



Heritage 4 Health

# Heritage 4 Health

## Project Evaluation

April 2023 - June 2024



Healthy Living Centre Alliance



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## 1. Introduction

### Project Overview

**1.1.** Research has proven that natural heritage and green and blue spaces are extremely valuable supports to human health and wellbeing. It is widely acknowledged that being outdoors and connecting with the natural environment boosts activity levels, improves physical and mental health recovery, and enhances peoples' overall sense of wellbeing.

**1.2.** The Heritage 4 Health project ("H4H" or "the project") is designed to increase access to, and time spent on activities known to enhance individual health and wellbeing.

**1.3.** The project is based on the HSC Public Health Agency NI 5 steps to wellbeing<sup>1</sup>:

- Give
- Be Active
- Connect
- Keep Learning and
- Take Notice



**1.4.** Heritage 4 Health is a partnership between the Healthy Living Centre Alliance (HLCA) and Northern Ireland Environment Link (NIEL). The project is funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund and is a regional model combining mental health recovery with recognised natural heritage recovery.

**1.5.** The health partners are based in Healthy Living Centres (HLCs) which are community-led health and well-being organisations throughout NI and members of the Healthy Living Centre Alliance. The HLCA has experience in providing similar schemes focusing on the improvement of individuals health and wellbeing through SPRING social prescribing, Better Days Pain Support Programme, and the Warm, Well and Connected scheme. The health partners are responsible for the recruitment of participants and coordination of the health activities offered by their centre. They are also responsible for the outreach to local heritage partners to provide the heritage sessions of the project.

**1.6.** The heritage partners are from the Northern Ireland Environment Link (NIEL) which is a network of natural and built environment organisations. The HLC Alliance and NIEL provide co-ordination of the project and two part time co-ordinators (one employed by HLCA one by NIEL) oversee the day-to-day running of the project.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/publications/take-5-steps-wellbeing-english-and-11-translations>

**1.7.** Programme delivery is co-located in a Healthy Living Centre and a recognised local natural heritage site and project participants are referred through Healthy Living Centres across Northern Ireland and consists of two phases.

**1.8.** Phase One consists of at least 10 sessions and combines health awareness group work-focused sessions with heritage-focused sessions and environmental site visits.

**1.9.** Phase Two consists of at least 10 heritage-focused sessions and site visits. These are geared towards enhancing/increasing the participants active interest, such as:

- Heritage engagement
- Built Heritage visits
- Guided tours
- Exhibitions
- Walking Trials/tours
- Museum Visits
- Conservation Awareness
- Outdoor activities
- Wellbeing talks
- Healthy living activities

**1.10.** The key aims of the project include:

A wide range of  
people will be  
involved

People will have  
developed skills

People will have  
greater wellbeing

Heritage will be in  
better condition

**1.11.** The project ran from April 2023 to October 2024 and was funded by The National Lottery Heritage Fund. Information used in this report was collected from project commencement until June 2024.

### **Evaluation Approach and Report Layout**

**1.12.** This evaluation covers the period April 2023 to June 2024 and utilises an outcomes-based accountability approach to review the project during this period, considering the following three questions:

- How much was done? (Quantitative information) – Section 2
- How well was it done? (Qualitative Information) – Section 3 and,
- What difference has Heritage for Health made? (Impact) – Section 4.

**1.13.** We have summarised the findings from our evaluation against the anticipated aims and highlighted our overall conclusions in Section 5.

### **Information sources**

**1.14.** At the outset of the project, questionnaires were developed to gather relevant information from people participating on the programmes. These questionnaires were completed by participants before participating on programmes (pre) and after participating on programmes (post). Much of the information contained in this report has been drawn from these questionnaires.

**1.15.** The report also draws on demographic, activity and referral data recorded by the programme facilitators and participating HLCs, case studies developed by HLCs, participants and heritage partners, post programme feedback from project staff, HLCs and heritage partners, project funding applications, briefing documents and videographic information developed by the co-ordinators.

