

Case study

# **Mid & North Powys Mind – Mums Matter Zumba**

## Project at a glance

- Mid & North Powys Mind's Mums Matter service provides practical tools and support for new mums with mental health problems.
- The group offered online Zumba sessions for those finishing the course after requests from participants who wanted to get active in a non-judgmental space.
- Each session provides mums with a sense of community as well as the feel-good benefits of exercising to uplifting music.
- 100% of participants reported improved mental health and felt better able to deal with future challenges.

## The challenge

Mind's Mums Matter is an eight-week course offering mums facing mental health problems essential tools and support.

When one of her group shared she wanted to get back into exercise, Mid & North Powys Mind Mums Matter facilitator Tracy Lewis made it happen through online Zumba classes.

It was such a success that Tracy eventually made Zumba one of the package of options (including volunteering) offered to course graduates.

**“People said they couldn't just join an exercise class or go to the leisure centre”**

Tracy

“They felt their anxiety was just too much to do that. So this is another way people can get moving and support each other.”

## Mid & North Powys Mind's response

To start with, Tracy offered Zumba classes on Zoom, imagining that live physical sessions would eventually follow. But she soon realised that an 'in real life' class would exclude many mums. Some wouldn't be able to get to the venue, while others would feel anxious about exercising with other people. Online, people can join in from anywhere, and leave their camera off if they feel self-conscious.

"Helping people build a routine is a big part of it too," say Tracy.

**"You're committing to a session every Thursday and maybe developing the skills to use Zoom. Then there's the community aspect. We have an online group where people can share how they feel. There's a chat before and after each session to share how people feel."**

She adds that the music is a big part of creating a positive mood.

"Music has a lot of power, doesn't it?" she says.

"It's different to something like Yoga. Even if you're having a really bad day, you can switch off your camera and just do some arm movements along to the session. The music alone can be uplifting. It helps people feel better."



## The results

Results of the project have been overwhelmingly positive.

**100% of women who attended Mums Matter reported feeling more connected, with improved social and support networks.** They also reported benefits for self-esteem and mental health.

Today the sessions attract about 6 participants each week. But the goal isn't to keep people going long-term: it's to build their confidence so they get involved in exercise in the community, if they wish.

**“People overcome the barriers and feel the benefits of the exercise.” We want to show them they can take that into the rest of their lives.”** Tracy



## Learning

- **Build a community**

The Zumba sessions are about more than the exercise itself. Creating an online community around each session gives participants the chance to share and connect. “It gives people the chance to talk about the session and how they felt about it,” says Tracy.

- **Offer activity as part of a package**

When people graduate from Mums Matter, Tracy offers Zumba sessions along with other options including volunteering. This helps boost take-up and provides a stepping stone into other exercise and support.

- **Focus on the participants**

Mums Matter eliminated as many barriers as possible to attending the group. For example, making sure mums didn't have to travel and making it OK for them to turn cameras off. They did this by listening carefully to their needs and shaping the sessions in response.



## Relevant support available

Mid & North Powys Mind's Mums Matter service

Mental Health Awareness for Sport & Physical Activity+ eLearning

Mind's Mental Health and Physical Activity Toolkit: Making physical activities inclusive to people experiencing mental health problems

