the community and stakeholders

Respect and Value

Developing a committed and caring organisation that supports the development of volunteers, staff and members, promotes team working and working with partners and key stakeholders

Innovative

Developing services that help reduce health inequalities, enable people to improve their health & wellbeing, and that are accessible and beneficial



Picture from Sizewell C Community Fund



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Looking
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www.activlives.org.uk

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Charity Registration Number: 1147615, Company Registration Number: 7672809

From Our Chair of Trustees

This is my first year taking on the role as chair of Trustees, and it's been another eventful one at ActivLives. The board of Trustees and I are delighted to see how our services, activities and projects continue to reach and impact on so many lives across Ipswich, Sudbury and East Suffolk.

Our services have continued to support, amongst others, local NHS 'Living Well' health strategies and delivery plans, particularly under the Stay Well and Age Well programmes, including mental health, people living with dementia, carers, increasing physical activity, falls prevention, hypertension and reducing health inequalities.

I have heard from a number of our members throughout the year about how ActivLives has a positive impact on their lives, and it has often struck me how crucial, in particular, in the current economic climate, charities like ours are to people by ensuring that they continue to have access to the necessary care, attention and effective social and fitness activities whilst the capacity of the NHS and the affordability and availability of health and social care are put under strain.

It amazes me how a charity of this size can offer so much variety in its initiatives to its members, including through sport and exercise, social hubs, gardening, woodwork and singing; all of which provide our members with valuable skills, exercise, confidence and opportunities to socialise. We currently run 51 weekly sessions, 3 fortnightly sessions plus all the garden activities. Whilst we have such variety in our initiatives, over the past year I have been impressed with how our staff and volunteers are able to provide a 'joined up' approach to ensure that members can get the most out of what ActivLives offers.

ActivLives has received recognition over the past year through various awards nominations and wins.

These included:

- Receiving a 'Bronze Quality Standard' at the Get Set UK 'Good Health at Work' Awards;
- Julie Stokes, CEO, receiving the 'Everyone Active Activity Champion of the Year' award at the Active Suffolk Awards 2024;
- Our BreatheFit sessions, run by Frazier Seager, ActivAgeing Development Officer, was shortlisted and runner up for the 'Innovative Project of the Year' award at the Active Suffolk Awards 2024; and
- Being 'highly commended' in the 'Healthier Lives Award' category at the ICS 'Can Do' Health and Care Awards 2024.

All of this is testament to the hard work of our staff and volunteers, without whom this would not be possible. For that, I would like to thank you on behalf of all the Trustees.

Over the last year, the board of Trustees has grown from 6 to 8 with the addition of Linda Hughes and Karen Stacey. They provide us with valuable expertise in HR, business strategy and recruitment which has helped to broaden the diversity of skills and backgrounds within the trustee group.

The Trustee board meets every other month to ensure that:

- ActivLives is meeting our strategic aims and objectives
- Our existing services continue to develop, and that we consider appropriate new projects
- We are engaging and supporting the people we need to reach
- We have the resources and skills we need to deliver our services and
- We have the funding we need to ensure that we can continue to offer our services in a sustainable way.

One of the Trustee board's main current focuses is to diversify our income generation. As a charity, we have historically relied mainly on grant funding, which has been supplemented by the income generated from some of the services we offer and products we sell. However, in the current economic climate, where grant funding is becoming less available and more restrictive in how it can be used, we have placed focus on raising awareness of the charity with local people and businesses, and to increase the proportion of our income which derives from fundraising and charitable giving. In addition to spreading our income across different sources, the benefit of income which comes from fundraising is that it's often unrestricted, so ActivLives has autonomy in how the funds are used.

One of the recent investments we have made in this regard is to appoint Colin Baldwin as our Partnership and Fundraising Officer. This is a newly formed role in which Colin, with his experience in this sector, is working to develop relationships with individuals and the local business community, and to create engaging events and initiatives which can raise important funds for ActivLives. Watch this space...

Notwithstanding the above, ActivLives continues to actively search out and apply for appropriate funding. Notably, we have applied for Sizewell C funding through the Suffolk Community Foundation to enable us to reach and support more people in Leiston, Saxmundham, Aldeburgh, Yoxford and Wickham Market with inclusive activity and to support our existing sessions which are held in Leiston and Saxmundham.

Whilst the uncertain economic landscape shifts, ActivLives continues to focus on developing services that achieve its principal aims, to: Improve people's health and well-being; reduce loneliness and social isolation and provide opportunities for people to learn skills and volunteer, at the same time, being prepared to adapt to ensure our long-term financial sustainability, increase awareness of the charity, and to build positive partnerships and support within the community.

Finally, I would like to say a big thank you to all the staff, volunteers, members, fellow Trustees, our funders and supporters, and everyone who helps make ActivLives what it is today.

I feel an immense pride being a small part of this wonderful charity, and I hope that everyone who contributes to, as well as benefits from, its services feels the same way too.



Daniel Billson
Chair of Trustees

I always have to start my report by thanking our dedicated and amazing staff, volunteers and Trustees for their hard work, commitment, passion, empathy and support that they give to everyone at ActivLives. The support you give involves so much more than just the activity you deliver and often involves not only the member but their carers, families, friends, neighbours, health & social care professionals. You can read all about the fantastic work that our staff and volunteers do across the organisation in the Annual Report, including the people we reach, support, the feedback we receive and the impact, that being involved with ActivLives, has on their lives.

Last year I mentioned that it had been a year of change and well, 2024 – 2025 was no different. We have had to face more challenges, such as the competitive marketplace for funding, shortage of volunteers, increases in the cost of living, rising costs generally and now we are hearing that many Trusts and Foundations are closing down their funding streams.

So again, I have to thank Susannah Robirosa - ActivGardens Development Manager, Cynthia Glinos - Finance Manager, and Alison Pearson, Engagement Officer for supporting me in raising just over £310,000 through grant applications to keep all our in-house and on-going activities running and developing new projects where there is a local need. This involves writing funding applications, looking at different ways to generate income, linking with the Corporate and Business Sector, local Borough, District and County Councils and Councillors and working closely with our health and social care colleagues to try and secure local, regional and national funding for ActivLives.

Funding is always one of our top priorities and so a big thank you goes out to all of our funders, supporters, members and their families who generously donate, fundraise and invest in ActivLives, and help us support nearly 2,000 people each year, these include - £717 raised through sponsorship for the Mile a Day Challenge in May; £500 which our lovely Trustee Clare Lucas raised at a Ducks in a Row event; £1030 from Ipswich Wanderers FC and £2150 from Lodge of Perfect Friendship, both as their charity of the year; £150 donation from Hitcham Hoes Gardening Group and £200 donation from the parents of a gardens volunteer; a total of £466 raised from two East of England Co-op local giving campaigns; donations of £1000 from Heartbeat East Suffolk, £1500 from the Murphy-Neumann Charity and £2000 from John Lewis Ipswich; donations in memory of former members and volunteers – £124 for Scott Morgans, £552 for John Collins and £1673 for Barrie Powell.

Promotion, marketing and communication are also key to ensure people know about the services we provide and how people can support what we do. Jomel Gutierrez, Marketing and Communications Officer has certainly done an amazing job in making people aware of ActivLives on our social media platforms, LinkedIn, Instagram, Facebook etc, linking us with lots of other platforms, designing a new website, posters and flyers and creating some amazing videos of our members and volunteer stories. A big thank you to Councillor Mark Jepson, also Suffolk Sounds Radio presenter for giving us a regular slot on his show and Hospital Radio – Ipswich for inviting us on to inform patients and others about our services.

We also raise awareness in other ways, apart from all the activities we deliver in-house, ActivLives also delivers additional sessions, talks and presentations to many other organisations in Ipswich and East Suffolk, to promote what we do, raise funds, develop partnerships and very importantly, widen our reach out in the community. Many of these groups include faith groups, WI's, Guilds, Schools, interest groups, health and social care colleagues and groups that support people with specific health conditions such as Fibromyalgia, Stroke and Parkinson's Disease. A few of the groups/ organisations we have worked with during 2024 – 2025 are the Bangladeshi Support Centre Multicultural Services – Women's Carers group; McCarthy Stone – Thomas Wolsey Place; Oddfellows; Britannia Ladies, Priory Park; Avenues East; Papworth Trust; Indigo Opportunities, Felixstowe Mencap, LEAPS Suffolk, IBC Summer Holiday Programme, Leading Lives Stowmarket, the Lavender Trust Day Centre, St Peter's Church and Top Up Shop, the Job Centre to name but a few.

Mike McCarthy – ActivSport Development Officer delivered 70 additional ActivSport sessions during the year, plus 6 inclusive Badminton and Boccia tournaments and competitions, some of these in partnership with Special Olympics Suffolk.

The 12-week Strength and Balance Programme that ActivLives have been developing in partnership with East Suffolk and Babergh District Councils has been very successful and has supported over 100 people who have had a fall or who are high risk of falling. We run 6

sessions now, 4 in East Suffolk and 2 in Babergh District. Thank you to the ReBalance team Jemma Tilley, Laura Lopez, Del Keeble and Frazier Seager, the freelance staff and volunteers for your hard work in promoting and growing these sessions and a thank you to the council staff who have supported us in developing this new Strength & Balance programme. We also deliver another 27 on-going better balance sessions to build strength, confidence and improve balance and co-ordination including ActivSteps (which includes dance steps, particularly Salsa) with freelance instructor Claire Kynaston and our new Love to Move programme, led by Laura to help people with Parkinson's Disease, people living with Dementia and people with poor cognitive function to improve their balance, gait and mobility.

Frazier has also continued to develop the increasing the number of BreatheFit sessions, which are now in Leiston, Felixstowe, Stowmarket and Ipswich. These sessions have really helped participants with COPD, heart and lung disease and asthma, to build their fitness, strength and improve their breathing.

Together, Frazier and Mike have also continued to lead/oversee the ActivSport ongoing sessions including New Age Kurling, bowls, badminton, short tennis, boccia, yoga and walking football.