### **Caveat**

**1.16.** The information used for this evaluation is self-reported and as noted above, has been sourced from reports and supporting documentation provided by the project co-ordinators. We have not sought to verify the accuracy and completeness of this information.

**1.17.** Given this context, it is therefore important to take care when interpreting the information reviewed and drawing conclusions from it. Having highlighted this, in our view it is possible to highlight trends and patterns arising from the information reviewed, and we have sought to do this throughout the report.

**1.18.** Information contained in this report should not be re-produced without our permission. This permission will not be unreasonably withheld.

**Acknowledgements**

- 1.19.** We would like to thank those who contributed to this evaluation including Beth Frazer, Kelley Hann and Colin McKinty, Project Co-ordinators, Tony Doherty, HLC Alliance Regional Co-ordinator, Max Bryant, CEO NIEL, Louise Stephenson, Finance and Admin Officer, Programme facilitators and all those who completed questionnaires, developed case studies and collated information.

## 2. How much was done?

### Introduction

- 2.1. This section focuses on quantitative information about the project. The information has been derived from reports produced by the project co-ordinators.

### Programme overview

- 2.2. Programmes were delivered in two series between April 2023 and June 2024. The table below provides a summary of the overall activity delivered in the evaluation period.

Series 1 April - December  
2023

- 4 HLCs and heritage partners
- 86 participants registered
- 64 participants completed

Series 2 August 2023 to  
June 2024

- 6 HLCs and heritage partners
- 128 participants registered
- 104 participants completed

In summary therefore, 10 Heritage for Health programmes were delivered by participating Healthy Living Centres and heritage partners during the evaluation period, with 168 participants completing these programmes. Details of participating HLCs are provided later in this section.

### Series 1

- 2.3. Series 1 was held in 4 Healthy Living Centres between April and December 2023. The table below shows the HLCs who delivered H4H programmes during Series 1. The total number of participants who began programmes in Series 1 was 86 with 64 completing these programmes. The average % retention rate in Series 1 was 74.4%.

	Phase 1	Phase 2	Start date	End date	Number of sessions	Total Participants	Completed	Retention
<b>Series 1</b>								
<b>Waterside Neighbourhood Partnership, Derry</b>	April - June 2023	September - December 2023	07/06/2023	22/11/2023	14 plus 10 x 1-2-1	15	15	100%
<b>CRUN, Coleraine</b>	April - June 2023	September - December 2023	31/05/2023	06/12/2023	16	21	16	76.2%
<b>Derg Valley Care, Castlederg</b>	April - June 2023	September - April 2024				21	15	71.4%
<b>The Verve Healthy Living Network, Lurgan</b>	April - June 2023	September - December 2023	01/06/2023	26/02/2024	20	29	18	62.1%
<b>Total</b>						86	64	74.4%

### Series 2

2.4. Series 2 was held in 6 Healthy Living Centres between August 2023 and May 2024. The table below shows the HLCs who delivered H4H programmes during Series 2. The total number of participants who began programmes in Series 2 was 128 with 104 completing these programmes. The average % retention rate in Series 2 was 81.3%.

	Phase 1	Phase 2	Start date	End date	Number of sessions	Total Participants	Completed	Retention
<b>Series 2</b>								
<b>Kilkeel Development Association</b>		Completed December 2023	02/08/2023	24/08/2023	16	27	27	100%
<b>NACN, Cushendun</b>		Completed December 2023	12/10/2024	14/12/2024	20	16	14	87.5%
<b>Ligoniel HLC</b>	September to December 2023	January – April 2024	05/10/2023	08/04/2024	22	18	16	88.9%
<b>Oak HLC, Lisnaskea</b>	September to December 2023	January – April 2024	04/10/2023	21/02/2024	18	24	21	87.5%
<b>South Lough Neagh Regeneration Initiative</b>	September to December 2023	January – April 2024	28/09/2023	25/04/2024	15	12	10	83.3%
<b>Peninsula Healthy Living Partnership</b>	September to December 2023	January – April 2024	13/09/2023	11/06/2024	21	31	16	51.6%
<b>Total</b>						128	104	81.3%

