



Get Active in Drumchapel

*The difference our project is making: **Where a blether and a cuppa can lead to...***

Brenda, aged 50, had struggled with alcoholism from age 16, only sobering up after the birth of her Granddaughter 12 years ago. Very unfortunately, neither her daughter in law nor her son are still alive, having both lead very troubled lives. When her son died, she became sole carer of her then 9 year old grand-daughter. Despite support and bereavement processing she suffered from mental health problems and found it very difficult to cope and was reluctant to engage with life outside her home.

What we did: Following GP referral and encouraged by Janet, a Community Links Practitioner, to initially just go to the Sport Centre for a "blether and a cup of tea", Janet called for her, at her home and escorted her to the Centre. For a few weeks Brenda just watched, chatted and drank tea, but in the last 3 months she has been attending on her own and has actually been regularly taking part in the Indoor Tennis and has now even signed up for a walking group.

The difference we made: It is clear after several months, that coming to the centre has made a huge difference to Brenda's life. Not only is she attending regularly on her own, not only has she signed up for another activity, but sometimes her Granddaughter comes with her - which is an unexpected outcome. Brenda willingly tells those involved what a huge difference it has made to her life.

We firmly believe we have made a non-active person active. We firmly believe that she will continue to attend. And we are confident that Brenda and her Granddaughter have both seen a significant difference in their life styles, their wellbeing and, importantly, their hopes for the future.

What we learnt: Firstly we learnt that it is sometimes a slow process and to move from a GP recommending that someone could benefit from some exercise, to showing them what was on offer is only the first step.

Important factors in this success were:

- a) making the initial visits very relaxed and non-threatening ("just a cuppa and a blether")
- b) having someone actually call for the person and come with them
- c) allowing them to decide for themselves if/when they are ready to "have a go".

The role of the Community Link Practitioner, Janet, cannot be over stated. She understood the GP recommendation and that this "non-threatening" environment just might work Brenda. She would be made to feel welcome, no pressure would be put on her, but she would be encouraged once she started to take part.

The poem below was written by Brenda's Granddaughter. It speaks for itself.

About 2 years ago,
My world, it fell apart,
My daddy took his life,
Along with Nana's heart.

My Nana cried and cried,
This made me cry lots too,
We wanted him in our arms,
After all that he'd been through.

His last 6 months were hell,
He'd lost his wife, My Mother,
Although they weren't good together
They still loved one and other.

Now I have no parents,
But I've still got Nana here,
To help me when I waiver,
And catch my fallen tear.

But Nana needs my help,
Her needs are greater than mine,
I'll cheer her when's she's sad,
Until she's feeling fine.

We help each other daily,
But Nana feels the pain,
She sits about, does nothing,
Her health's suffering again.

So her doctor gave her someone,
Who would help to pull her through,
She LINKED her in and listened,
She knew just what to do.

My Nana's smiles grew bigger
Playing tennis and going for walks,
Her Links Practitioner was about,
To listen more and to talk.

But my brave face, it cracked,
As I watched my Nana grow stronger,
My losses, my fears, my thoughts,
I could hold onto no longer.

My Nana tried to help,
On all her strength she drew
I knew I needed someone, so asked,
"Can I have a Links Practitioner too?"

This person came to see me,
Although I knew from before,
She gave me plenty of her time,
Which opened up new doors.

Because of her I see this person,
I talk about mum and dad,
I talk about my Nana,
And you know? Life is not that bad.

My Nana still goes walks,
Plays tennis and joined the gym,
Me? I have my dancing,
My youth clubs, I've learned to swim.

My Nana's back on track,
She's really done me proud,
We see the sunshine together,
Instead of stormy clouds.

The people all around me,
Help me reach for the stars,
I feel their love and from heaven,
It helps to heal my scars.

So I will keep on dancing,
Annoying Nana, singing loud,
My mum and dad can watch me now,
I hope I do them proud.

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