The three ActivGardens sites continue to grow and flourish, with lots of free courses for people to learn about growing vegetables, wildlife, beekeeping, construction, the environment and de-stressing, surrounded by nature. A thank you to Susannah Robirosa, ActivGardens Fundraising and Development Manager, Ian Hirst, ActivGardens Operations Officer, Phoebe Hyett, Grow Your Future Project Officer and John Bettinson, ActivSheds Project Officer, the key volunteers and everyone who helps to keep all the gardens looking lovely and for the amazing work you do and the impact you have on people's lives.

Barrie Powell or 'Barrie the bee' as he was known, passed earlier this year and John created an amazing Bee Sculpture in memory of Barrie, which can be found in the Sensory Garden at the People's Community Garden. I am so pleased that we were able to present Barrie with his Volunteer Award at last year's AGM and thank him for all the knowledge and experience of bees and beekeeping he has shared with so many people at the gardens.

Unfortunately, during the year we had to say goodbye to Jack Cook at the end of his one-year apprenticeship which was part of the Groundwork UK's New to Nature

programme, Samantha Grainger-Cowles following the conclusion of her successful Gardening in Mind Project and Moira Hoogendyk, ActivCommunity Support Officer at the end of the one year funded joint Mental Health NSFT Project. We wish them all the best in their future ventures and employment.

The ICare Connect Project funded by Suffolk Community Foundation – Suffolk Carers Fund, led by Alison Pearson, Engagement Officer supported 24 carers during the first year of the project. A co-production meeting was held in October 2024 with carers to discuss the issues that carers and former carers face and to inform the direction of the project in Year 2. Alison also facilitates the Men's Breakfast Hub and ActivFriends, both of which support existing and former carers. A big thank you again goes out to all the volunteers who help prepare, cook and serve the lovely meals, help with activities or talk to our members. That also goes out to our Lunch Club volunteers and cook as well, both hubs ensure that people have a hot two course meal, time to socialise and a beneficial experience, to help reduce loneliness and social isolation.

This year we also worked closely with the SPILL Festival and were involved in the spectacular 'Posh Club' event held at the Ipswich Corn Exchange. Many of our members and volunteers attended and thoroughly enjoyed the afternoon filled with music, entertainment, dancing and afternoon tea - it certainly was an eye opener and very posh!

Times are hard and I can't deny that it can be very stressful at times for all of us, but we are a flexible, proactive and forward-thinking organisation, we have an amazing team of caring, passionate, enthusiastic and experienced staff and an amazing team of dedicated and loyal volunteers across the organisation and not forgetting our Trustees. So, a big thank goes out to all of you.

A thank you to Cynthia, Jomel, admin support Stella Houlihan and volunteer Jean White in the main office, for keeping us all in order.

2026 will be our 20th Anniversary. We started as the Town & Bridge Project all those years ago on 5th September 2006, hosted by ICVS and based in the Old Post Office building, at No 1 Cornhill, in the centre of Ipswich. So here is to another active year at ActivLives and I look forward to the party.



**Julie Stokes
CEO**



I always look forward to coming every week – always made me really welcome, my balance has really improved.

-Member, Keep on Moving Leiston



I hope that you are all so proud of the incredible reach that ActivGardens projects have, how they touch so many lives and make such a difference.

-Community Support Manager, East of England Co-op



Love being here every time that we come. It's great to see the badminton players improving their game, making friends and being in a safe place. Brilliant volunteers, the day was organised very well. Well done to Mike and all of the team!

-Family member



Volunteering gives me a lot. It gives me a lot of confidence and a lot more skills in my coaching.

-Volunteer, Boccia



SPECIALIST HUBS

Men's Breakfast Hub



**Alison Pearson
Engagement Officer
& Specialist Hub
Facilitator**

The group has grown and we now have 14 regular attendees, aged 56 to 89 years old. They all have very varied life experiences, which is great for the group as it gives different perspectives during discussions.

Although the session starts at 10:00 am, many arrive earlier and enjoy teas and coffees and a catch-up chat, before we start the sessions.

At the beginning of each session attendees have the opportunity to discuss and raise questions about any local issues or outside activities that they are interested in. In the background volunteers from the group are cooking the bacon for the breakfast rolls.

Health is important to the men who attend so we have had visits from Cancer Specialist nurses, Cancer Support in Suffolk, Healthwatch Suffolk, and also discussed any health concerns. Other sessions we have had included People's Community Garden visits, a day with Dr David Norman a Militaria collector and researcher, cookery sessions, food and nutrition, reminiscence sessions on childhood, work and family, topical quizzes and a lot of banter and laughing. Thank you to our volunteer Mary for helping us every Wednesday. Your support means a lot to the group.

Everybody really looks forward to their Wednesday mornings with enthusiasm. The group has given them a weekly purpose, and a safe space to meet and chat to other like-minded men and make new friendships. Many attend other ActivLives activities and also meet up away from the group. It's definitely a friendly, relaxing place to be on a Wednesday morning. Here are some feedback from the men who attend:

Having been isolated for many years, I have relearned how to mix with people, and have really enjoyed the social interaction and the exchange of information. It has pleasantly surprised me.

This group is exactly what was missing in my life.

I was at a low ebb due to losing my wife, this group has brought me out of myself, I love all the banter and conversations.



A summer discussion outside CRESS Pavilion and the group's WW II memorabilia



Sharing ideas and outlooks, in a safe environment, has been really helpful to me. Alison, who guides the group, is a real star and her evident concern for the welfare of the group is refreshing and a real pleasure.

If this group is of interest to you call 01473 345350 and talk to Alison Pearson.

The group has helped me to forget about problems at home for a couple of hours a week, and it has given me more confidence to open up in group discussions.

ActivFriends



ActivFriends members participating in different activities throughout the year

Caring for an older family member can be isolating, as is living on your own, without local family support. ActivFriends Social Hub is here to help you with that.

The project is now funded through Ipswich Borough Council and we have had a very busy year in 2024 – 2025. In 2025 we had a key staff member off after an accident at home, however the project continued with the support of our CEO Julie Stokes and the assistance and support of the volunteers.

Conversation is the cornerstone of ActivFriends, everyone catching up with each other, talking about their week, asking advice, and laughing a lot as well. Every week is different, and so are the temperatures, something we are very conscious of at ActivFriends. Plenty of cold and hot drinks, whatever is needed on the day.

We offer a big variety of different activities with live singers and musical groups, visiting choirs, Dance East with their wonderful Care to Dance programme, musical sing-alongs, indoor bowls, crafting activities, reminiscence and so much more. Plus, any questions on the day are answered.

Without all our fabulous 7 volunteers, we couldn't provide the fantastic support, entertainment and delicious 2 course meals that we do. They help to make the magic happen on a Friday.

A MASSIVE thank you to all my very hard-working volunteers....Pat, Bob, Sandra, Barbara, Barbs, Melissa and Sandra's husband Ray, they are all superstars, each and every one of them.

We know how important this hub is and what a difference it makes to our members and volunteers who come along each week. Everyone tells us that Fridays is something they all look forward to each week. So, if you, or anyone you know, would like to know more about the group, **please do get in touch now and call Alison Pearson on 01473 345350, we have spaces for new members and would love to hear from you.**



Cheers to another successful year of the ActivFriends!

Coming here on a Friday feels like home to me. I really enjoy it.

I wish we could come every day.

ActivFriends is so much fun. I especially enjoy Pats lovely home cooked meals every week, they are really lovely.

It's all new to me. I didn't know such a lovely place existed.

Thank you for all the hard work you put into ActivFriends to make it such a special day.



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. The Lunch Club celebrated its 17th Anniversary. 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.

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.

The Lunch Club started with 8 members and now caters for up to 30 people every week. Tina the cook and volunteers Pam and Rose help prepare and cook the hot two course meal every week.

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.

Linda said: "I really enjoy my time with ActivLives and look forward to every Tuesdays leading a friendly team of volunteers, we are all there for each other. It is lovely to see the members and volunteers together".

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.

Over the year we have delivered 43 Lunch Club sessions, we have 48 people registered and 920 attendances. A big thank you also goes to Halstead Ottery who has been the exercise instructor at St Mary at Stoke for all those years and for the thousands of weekly 'dad' jokes – we have had to listen to - what would we do without them. We would like to thank St Mary at Stoke Church for allowing us to use their venue; for the Church Volunteers who have helped with washing up all these years and to the Pop-Up Shop for supporting our members with groceries and other goodies.

Thank you to everyone who has been involved with the Lunch Club.



Lunch Club hardworking volunteers at St Mary at Stoke Church Hall who prepare and serve meals every Tuesday



This year, we were able to start a new Ipswich ActivSinging group in April 2024, meeting alternate Fridays, at Pinewood Community Hall.

The Woodbridge Group has been running a number of years now and meet every other Friday at the Quay Church. There are 40 people registered with the Woodbridge group, they have had 20 sessions, with 363 attendances. The new Ipswich Group has 24 people registered, has had 4 sessions and 38 attendances.

So, both groups have had a busy year learning new songs with Evie Capon the Music Facilitator including, 'Build Me Up Buttercup', 'True Colours', 'I'm Still Standing', 'Forever Country', as well as other favourites from musical theatre, swing and pop.

The Woodbridge Group sang at the AGM in November 2024 and although a small group, gave a very uplifting performance and always cheer people up attending the event.

Members say, 'Singing makes me feel good, alive and happy'; 'It's uplifting and improves your mood'; 'I can't sing well, but I enjoy singing with others' and 'It's great for meeting and making new friends and singing together as a group'.

Singing is good for you because it:

- Makes you feel better
- Strengthens the immune system
- Is a natural anti-depressant
- Enhances lung function
- Improves your posture
- Helps with sleep
- Reduces stress and helps you relax
- Builds a sense of community
- Let's you express yourself
- Helps pain relief
- Boosts your confidence.