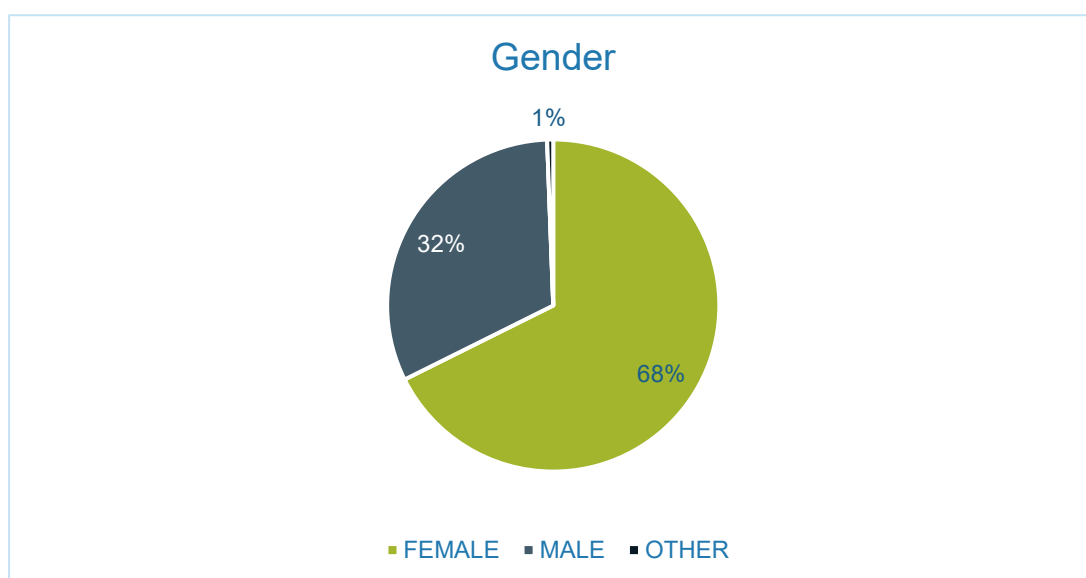
2.5. Overall, H4H had a high retention rate, with approximately 78.5% of people who started programmes completing them. The table above show that most programmes ran for periods of approximately 7-8 months, so given this extended timeframe, the high retention rate may indicate the value people placed on taking part in the programmes.

### Participant information

2.6. The information below about people who participated in programmes has been provided by the programme facilitators and is sourced from pre programme questionnaires completed by participants attending both series of the project. <sup>2</sup>