ICare Connect: A Carer's Support Project

ActivLives has been working with carers for many years before this project started.

We understand from previous experience, that for many carers, caring for a family member, friend or partner, takes up a large part of their lives and some lose touch with friends and family as a result, and it can also be challenging for other closely connected family members.

Caring for someone at home can have an impact on your physical and mental health and you may have to make sacrifices in your social life and leisure time, and feel that you are caring in isolation with no respite. Many feel that no one understands the pressures that they feel, so talking to someone, can be a real help.

ICare Connect project is a one to one, support service, designed to assist people with coping with their caring role and moving forward in a step-by-step way. We can assist with worrisome, everyday issues in a practical way. Support is available by phone, online or in person. The project allows people the time to talk about worries and concerns and set down a way forward.

24 carers and former carers were registered with the project and each individual had a 1-2-1 assessment, documented through questions, to identify and measure their needs at the time, this was a self-reported health and wellbeing and mental health discussion, including any pre-existing medical conditions.

Following this, and on an ongoing basis, the project was then able to offer them the support they needed and provide additional knowledge & confidence, to manage the events on their caring journey. For some who came to the project, this support is ongoing, as and when needed.

This project has been developed through learned experience and listening to carers who look after family, friends or neighbours. We have strong relationships with Suffolk Family Carers and Suffolk County Council as well as many health and social care practitioners and ties to community and voluntary groups locally.

If this project is of interest to your charity or group, please contact Alison Pearson on 01473 345350, prior to any referral, as she is the lead for the project.



Creating impact with ICare Connect Carer Project with support from members and listening to their voices



Picture from Canva



Caring for Carers A Conversation activity with Alison

Highlights

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ICare Connect Project Conversation event



One of our sessions at ActivFriends with the members



Members enjoying the moment with an Elvis impersonator at ActivFriends



Men's Hub members making some soup

ACTIVSPORT

Inclusive Sport Events

The ActivSport programme continued throughout the year, with a variety of sports and physical activities including boccia, bowls, new age kurling, badminton, table tennis, short tennis, yoga, health walks and walking football. We have approximately **250 participants** registered on the ActivSport programme.

In addition to the weekly programme of activities, we also hosted **five inclusive sports events** in Ipswich and Stowmarket (specifically for athletes with a disability), and **one event** which was targeted at older independent adults.

At the five Inclusive/Special Olympics events that we hosted there were 56 badminton players and 119 boccia players – a total of 175 athletes taking part in these events.



Mike McCarthy
ActivSport
Development Officer



April 2024 – Inclusive Badminton Tournament in Ipswich

We had 26 athletes at this event including visiting teams from Wimbledon and Southampton.



Athletes playing during the Inclusive Badminton Tournament in April at Ipswich



I cannot thank you enough for everything you poured into Saturday's event – before, during and after – it was such a success and amazing to be a part of. Thank you so much! I must say I loved the 'team relay', I think it would be a really cool thing to incorporate into more SOGB events. Thank you again - A huge thank you to all the other attendees, competitors and volunteers too. 😊
-Emma Kane-McGuigan,
Head of Network at SOGB

Inclusive Sport Events

July 2024 – The second Boccia Tournament in Stowmarket

We had 42 athletes at this event with two divisions of players with an intellectual disability and one division for players with a physical disability.

*We thoroughly enjoyed it - superb organisation and everybody felt as though they were a winner! Many thanks to everyone involved - you deserve a medal as well...
Best wishes,
Neil and Sadie Watts*



Players participating in the 2nd Boccia Tournament in Stowmarket



It's been a lovely day. Very impressive to see people with a disability in sport and social activities.
-Family member

September 2024 – ‘Big Boccia Bash’ in Ipswich

ActivLives celebrated ‘National Boccia Day 2024’ in Ipswich with a Boccia Festival. We had 45 participants at this fun, ‘come and try it’ event.

Absolutely incredible! Very inclusive, very sociable and so much fun! Everybody we came with are now leaving with great big smiles across their faces. – Activities Facilitator

I came today with my 17 years old son. He was anxious at the start but soon settled in and he has thoroughly enjoyed it. Brilliant atmosphere, it has been lovely watching everyone enjoying themselves and just having fun.

I enjoy it and meeting new people. I enjoy the game.
– Player

Celebrating National Boccia Day with our players at ActivSport Big Boccia Bash in September 2024



November 2024 – Inclusive Badminton Tournament in Ipswich

We had 30 athletes at this event including visiting teams from Wimbledon and Lincoln, competing across four divisions.



A competitive day with the athletes at the Inclusive Badminton Tournament in Ipswich in November 2024

It is a pleasure to come to these tournaments to play – we always look forward to coming. I get to play some challenging, yet fun matches, with some amazing people. Thank you to all of the organisers for the organising the event.
-Wimbledon player



We always like coming to Ipswich. The tournament is so well organised and the volunteers are so supportive towards our players. Well done to Mike and his team. - Parent

March 2025 – Boccia Tournament in Ipswich

We had 32 athletes at this event.

It was my first tournament and it was good. - Joel, Competitor

Well organised and professional -Irene, Support Worker

A very nice social event for all. -Sadie

Players having a great time competing at the Boccia Tournament last March in Ipswich



Busy seasons for ActivSport

In August, most of our weekly ActivSport sessions take a break but we have Lawn Bowls in Kesgrave throughout the summer months for our members to enjoy the outdoor venue and sunshine. ActivBowls (lawn bowls & short-mat) had 46 sessions for the year with 1,072 total attendances.

In the start of September, we started again with our ActivSport sessions including Badminton, Boccia, New Age Kurling, Table Tennis, Short Tennis, Yoga, Short-Mat Bowls and Walking Football.



Lawn Bowls members had a great time during the summer



Short Tennis, Ping Pong and Badminton have continued to deliver weekly sessions for the year benefitting a lot of our members that help them improve their wellbeing



The Short Tennis and Ping Pong in Gainsborough and Whitton Sports Centres had a fantastic year with our members continuously enjoying the sessions. For the year, the two sessions recorded a total of 856 attendances. Both venues also had a total of 79 sessions.

Our ActivBadminton held 39 sessions with 372 attendances. This session is for older adults who have or no experience at all of playing badminton but want to try the sport to learn the basics of the game.

Weekly Yoga sessions in Ipswich continue to help improve members physical and mental health. 37 sessions were delivered throughout the year, with 320 attendances.

Walking Football sessions held at the IBC Whitton Leisure Centre are well attended. This year 31 sessions were held with 399 attendances.

Kurling and Special Target Event



Group picture with Felixstowe Kurling members and a participant playing bowls at the Fun Target Challenge

Kurling and Bowls Target Event

Frazier and Mike hosted this event at Gainsborough Sports Centre on Tuesday 25th March 2025. The event combined two sports on our ActivSport programme- New Age Kurling and Short-mat Bowls.

The first part of the day included a variety of fun target challenges designed to challenge certain skills involved in these activities. The second part of the day participants competed in their preferred activity, with medals up for grabs.

It was really encouraging to see so many different people get involved in the day's activities. It really highlighted the inclusive nature of our ActivSport programme. For some it was their first time trying these sports and it was great to see participants developing their skills and knowledge throughout the day.

"I would like to thank all those who kindly volunteered on the day and my colleague Mike McCarthy who has helped me with the organisation and planning for this event. A lot of work goes into hosting large events like this, and I am grateful for all the support I had from both members and staff here at ActivLives. I would also like to thank all the staff at IBC for their continued support," Frazier said.

Felixstowe Kurling

ActivLives are hosting New Age Kurling sessions on Monday's 11.30am -1.00pm at Felixstowe Leisure Centre.

Frazier said: "New Age Kurling is an adapted sport and a great way of keeping active. It is an activity that can be enjoyed by people of all abilities, which is what I am seeing here at Felixstowe Leisure Centre. We have various health conditions and physical abilities within this group. There is a wonderful atmosphere of friendly competition with our members and some great friendships have been made. Special thanks to the staff of Felixstowe Leisure Centre for their continued support facilitating this session."

Felixstowe Saturday

After gathering feedback from our members it was identified that weekend sessions would be of great benefit to those who are at risk of social isolation. Weekends can be a lonely time for some of our members who might live alone. To combat isolation ActivLives has been hosting regular Saturday sessions at Walton Community Hall to provide additional social contact for members over the weekend.

This group activity combines Boccia and New Age Kurling- fun games that can be played in pairs and teams. It's a great way of meeting other people in a relaxed, safe environment. Time is set aside between both of these activities to chat and socialise with each other over tea and coffee.

Healthwalks

Health walks members at Christchurch Park



"I joined the health walk to exercise and to meet people. The sessions are very friendly and inclusive. It has certainly helped me to socialise. My eye sight is poor, but I can still walk, and I enjoy being with other people. I feel much better, health wise and I have made friends."
-HealthWalk Member

"The health walk has helped me maintain my physical fitness, after a leg injury and it helps me socialise. I felt included in the activity and we have created our own community. The walk has improved my general fitness."
-HealthWalk Member

Inclusive/Special Olympics Tournaments

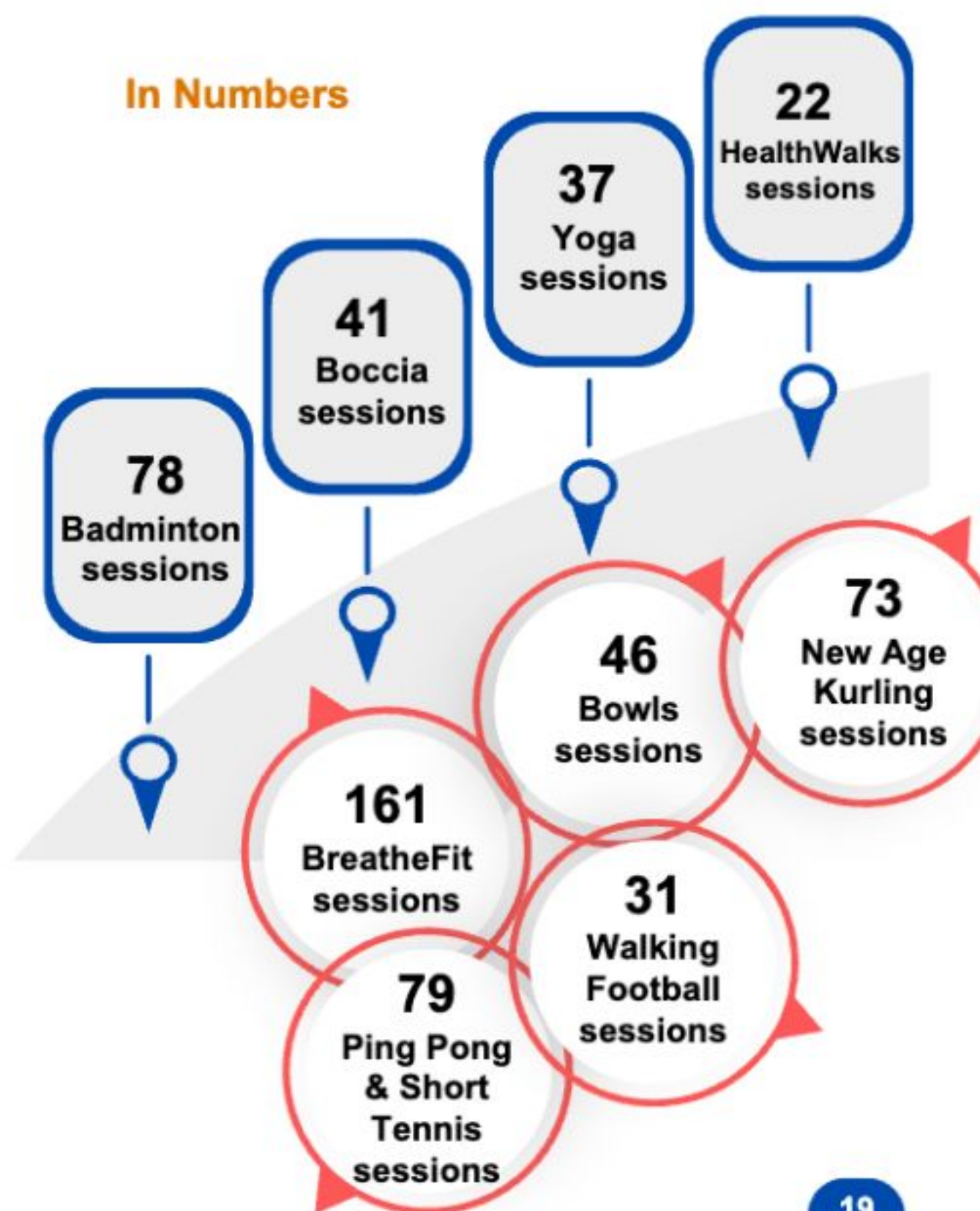
From June - September 2024, ActivLives/Special Olympics Suffolk players competed in different inclusive/Special Olympics Tournaments. In June 2024, ActivLives, in partnership with Special Olympics Suffolk, supported 7 athletes to compete in the Para-Badminton Tournament in Gillingham. And in September 2024, we partnered again with Special Olympics Suffolk to support 3 athletes compete in the Special Olympics North Staffordshire Tournament in Cheadle.

In addition to our weekly programme of activities and our inclusive events, we also delivered 70 additional activity sessions to, and with, a variety of partner organisations. Most of these are boccia sessions with adults who have an intellectual (learning) disability.



ActivSport inclusive badminton athletes went home with medals after competing in Gillingham (left picture) and Cheadle (right picture) in partnership with Special Olympics Suffolk

In Numbers



Special Thanks to ActivSport Partner Organisations

- Avenues East (Ipswich & Stowmarket)
- Boccia England
- Everyone Active (Mid Suffolk LC)
- Felixstowe & Villages Carers Group
- Felixstowe Mencap
- Foxhall Day Centre (Lavender Trust)
- Framlingham Trefoil Guild
- Icanhoe Stowmarket
- Indigo Opportunities
- Ipswich BC Summer Holiday Programme
- Kesgrave Bowls Club
- Kesgrave Community Centre
- Landseer Road Methodist Church
- Leading Lives Stowmarket
- LEAP's Suffolk
- Monday Club Stowmarket
- Papworth Trust
- Places Leisure (Felixstowe LC)
- Special Olympics GB
- Special Olympics Suffolk
- Suffolk Community Foundation
- Suffolk New College (Goals)
- Suffolk Sight
- Thomas Wolsey Ormiston Academy
- Woodbridge Trefoil Guild





Frazier Seager
ActivAgeing
Development Officer

BreatheFit is an exercise-based therapy to help people manage their daily symptoms of breathlessness and improve their overall physical function. It challenges the cycle of inactivity that is associated with a long-term respiratory condition. It offers support and motivation for participants to keep active. Living with a long-term health condition can greatly increase levels of anxiety and depression, which in turn can negatively impact motivation to exercise. So connecting with other people living with a similar condition is also a big part of this project - it provides understanding company- an interchange of encouragement. It's a great way to share experiences and helpful advice with others.

With more space to accommodate participants the class has continued to grow and develop with weekly sessions being held each Monday.

Frazier said: "I would like to thank all the staff at The Grove Medical Practice for their support of ActivLives and the BreatheFit project. Working closely with the NHS services really helped reach those who needed our support most in the community, and it was great to have positive feedback about the project from the staff at The Grove who really supported this group in its early stages of development."

Ipswich and Felixstowe BreatheFit have a total of 71 sessions and 511 attendances.



BreatheFit Ipswich members enjoying the day



It's definitely comforting to meet with others with a similar condition. We can reassure each other and always find humour in ourselves. The social side of these classes are equally important as the exercises themselves.

-BreatheFit Member



Very nice and friendly, always leave on a positive note.

-BreatheFit Member



Relaxed atmosphere with exercises tailored to each individual.

-BreatheFit Member



Look forward to this group each week, found it very helpful.

-BreatheFit Member



Leiston BreatheFit turns 1 year



Frazier with the members of BreatheFit Leiston's celebrating 1st year of the group

It has been a year since Leiston BreatheFit was started by ActivLives!

Members organised a tea party with plenty of cakes and treats. It was a wonderful celebration to mark an important milestone especially that the Leiston session members has been increasing throughout the year. There were also 48 sessions held during this period with a total of 636 attendances.

On 11th December 2024, Leiston BreatheFit set a new record attendance of 20 participants in one session.

Meanwhile, Heartbeat charity organisation donated £1000 to the BreatheFit project. Terry and Lynn Osbourne came to the ActivBowls session to present ActivAgeing Development Officer Frazier Seager with a cheque from Heartbeat.

Terry and Lynn are involved with Heartbeat, which is a local charity in Ipswich and East Suffolk providing much needed support to people in the community living with cardiac conditions.



Terry and Lynn handed over the £1000 donation to Frazier



Members of BreatheFit programme in Leiston

Case Study



Mrs. K is a member of BreatheFit Ipswich. It wasn't until she attended the sessions that she realised she wasn't managing her condition as best as she could. She was taking inhalers and medication but she hadn't thought about her lifestyle or physical activity. Attending regularly, she has built up muscles. She now has more endurance and is able to walk further. She realised that she is less breathless than she previously was. She also found that the breathing techniques and recovery positions have helped her control the panic she experiences when she can't catch her breath. Attending the sessions helped her mental health no end. "We are all in the same boat- there are others with my condition. The peer support really motivated me and made me feel less isolated", she said. Having access to a friendly instructor has helped her as well. The tips and advice are all so welcome and helpful. If she had an injury, or she wasn't feeling as good as a previous week, Frazier would adapt the exercises to how she was feeling. He was flexible with planning the exercise around her as a person.



Members from BreatheFit Stowmarket socialising after a session and doing the circuit-training

BreatheFit Stowmarket records over 500 attendances

From April 2024 - March 2025, we have a good attendance record for our BreatheFit Stowmarket sessions. We had 561 attendances and a total of 42 sessions. It has been two years since we started this group. We have received incredible feedback from the members too.

Frazier also uses circuit-training as part of the programme of exercises at Stowmarket. This is an effective way of working various muscle-groups and it also means that members can work independently, rather than being led as a whole group. Frazier supports those with their exercises on an individual basis- adapting the exercise to suit the individuals personal fitness levels.

Circuit training is a type of workout that involves rotating through a circuit of exercises that target different muscle groups. Circuit training refers to how a workout routine is structured rather than a specific type of exercise. With circuit training, you will complete each set of exercises for a certain number of repetitions, or time period. Then, you'll move to another activity for the same amount of repetitions or time with rests taken between as needed. Because you move through the circuit of exercises relatively quickly, an entire circuit training session can usually be completed in only 30-45 minutes.

Frazier said: "Circuit-training is a great method to use in classes such as Stowmarket BreatheFit. I find it helps members to become a bit more self-motivated when exercising. Sometimes its not WHAT you do but HOW you do it that makes the difference between effective and non-effective exercise. I am able to teach individuals correct technique and intensity; while supervising the group circuit-training as a whole."

If you want to join our BreatheFit session in Stowmarket and other venues in Leiston and Felixstowe, please contact frazier@activlives.org.uk or call us on 01473 345350.



Beth from Asthma+Lung UK talking to some BreatheFit members

Asthma+Lung UK

Beth from Asthma+Lung UK came to visit BreatheFit sessions in Ipswich and East Suffolk to share her inspirational story and raise awareness of their charity and the support it can offer people living with respiratory conditions in the UK. Asthma+Lung UK offer expert advice and provide a wealth of helpful information about a wide-range of lung conditions. To find out more about this charity please see the information: <https://www.asthmaandlung.org.uk/>.