### Demographics

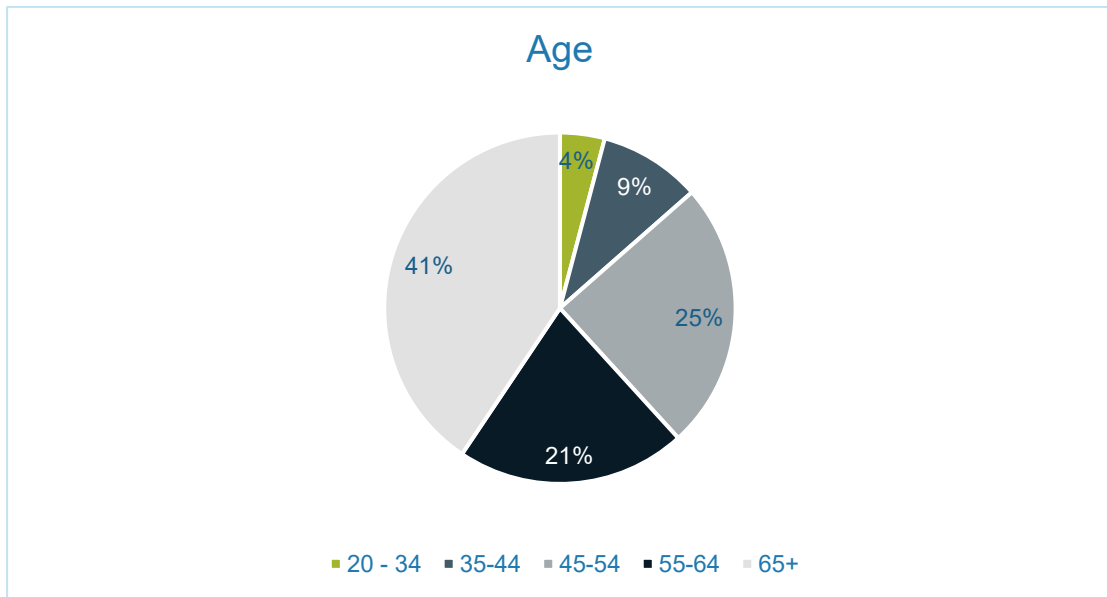
#### Gender of participants



2.7. The chart shows that 68% of participants on programmes were female. It is not untypical for the majority of participants on social prescribing schemes to be female. Indeed, 32% male participation could be considered to be high compared to similar schemes delivered by HLCA.

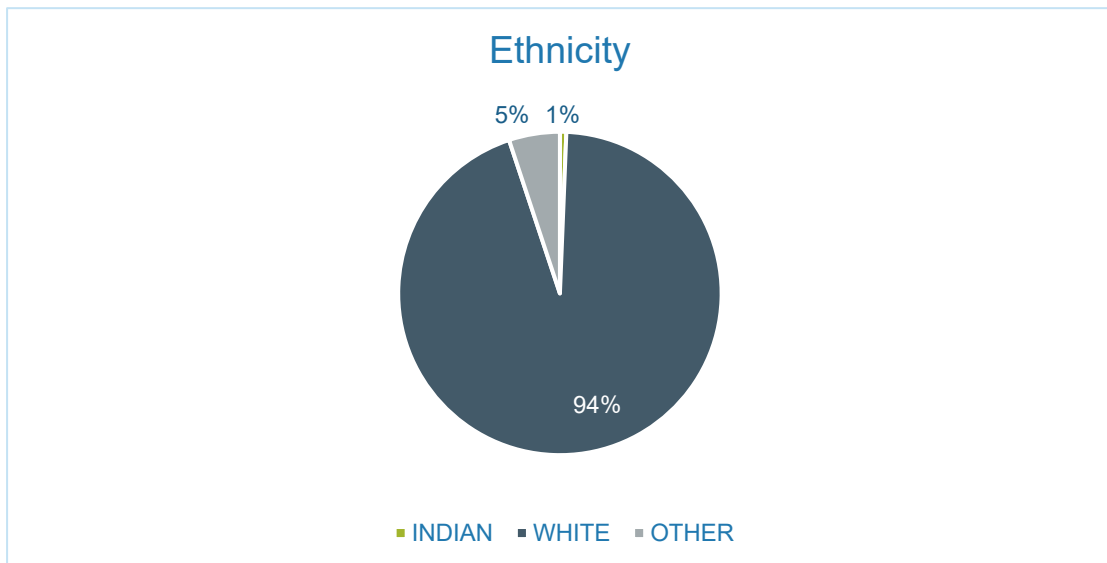
<sup>2</sup> Note: 170 participants provided age and gender data, 157 provided ethnicity data and 152 provided employment status data.

Age of participants



2.8. The project is open to ages between 18-65+. The chart above shows that 62% of participants were aged 55+ with 41% 65+.