Healthwatch Suffolk COPD Research Project

BreatheFit members contributed to Healthwatch Suffolk's local COPD research project, providing insight into their condition the everyday challenges they face. This project compiled some fantastic research alongside case studies, people's personal stories and experiences living with COPD.

In this research over a third of respondents reported they were not confident about managing their COPD. Some of the following points were raised in the research: *Understanding of the condition, Access to medication and confidence taking it, Professional support, Social connection, Pulmonary Rehabilitation and healthy lifestyles, Home and environmental influences, Mental health support, Transport and Finance.*

The article can be found online with this link: <https://healthwatchsuffolk.co.uk/copdreport/>.



Last year I joined forces with another COPD sufferer to gather interested clients from an NHS run Pulmonary Rehab courses which were time limited. We got involved with local group ActivLives (www.activlives.org.uk) who agreed to run a weekly BreatheFit session for COPD sufferers and people with other chest/heart related problems. These sessions have gone from strength to strength.

-BreatheFit Member on Ageing Well in Suffolk, Healthwatch Suffolk Report

ReBalance PROGRAMME

Highlights



Jemma Tilley
ReBalance
Development
Co-ordinator



Del Keeble
ReBalance
Co-ordinator



Laura Lopez
ReBalance
Development
Co-ordinator



Keep on Moving members in Rushmere using resistance band for exercise and a full packed session of participants in Felixstowe enjoying the exercise



Highlights



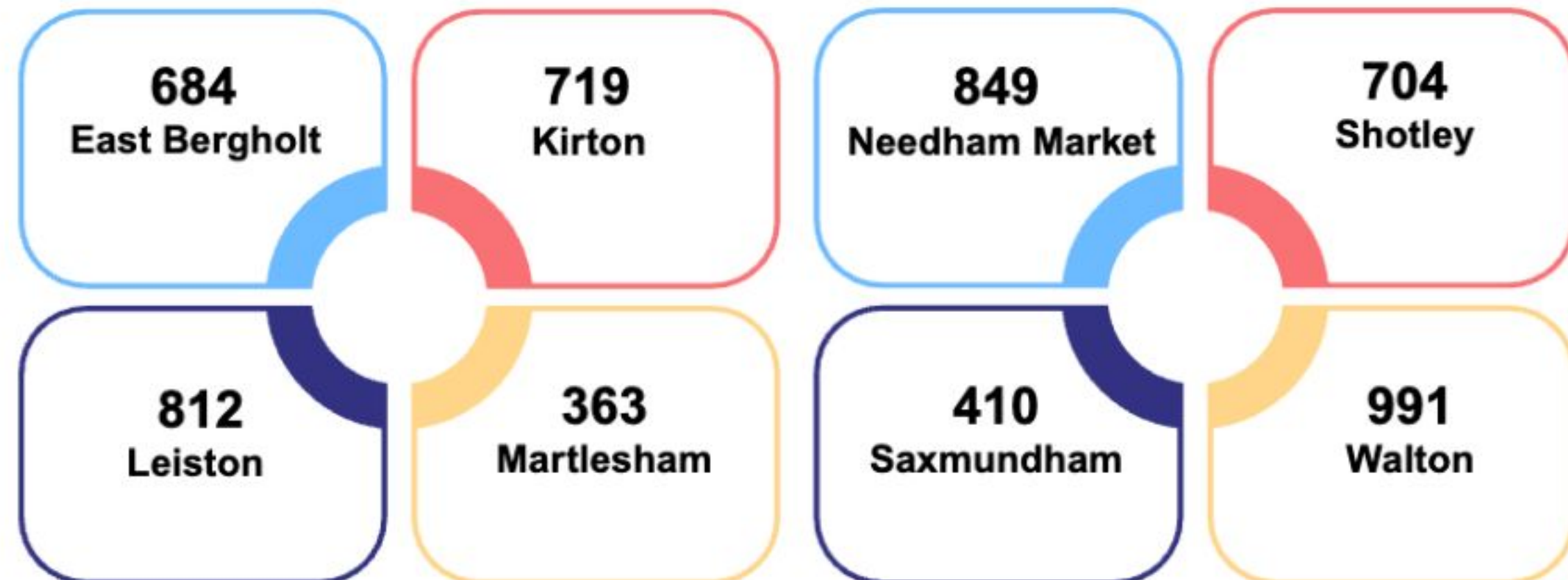
ActivSteps members at Castle Hill Community Centre and Keep on Moving Walton trying out different forms of movement and exercise of our ReBalance programme

With the support of the Mrs L D Rope Third Charitable Trust, the Step by Step Balance programme re-branded and is now called ReBalance. Under the ReBalance programme we have four different activities namely Keep on Moving (formerly Better Balance), Strength and Balance, ActivSteps and Love to Move. These sessions are delivered by our staff Jemma, Del, Laura and Frazier. We also have freelance staff who helped us lead these sessions: Clare Kynaston for ActivSteps, Halstead Ottley at St Mary At Stoke Church Hall and Kim Bilner our instructor in Holbrook and Shotley.

For our Keep on Moving sessions, we deliver the exercise in different locations across Suffolk: Ipswich, Saxmundham, Holbrook, Felixstowe, East Bergholt, Leiston, Martlesham, Needham Market, Shotley, Woodbridge, Kirton, Wickham Market and Woodbridge. ActivSteps has two different venues in Ipswich, California Social Club and Castle Hill Community Centre and our Love to Move is held at the Walton Community Hall. The ReBalance Programme is going from strength to strength with new members registering in the sessions after finding out about them through our website, flyers, social media and other organisations.

Over the last year we have held a total of 889 sessions for the 4 movement and balance activities. In terms of attendances record, we have the following figures for the year:

Keep on Moving Total Attendances



Keep on Moving, Love to Move & ActivSteps Total Attendances

1,139
Woodbridge

1,088
Felixstowe

94
Ipswich

778
ActivSteps

94
Love to Move



Every session is different for Felixstowe ReBalance programme members

Movement in the Community

ActivLives delivers over 50 weekly exercise sessions to support people to keep active and connected, but as well as these sessions, we work closely with other community organisations to widen our reach and deliver exercise sessions to different communities, groups and care homes.

We give talks and demonstrations to groups such as WI groups, support groups for people with Fibromyalgia, people who have experienced a stroke or who live with Parkinson's Disease, and Dementia. These sessions enable us to inform people about what we do at ActivLives and to show people the benefits of seated/standing exercise and how it can help with upper/lower body strength, stamina, balance & co-ordination, that it's fun and can lift mood. Some instructors incorporate seated/standing dance routines to music in their sessions, which are always popular. Movement can be fun!

We attend health events and festivals such as CONNECT for Health, Chamber of Commerce, Bangladeshi Support Centre & Multicultural Services, Port of Felixstowe Health & Wellbeing Event, the Dementia Awareness Event and AGMs where we often do a seated dance warm-up routine.

We provide regular sessions to groups such as Britannia Ladies Group, Oddfellows in Ipswich, McCarthy Stone and the Bangladeshi Support Centre Multicultural Services – Carers Project, to help us spread the word about the importance of Movement.



Keep on Moving sessions are OTAGO based seated exercise that ActivLives offers in different venues across Suffolk and these have provided several benefits to members in preventing falls, maintaining balance & improving their wellbeing.

Case Study



JN is a 78 year old with joint issues who has been with the Keep on Moving session for around six months and lives in IP2 area. Throughout her life JN has been active due to her jobs and it was not until she retired that she decided to do exercise. JN knew a lady who volunteered at a group and went along to see what it was about. From there JN decided to join and says "it is the best thing for her". "I wanted to move more and meet other people and the group is so friendly and the class is enjoyable". JN had issues with her knees which have now gone and they "feel stronger than ever enabling me to walk without pain". JN also likes the little tips we give out about health that "I pass onto my friends". JN will continue "as long as I can as it helps my mind and body".



Keep on Moving members in Rushmere with Del and Walton with Laura participating in exercise

Case Study



RK is a 70 year old member who has COPD and previously took part in BreatheFit but now does Keep on Moving at Goldcrest Court. RK lifestyle was very inactive before starting BreatheFit due to her health issues. "I went along to my first session and thoroughly enjoyed it and since then have lost weight which has helped with my breathing".

RK says "I don't like sport centres so where the classes are held is inviting and I look forward to going and feel much better for it". RK intends to keep attending and "can feel a difference at each session which is really encouraging for me". "The whole class is friendly and I have made new friends", RK said.



My physical health was not very good! I use a walking stick and was worried about crossing roads. I wanted to walk with more confidence. I feel energised after the class and can walk faster now. It is good to meet with friends, which improves my mental health. I enjoy the exercise as well as the music. I like that our brains get exercises as well.
-Mrs. L, Keep on Moving Member



I enjoy exercising with a group of people. The exercises are very well thought out to improve one's strength and balance as we get older.
-Mrs. M, Keep on Moving Member



I look forward to the exercise group each week. I found it very helpful.
-Mrs. M, Keep on Moving Member

Strength & Balance Programme

The 12 week Strength and Balance programme continues to be successful going into its 3rd year. ActivLives is working in partnership with East Suffolk and Babergh District Councils to deliver 12 free weekly sessions in various locations in Suffolk: East Bergholt, Holbrook, Felixstowe, Woodbridge, Leiston and Saxmundham. This is for people who have experienced falls recently or feel unsteady on their feet and aged 65 and over.

The Strength & Balance sessions are aligned to the evidence-based programme called OTAGO, which is a mixture of both strength and balance exercises led by a qualified instructor. Sessions take place weekly across a 12-week period, and last approximately 60 minutes, with tea and coffee time to socialise. The exercises are designed to help people feel more confident in their mobility and help with the prevention of falls and fractures.

Case Study

Mrs. H physical strength was poor before attending the strength and balance classes in Felixstowe. She joined with the top goal to improve it. After weeks of doing the sessions, she observed major difference on her physical wellbeing. "Since joining the classes I have improved in all areas and I can now tie my own shoe laces. I have continued with walking and home exercises," she said. She also mentioned what she likes about the classes: "What I enjoy mostly is the nice, friendly atmosphere, and no pressure to do more. The course has also improved my confidence as well as my well being."