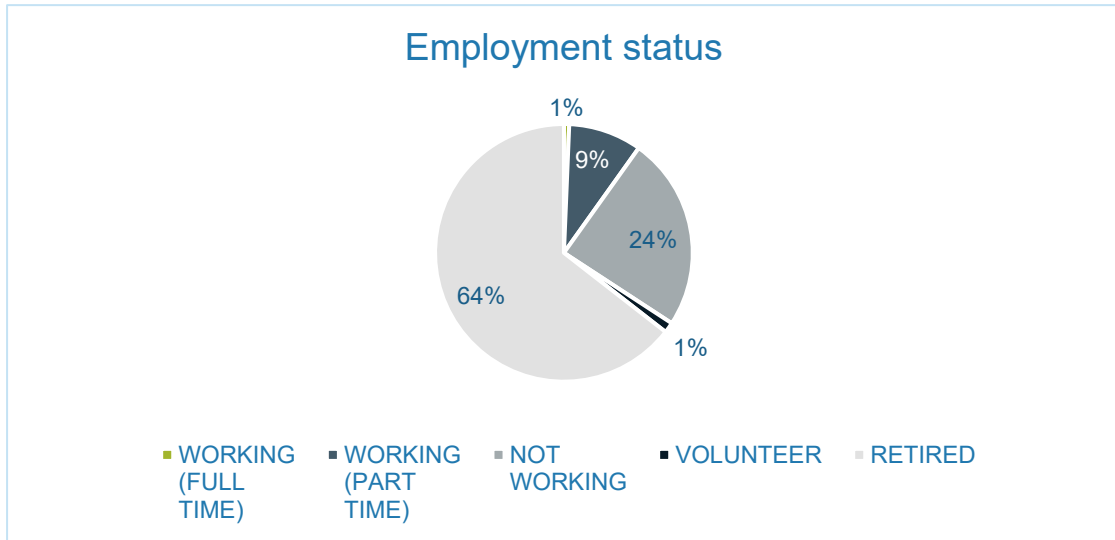
Ethnicity



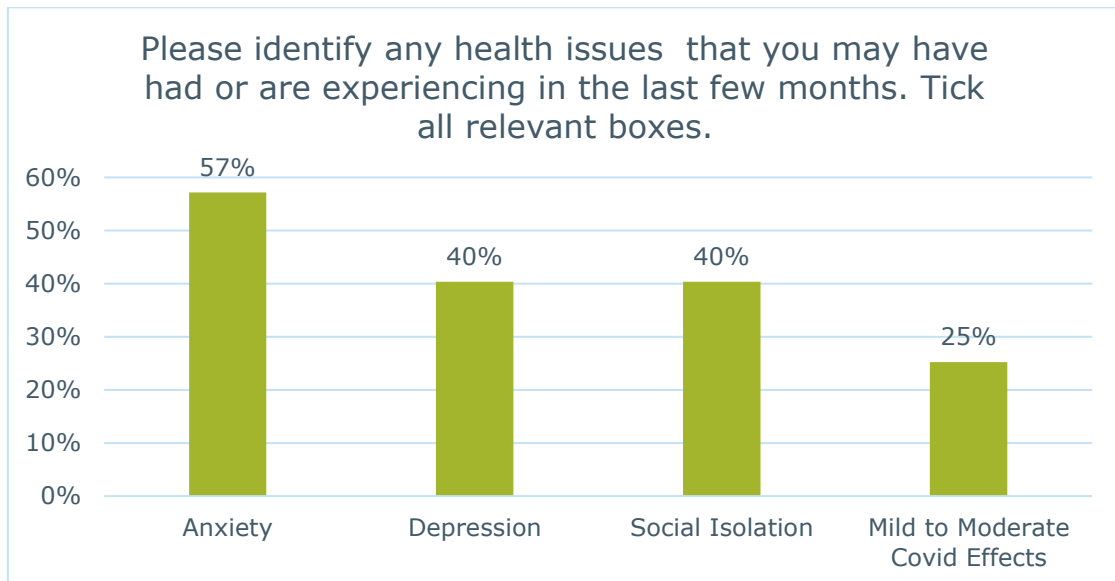
2.9. 94% of programme participants identified as being white.

**Employment status**

**2.10.** The chart below shows that 64% of participants on programmes were retired, 24% were not working, 9% were working part time, 1% worked full time and 1% were volunteering.



**Health issues**



**2.11.** As noted previously, the project was targeted at individuals experiencing low level mental health issues and covid effects. Before completing programmes, based on a pre-determined list, participants were asked to indicate health issues they had been experiencing in the last few months. Participants could select more than one issue. The chart above shows that prior to attending programmes, 57% of the participants who completed a pre programme survey noted they had experienced anxiety in the previous few months, 40% indicated they had experienced depression, 40% social isolation and 25% indicated they had experienced mild to moderate covid effects.