Members in Woodbridge and the Castle Hill Community Centre doing seated and standing sessions

Case Study

Mr. C experiences breathlessness at times despite his physical health was reasonably active before becoming a member of the Strength & Balance sessions in Woodbridge. He signed up for the programme to avoid falls that he fears will damage his fused vertebrae on his neck and spine. He noticed some incredible improvements after joining the class: "Since joining the classes I have improved strength in my leg muscles and some improvement in my balance. I enjoy greater motivation in a group setting.". He started exercising at home and now determined to continue on the next course. He also appreciates the instructor at the sessions. "Excellent class leader, very clear instructions and manages to keep an eye on everyone," he said.

Case Study

Mrs. F, a member in East Bergholt class, has Parkinson's. Her balance is quite poor. She learned about the Strength and Balance programme through her consultant who recommended it to her. When she joined her goal is to improve her balance. She noticed a big difference after joining the sessions. She said "I have improved my balance since starting the programme. It was a very good programme. Jemma made it fun and she was very encouraging". Now, she wants to continue gaining more positive results and aiming to join our Keep on Moving sessions every week.



Jemma leading the exercise with our East Bergholt members

Participants at Saxmundham session

Strength & Balance Programme

Members improving their balance and building confidence at Leiston



I needed to improve my overall fitness to feel stronger and be more flexible I am able to get out of a chair without pushing up from the chair – my legs feel stronger. I will continue with the exercises at home. I have enjoyed meeting new people and all of the exercises. - Mrs. G, East Bergholt Member

Before starting the classes I had had a stroke, and this left my left side of my body poor and my balance affected. Since joining the classes I can walk short distances unaided. I continue exercising at home and I am going to join the next stage classes. I have enjoyed the mental and physical improvement. An excellent course and tutor. I have recommended it to others. - Mrs W, Woodbridge Member



Holbrook members with instructor Kim

Case Study

Mrs C has experienced tiredness, breathlessness and poor balance. When she learned about the Strength and Balance programme in Holbrook, she decided to try the 12-week exercise. She was focused on one goal which is to strengthen her muscles. The programme helped her achieve this goal in different ways. " My breathing has improved. I am now walking without my aids," she said. She also appreciated how the session fosters "community spirit" and praised "a great instructor". She will be joining the follow on session after experiencing all the positive benefits she received from this class.

Case Study

Mrs A knees were not good before joining the Leiston class even if her physical health was ok. She registered for the session to attain her personal goal: "My goal was to seek help with my balance and general mobility". Weeks after doing the regular exercise, she is happy with the results. "Since attending the classes there has been definite improvement." She was encouraged to practice the exercises at home too. She also appreciated how the group motivated her. "I enjoyed learning that I can do more than I expected and it has built up my confidence," she said. And she is looking forward to continue exercising with Frazier who has been a wonderful teacher for their class.

Case Study

Before joining the Strength and Balance classes in Saxmundham, Mr H 's physical health was poor. He wanted to improve his balance that will help him to enhance his physical wellbeing. "My goal was to improve my balance", he said. And his weekly strength and balance exercise did not disappoint because he experienced "some improvements". He also tried to do the exercises at home. Overall, he also enjoyed "the relaxed approach" of the programme with the instructor.

Developed by the British Gymnastics Foundation, Love to Move is a gentle seated movement programme that's making a big difference in the community. We've been running sessions in the Felixstowe area since November 2024, recently moving to our new base at the Walton Community Hall – a bright, friendly space perfect for bringing people together.

Laura, who qualified as a Love to Move instructor in September 2024, leads the sessions and loves seeing the smiles and hearing how much the sessions have brightened people's lives. Designed especially for older adults, including those living with dementia, the fun, simple exercises boost coordination, strength, and provide valuable cognitive stimulation to help keep minds active and engaged. Many of our members also take part in our Keep on Moving sessions, adding variety to their weekly routines and keeping active in different ways.

Members also love the music, which sparks memories and takes them back in time – turning each session into not just exercise, but a joyful trip down memory lane.



Instructor Laura teaching different movements to Love to Move members

Case Study

The picture below on the left is of Laura with John and Doreen who are regular attendees at the Trimley St Martin session. John has run the London marathon 6 times with his fastest time being an incredible 2 hours 57 minutes. John had a dense stroke in June 2023 and has had a long road to recovery but is now seeing real benefits since starting Love to Move. One of their favourite parts of the session is the alphabet topic. When they get home after a session, they always go through the topic again (sometimes for hours!!) with pen and paper writing a list and coming up with lots more answers. And they never ask Google!

Doreen said "I love it. It gets you going. It makes you think for yourself, not just follow. I'm getting my husband back bit by bit. He is gaining more movement and strength in the side affected by his stroke. It's not just me who notices it but other people too".

Sue, right picture with Laura, is a full time carer for her husband who suffers from acute anxiety and depression and they have been coming to the session since it started. "It has helped me as a carer and done a lot for my husband's mental health and wellbeing. After a session you feel really good. This is the only activity that my husband will come to where he can be with other people."

The Trimley St Martin session is run weekly & it has now moved to Walton, Felixstowe and participants enjoy a well deserved cup of tea and biscuit and a chat afterwards. Having seen it's success, Laura is keen to develop more Love to Move sessions and the British Gymnastics Foundation is currently liaising with ActivLives and Active Suffolk to look at how we might be able to bring more Love to Move sessions to Suffolk. (Case Study Prepared by Sue Taylor)



ActivSteps is part of the new ReBalance programme. Two sessions run on a Thursday morning at the California Social Club and Castle Hill Community Centre. 41 people have registered with ActivSteps, 85 sessions have been held and 778 attendances recorded.

ActivSteps is aimed at people 55 plus and is a seated/standing and dance session led by instructor Claire focusing on movement, strength, co-ordination and balance and having a lot of fun and laughter moving to music. Both sessions last one hour with time to socialise over a coffee and a chat at the end. ActivSteps has been running a number of years, enabling people to meet and make new friends, build their confidence, and improve their fitness, physically and mentally. The feedback from members show how people enjoy the sessions, how they have improved people's health and wellbeing and how the dance routines help with memory and co-ordination.

Claire is an excellent teacher. I love going to the exercise class every week. She has guided us through all the exercise steps over and over again. She demonstrates great patience for all of us. She has taught us to be aware of how are bodies work and the best way to keep fit. Her instructions are clear and she demonstrates each move. She is caring toward the older members of the class... She makes sure each one of us feels cared about. I cannot speak more highly of her teaching method. I looked forward every week to our exercise class for the fun and enjoyment we have in the class. I feel like a new woman at the end on an absolute high. -Member, ActivSteps

We all love our Thursday morning class with Claire! She has good routines for our exercises so that we work all parts of our "stiff ageing bodies" and makes it fun. She points out the dancing we do also is helping with our memory and balance. And we all love it! The hour goes so quickly and we all feel good and satisfied This is because of Claire's influence and instruction She is "Simply the Best". -Member, ActivSteps

ActivSteps has been part of my life for 7 years. I look forward to Thursdays class as it gives me activity I would not be doing. It has helped my balance, co-ordination, posture, and general fitness, plus friendship and fun. Claire, our instructor, is an absolute joy. She is passionate about all aspects of the class and is a brilliant teacher, with a lot of patience. Her personality shines and uplifts us every week. -Member, ActivSteps

ACTIVGARDENS

Summary



Susannah Robirosa
ActivGardens
Fundraising and
Development Manager

Ian Hirst
ActivGardens
Operations Officer

Phoebe Hyett
ActivGardens
Project Officer

John Bettinson
ActivSheds
Project Officer



Volunteers and learners work together at the People's Community Garden

ActivGardens community gardening projects respond to social need in urban Ipswich and rural Suffolk, working in some of the most disadvantaged areas of the UK. We bring people together in an active and healthy way to help them create positive change both for themselves and the communities in which they live.

We have two gardens in Ipswich – the People's Community Garden, which is a community garden on an allotment site, and Chantry Walled Garden in one of the town's main parks Chantry Park. In the market town of Sudbury we are based at Belle Vue Park.

We work in partnership to help other groups and organisations to develop their own gardens, as well as reaching out to schools, colleges, care homes and other settings.

We provide a diverse range of activities and opportunities throughout the week, including volunteering, work experience, and learning programmes in - gardening and horticulture, flower arranging, beekeeping and nature conservation, woodworking and construction.

These programmes are aimed at people facing a range of challenges in their lives, including mental health conditions, illness, disability, unemployment, chaotic lifestyles, or social isolation.

By participating, people are able to improve physical and mental health and wellbeing, make friends and develop support networks, learn skills and gain confidence and motivation – often moving on into further volunteering, learning or training and employment and benefitting from a more positive future.

Impact – the difference we make: who benefits from our work and how

In 2024-25 ActivGardens registered 286 people – a 30% increase from the previous year - who benefited from volunteering, learning, work experience and activities offered every day of the week throughout the year. An additional 579 children, young people and adults enjoyed and benefited from visits, special activities and events. Meanwhile, 140+ corporate volunteers got out of the office to contribute day's work to us..

We are proud to have delivered to a grand total of 1,005 people over the year!

62% of participants were not in paid employment, Of these, almost two thirds were economically inactive and not looking for work.

36% of participants reported a mental health condition.

13.6% of participants were from minority ethnic groups (Ipswich overall = 15.7%).

More than half total participants were male – an achievement in the context of Public Health concerns over men's mental health.

26% of participants had a physical disability.

23% of participants had a learning disability.

16% of volunteers were retired.

52 people learned skills, built confidence and improved their health and wellbeing in our horticulture-based programmes.

More than 300 people stepped up for nature through our beekeeping project and nature-based activities.

32 men and 2 women took part in creative woodworking at ActivSheds.