**Referral sources**

As noted in Section 1, the staff in the Healthy Living Centres are responsible for the recruitment of participants. Participants came from a range of sources including other programmes being run in the HLC, through primary care and through self-referral. The information below highlights some of the referral sources recorded by participants.

- Better Days Pain Management Programme
- SPRING Social Prescribing project / social prescribers
- Social media advertising including WhatsApp and Facebook
- Noticeboards
- Health in Mind Men’s Group at FitZone Foundation Craigavon
- Community health trainers
- Posters at GP and Pharmacy
- Covid recovery unit
- Website advertisement
- Bulletin Boards
- Printed flyers
- Emails
- Newsletter
- Disability social worker referrals
- Belfast Trust Carers Support Service
- North Belfast Health Forum
- Councillors
- Word of mouth
- Chi Me and Yoga classes

**Project Costs**

**2.12.** As noted in Section 1, during the evaluation period funding for the project was provided by The National Lottery Heritage Fund. Total funding provided by The Heritage Fund for the project was £204,038.

**2.13.** From this budget £6,800 was allocated to delivery partners to deliver each programme (i.e., £6,800 to each HLC and £6,800 to each heritage partner). 12% of the budget for each group could be utilised by the HLCs for their own purposes. Funding allocated to programme delivery costs is summarised in the table below:

Phase breakdown	Anticipated costs
<i>Series 1: 4 groups over 2 phases</i>	
Phase 1	£27,200
Phase 2	£27,200
<i>Series 2: 6 groups over 2 phases</i>	
Phase 1	£40,800
Phase 2	£40,800
<b>Total</b>	<b>£136,000</b>

- 2.14.** The funding was also used to recruit project co-ordinators, organise events, commission a photographer and videographer, provide staff training, , and provide participant resource packs and programme materials.
- 2.15.** Given that 168 people completed the programme during the evaluation period and based on total funding of £204,038 the cost per participant is approximately £1,215. (i.e., £204,038 divided by 168).

#### **Summary of quantitative information**

In the evaluation period (April 2023 – June 2024)

- Programmes were delivered by 10 different HLCs and their chosen heritage partner/s.
- 168 people completed these programmes, with a retention rate of approx. 78.5%
- Individual programmes at each HLC lasted approx. 7-8 months and were delivered in 2 phases (health focus then heritage focus).
- 68% of participants were female, 62% were aged 55+ (41% 65+), 64% were retired.
- In the few months before commencing a programme 57% of those who completed a pre programme questionnaire reported experiencing anxiety, 40% reported experiencing depression, 40% social isolation and 27% mild to moderate covid effects (could report more than one condition).
- The approx. cost per participant who completed the programme was £1,215.

### 3. How well was it done?

#### Introduction

3.1. This section highlights qualitative information about the project. The information has been drawn from the following sources:

- Case studies developed by HLC and Heritage facilitators
- Facilitator feedback
- Heritage and HLC facilitator survey results
- A video showcasing the project developed by the project co-ordinators

3.2. There is a wealth of information in this area, and we have sought to select information that highlights recurring key themes. Each area is reviewed in turn below.

3.3. In addition to the above, we have also included a sample of quotes from participants and facilitators expressing their views about the project throughout the remainder of this report.

#### Case Studies

3.4. As part of the monitoring process, participants and HLC and Heritage facilitators were encouraged to regularly submit case studies to the project co-ordinators illustrating peoples' experiences of taking part in H4H.

3.5. We have included selected case studies below to demonstrate the views of participants and facilitators on programmes during the evaluation period:

#### **Participant Case Study 1 – The Verve Healthy Living Network Lurgan, 50–60-year-old male**

*"After 2 consecutive TIA's (mini strokes) my health took a dive. I was finding it difficult to do the things I had taken for granted; walking, running, even doing small chores around the house. I was basically housebound as a result until someone mentioned VERVE/FITZONE HLC and their Heritage for Health group. This allowed me some important socialising which I had missed out on after being in the post office for over 20 years and meeting people. I was depressed and had anxiety because of the strokes and the alienation I felt because of being at home 24/7 for the past year and a half. But meeting with Sean and the Heritage group and going to the sessions gave me a new bounce to my step. New learning is great. I even made my own butter after last week's session."*

His story was also featured on the Heritage 4 Health's podcast.