2 families with home-schooled/ neurodivergent children took up 'Patchwork Plots'.

More than 60 families had access to freshly picked produce at the local Top Up Shop.

40+ people improved their wellbeing while maintaining Sudbury's park.

4 special events engaged local families in growing and cooking.

182 mainly older people took part in flower arranging workshops

240 primary-aged children and 48 secondary school children learnt about food-growing, gardening, nature and beekeeping.

Volunteers at Chantry Walled Garden raised an amazing £6,402 from sale of plants

34 women and 10 children from Afghanistan, Albania, Iraq/ Kurdistan, Kosovo, Morocco, Sudan and Ukraine took part in a multi-cultural feast.

140+ people from 12+ local businesses contributed 700 hours of volunteering – equivalent to 93 days work.



This year, we reached more people through two new projects – Grow Well Eat Well and ActivBlooms - while continuing our successful learning and training programme – Grow Your Future. Meanwhile, our important work continued across all our sites, with volunteers and participants cooperating together to maintain and develop our gardens, sell plants, step up for nature, care for our bees, and work on projects at ActivSheds.



Grow Well Eat Well project was developed as a direct result of consulting with our volunteers, who wanted to distribute our produce more effectively, and encourage more volunteers from the local community.

Through attending community networking meetings at St Peter's Church, we engaged in a productive partnership to distribute our produce to families via their Top Up Shop - which lacked fresh food, especially vegetables with a short shelf-life, such as greens - while encouraging engagement in community food growing through events and activities.



As part of this project, we have welcomed more than double the number of primary school children to ActivGardens – delivering activities to 240 children compared with 90 children the previous year; 48 secondary school children also took part.

**Top: Young volunteers pick up veg for the Top Up Shop
Below: Sidegate Primary School children visit the People's Community Garden**

Our other new initiative - **ActivBlooms** - enabled us to restart our work with older people. Project Officer Gina Cristallino delivered a series of 12 floristry wellbeing workshops mainly to older people, but also to other groups, including people with learning disabilities, a transgender support group, a women's refuge and young families. Workshops were held both at ActivGardens community gardens and in various community venues and residential care homes, to be as inclusive as possible. The project reached an amazing 182 people, supported by 27 volunteers and course participants, who grew the flowers and assisted at workshops.



ActivBlooms floristry wellbeing workshops bring people together to socialise and learn skills

Thirty-two people took part in the second year of our horticulture-based learning programme, **Grow Your Future**, led by Project Officer Phoebe Hyett. Participants learnt practical skills while developing employability/personal skills. More than 80% of participants said they felt encouraged and motivated through attending the project, that they felt included in the community and had an enhanced sense of hope and purpose, that they had raised their aspirations and could look forward to a positive future. Three people progressed into employment, five people progressed to formal/accredited learning and skills/courses, and 12 people progressed into further volunteering.



Grow Your Future participants learn employability skills through different activities at our community gardens



A group of young asylum seekers learn about bees with Ian at the community apiary

Operations Officer Ian Hirst widened engagement in **beekeeping**, passing on his passion to school children of all ages and delivering sessions to a wide variety of people, assisted by our loyal beekeeping volunteer team.

We were deeply saddened by the passing of our amazing beekeeping mentor Barrie Powell, who attended every week to pass on his knowledge and keep our bees in the best of health.

ActivShedders made a fitting tribute for Barrie the Bee at the People's Community Garden

ActivSheds Project Officer John Bettinson has encouraged a creative streak at ActivSheds - one of their finest pieces of work is a bee sculpture in Barrie's honour, which flies above our Sensory Garden so we can remember him every day.

This 'shoulder to shoulder' project brought 32 men together to share practical skills around woodworking, construction and carpentry, helping them break social isolation and overcome anxiety in a supportive environment. ActivSheds also welcomed two women to our mixed-gender sessions this year.



In **Sudbury**, we continued our Thursday morning general volunteering session led by Freelance Project Co-ordinator Jane Bearham – with a regular team of 10-15 people turning up each week to keep Belle Vue Park in peak condition and developing new areas of the park with additional funding from Babergh District Council. Three people joined the group after gaining skills and confidence with our 12-week course – ‘Grow Your Wellbeing’, which delivered to 11 disadvantaged adults.



Grow Your Community - Sudbury volunteers

Our **Employer Supported Volunteering** offer has gone from strength to strength this year, with Ian leading more than 140 people - from organisations including AXA, Bosch, Crafted Media, MacIntyre Hudson LLP, Sizewell C, Smartest Energy, Suffolk County Council, WTW, UK Power Networks and Milestone Logistics - in large-scale projects such as painting Chantry Cottage and developing the Wild Zone and apiary.



Sizewell C volunteers at Chantry Walled Garden

Despite continuing strong demand, we were unable to secure further funding for our mental health programme **Gardening In Mind** - funded for two years by the NHS to October 2024 - which meant we had to say goodbye to Project Officer Samantha Grainger-Cowles, who did a fantastic job of encouraging and helping people overcome significant mental health challenges and gaining skills and confidence. Three people who completed the programme became Key Volunteers - undergoing training to assist staff in the running of the day.

None of this could happen without our amazing teams of regular volunteers, across all our sites, who help us grow and develop our gardens, mentor others, and contribute their skills and enthusiasm, turning up every week, in all weathers, throughout the year. A very special thanks to all of you.



Gardening in Mind Project Officer Sam Grainger - Cowles



"I am happy that I can join this activity. I learned how to use various gardening tools that I have never heard before and also how hard it is to plant a decent amount of food. Now I see vegetables as precious treasures because it takes lots of time, effort and even some luck for a good result. I have tried beekeeping for once, it is meaningful that I can observe queen bees in such a close distance, the feeling is totally different from watching it on TV. The community is also nice, I feel relaxed and there was no one who pressured me when I was working. My mental health has improved after finishing my job every time and I feel more useful and also more confident. Thank you for giving me this special experience."

-Young male volunteer at the People's Community Garden

"Being outside has really helped my wellbeing and having a routine is useful. The course has allowed me to build the confidence to try new things. I really enjoyed the course, made friends, learnt more and feel so much better."

-Grow Your Wellbeing – Sudbury female participant, aged 41, recovering from surgery and loss of job and confidence, referred by Active Suffolk

"Good evening Ian. I wanted to say a massive thank you for our School trip to The People's Community Garden last week. The children really enjoyed it and learnt a lot. What you told us about linked in perfectly with classroom lessons and our Environment day. I felt that Year 7 engaged really well and listened brilliantly. Conversations around growing hot peppers, of all things, hooked the boys I was worried wouldn't engage - thank you. Some of them even used the compost toilet! I think you were a fantastic guide and made the two visits run smoothly. The enthusiasm and knowledge for what you do shone through, so thanks again."

-Andrew Haile, Science Department – Orwell Park School

"I wanted to thank you (and Ian and everyone else at Activgardens), because my short time volunteering there was very meaningful for me when my family and me were going through a difficult time, and because it was a factor in my decision to try to change career paths. So thank you very much for that."

-Male ActivSheds support volunteer for whom we were able to give an employment reference for the Environment Agency.

"The reason why I love volunteering at the park is that it gets me more confident in caring for the park and helping out the community. It was something I was interested in, and it's free! You get to learn new skills and there's so much you can learn from here in respect of gardening. I enjoy it a lot – making new friends."

-Sudbury male participant – aged 26

"Congratulations on the positive outcomes you are achieving, and thank you for the case study which brings the work to life. It is also good to see that you have strengthened links with a range of organisations and agencies."

-Henry Smith Charity - three-year funder of Grow Your Future

"Joining ActivHives is like joining a hive. Everyone teaches everyone else what to do for the good of the bees!"

-ActivHives volunteer member of the Bee Team"

"Just wanted to say a massive thank you and how impressed I was when visiting in July. I was in the area on a nostalgia visit having lived on Chantry until I left for the West Midlands. Me and my brother spent the morning (very wet) looking around our old childhood places, schools etc. We spent many a happy time on Chantry Park and remember the walled gardens only being open once or twice a year. So when we saw the plant sale signs we couldn't resist popping in. What a wonderful project and the two staff we spoke too were fantastic. It was the best part of our trip and now I have two plants from Ipswich planted in my garden in Hednesford Staffordshire."

-Visitor to Chantry Walled Garden

"Thank you so much for facilitating our visit to the People's Community Gardens yesterday. It was enjoyed by all immensely. A number of women went home with a better knowledge on growing vegetables, especially growing marigolds with your tomatoes. Also, lots of flowers and other produce. They loved the beauty of the place and the set-up is so relaxing, which was appreciated. The cooking, well it was amazing."

-Catherine Costello, International Women's Group Coordinator - Suffolk Refugee Support

"I just wanted to quickly say a huge thank you to you both for sparing the time to show us around your community gardens, sharing more about how our funds are contributing, letting us taste your honey, dig up some potatoes and learn a lot more about bees than I ever thought that there was to know. It was so interesting and I hope that you are all so proud of the incredible reach that your projects have, how they touch so many lives and make such a difference. We all really enjoyed the opportunity to visit with you."

-Angela Carpenter, Community Support Manager - East of England Co-op



Meet the Team



Julie Stokes
ActivLives CEO



Cynthia Glinos
Finance &
Office Manager



Susannah Robirosa
ActivGardens
Fundraising
& Development Manager



Alison Pearson
ActivLives Community
Engagement Officer



Mike McCarthy
ActivSport Development
Officer



Jemma Tilley
ReBalance Development
Co-ordinator



Jomel Gutierrez
Marketing &
Communications Officer



Laura Lopez
ReBalance Development
Co-ordinator



Del Keeble
ReBalance
Co-ordinator



Frazier Seager
ActivAgeing
Development Officer



Ian Hirst
ActivGardens
Operations Officer



Phoebe Hyett
ActivGardens
Project Officer

Meet the Team



John Bettinson
ActivSheds
Project Officer



Colin Baldwin
Partnership
& Fundraising Officer



Alana Sewell
ActivAble
Development Officer

Meet the Trustees



Daniel Billson
Chair



Clare Lucas
Vice Chair



Mark Ledger
Treasurer



Rachael Scott
Trustee



Louise Kenlock
Trustee



Kerry Overton
Trustee



Linda Hughes
Trustee



Karen Stacey
Trustee







These are extremely challenging times for charities, with grant funding shrinking, trusts and foundations closing, only short-term funding available, core costs increasing and more charities applying for grants locally, regionally and nationally.

We need to raise over £300,000 a year to keep all of our activities running, so we are extremely grateful for the support we receive from various organisations, our members and volunteers, individuals, partners and funders. We appreciate all the amazing and generous donations we receive from our members, their families and local businesses.

However, **we still need your support!**

Seeking funding never ends, we are continually applying for funding, organising fundraising events and campaigns. So, we need your help to keep our services, activities and programmes running, supporting and changing the lives of people living in Ipswich, East Suffolk, Mid-Suffolk and Babergh.

Whether big or small, your support matters. It matters to every person we support in the community.

If you would like to donate, become a partner or offer any other forms of support please contact us on 01473 345350 to find out more information about ActivLives and how you can help us.

To donate today go to our website www.activlives.org.uk



<https://activlives.org.uk/donations/>



Scan the QR code to **DONATE NOW**



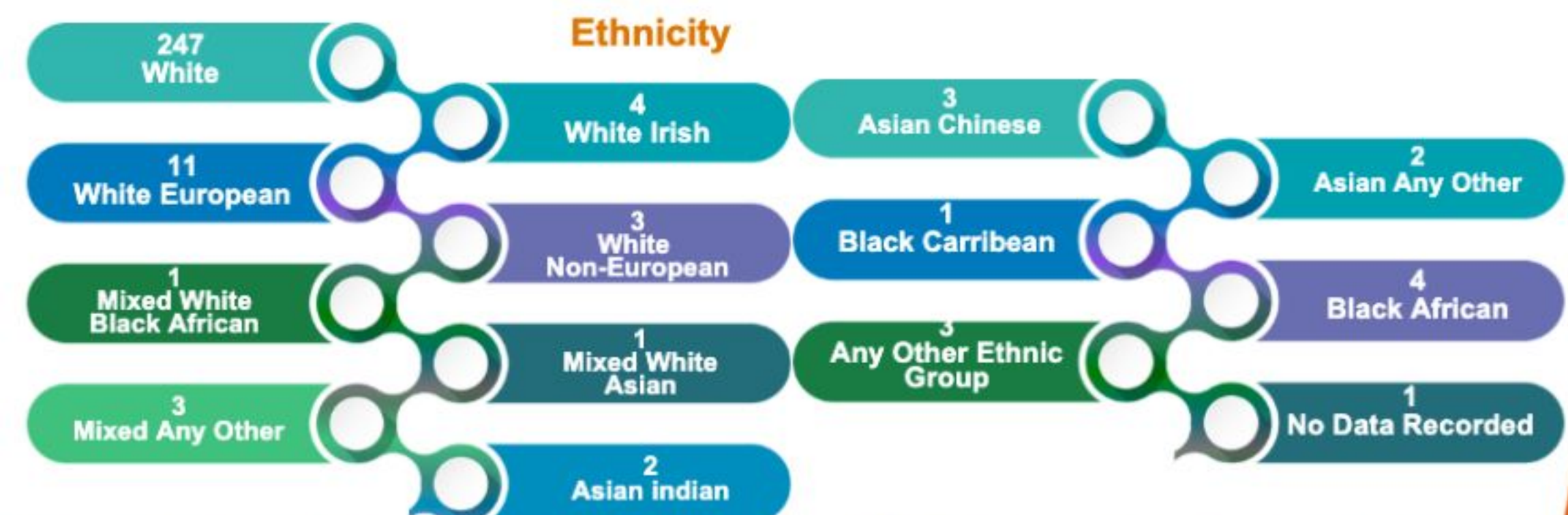
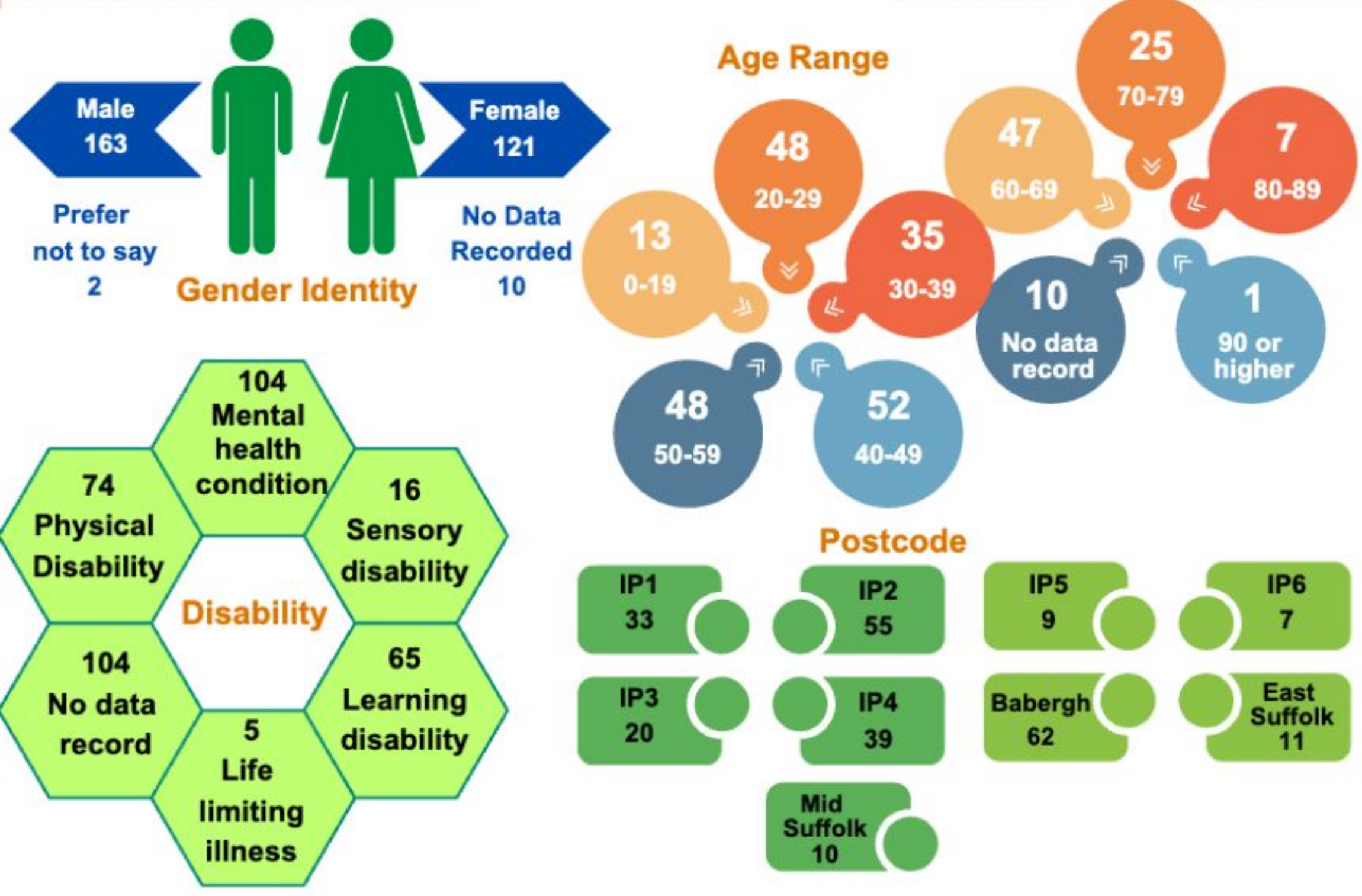
A BIG THANK YOU to all our volunteers, we couldn't do it without you.

Without our dedicated and loyal team of volunteers we wouldn't be able to deliver our services, programmes and activities across Suffolk. Volunteers are a key part of ActivLives, attending every week, giving up their time, supporting our members and each other, cooking lovely meals, gardening/helping at the men's shed, looking after the bees, making the tea and coffee, chatting to our members, helping with our exercise and sport sessions and much more... We are extremely grateful for the time that volunteers give to ActivLives, contributing approximately 15,000 hours each year.

In return we provide volunteers with new experiences, knowledge, skills, training in a safe environment to help people achieve their aspirations and individual goals.

We always need more volunteers, so if you, a friend or family member would like to join a welcoming and friendly organisation then please contact the main office on 01473 345350.

ActivGardens Participation and Monitoring Data



Looking Forward

We continue to focus on the four main areas of our ActivLives Strategy 2024 – 2026, to ensure that ActivLives continues to develop preventative and inclusive services and that the organisation is sustainable moving forward.

- The four areas are:
- Creating a positive working environment that will attract and grow a flexible, inspired and highly motivated team of people with the enthusiasm, knowledge and experience to deliver our vision.
 - Ensuring ActivLives is well governed, and our resources are deployed to deliver maximum value to the communities we serve, and we are transparent and accountable to our funders and customers.
 - Amplifying the voice of ActivLives and enhancing the brand across Ipswich and Suffolk, to raise awareness about our services with funders, commissioners, supporters, future members, staff and volunteers.
 - Reducing our reliance on restricted funding by developing and implementing our Marketing and Communications and Funding and Fundraising Strategies and investing in resources and people who will help us achieve this.

It is an ambitious Strategy, and we are having to face challenges in this ever-changing environment. The key focus at the moment is funding including grants, fundraising, donations and legacies.

We look forward to working with our partners, building new relationships with funders, supporters and donors, streamlining our services to ensure we are meeting local need and supporting people living in Ipswich, East Suffolk and Babergh.

So I am sure the next year will be as busy as ever....