### **Participant Case Study 2 – NACN Cushendon, 58-year-old male**

*"This has been a very beneficial programme for me. I would have been a person who believed in the usefulness of this type of programme, but only for other people. I am not a great joiner. I think the programme has made me much more open to participating in programmes. Like this. Mental health and wellbeing can be very private and even secretive, but this programme helped me to see that sharing, keeping active, getting outdoors, all help to alleviate problems, even if only in getting me to think about them, and to initiate a plan.*

*The model of the [outcomes] star helped to break my life-issues down into separate areas. This facilitates planning – tackling one area and making only small changes, at a time. I set out to improve sleep patterns and diet, and to reduce medications. I have begun to succeed with all three. I now try to have a bedtime routine, and a wind-down for sleep. I have reduced, but not removed, some of my pain medication. My diet has improved, partly because this extended course kept wellbeing at the front of my mind. Thanks for a good, humane, well managed course."*

### **Participant Case Study 3 – CRUN Coleraine, 74-year-old female**

*"I have enjoyed all of the sessions. I have made a lot of new friends. It has really helped my anxiety to get out and about and chat to others and forget my worries. I care for my husband who has Parkinson's and I feel it can be a lonely road at times and my world can feel quite small. I set the time aside for me and I really benefited from it. The fact I was out in the fresh air was fantastic for me to lift my head and feeling of being connected to something. It has inspired me to do more for myself and the importance of taking time to enjoy something for me."*

### **Participant Case Study 4 – SLNRA, 22-year-old male**

*A 22-year-old programme participant who has autism and brain damage as a result of a car accident embarked on a remarkable journey with the "Heritage 4 Health" project. With 20 diverse sessions designed to enhance participants' knowledge about heritage while promoting physical and mental well-being. The activities included gardening demonstrations, Qi Gong (a form of gentle exercise), a foraging workshop, a heritage walk in Lurgan town, traditional woodworking skills (specifically making a stool), Caledonian dancing, and a nature walk in Peatlands Park.*

*Before joining the project, this participant led a life with limited social interaction and outdoor activities due to his condition. The car accident had significantly impacted his ability to engage in regular activities, and his Autism often made social situations challenging. His caregivers and family were eager for him to find opportunities that would improve his social skills, physical health, and overall well-being. The "Heritage 4 Health" project seemed like an ideal opportunity for this participant to explore new interests in a supportive environment.*

*He enjoyed the gardening demonstrations and found experience working with soil and plants therapeutic and began spending more time in the garden at home, he found the woodworking skills very rewarding and crafting a stool from scratch gave him a sense of accomplishment and boosted his confidence. His favourite part of the programme was the nature walk in Peatlands Park and he enjoyed this gentle physical activity in a peaceful environment where he could learn about the different plants and animals.*

*The "Heritage 4 Health" project had a profound impact on this participant. He experienced significant improvements in his social skills and physical health. The variety of activities helped him discover new interests and provided a structured way to engage with others. His family noted an increase in his confidence and a more positive outlook on life. This participant's ability to focus and his physical coordination also improved, thanks to the gentle exercises and hands-on activities.*

*This participant's journey with "Heritage 4 Health" demonstrates the powerful benefits of inclusive community projects. Through participating in diverse and enriching activities, this participant was able to step out of his comfort zone, gain new skills, and improve his overall well-being. His story highlights the importance of providing supportive environments where individuals with disabilities can explore, learn, and thrive.*

#### **Participant Case Study 5 – Ligoniel, 70-year-old female**

*"I have caring responsibilities and came across the programme from Ligoniel Healthy Living Centre social media page. The initial design of the programme was very interesting, and I was lucky enough to secure a place. I didn't know anyone before going but have come away with wanting to keep in touch and join new groups with these people. I suffered from low confidence and social anxiety before, and this programme has increased my confidence through being included and accepted into a group.*

*I am happier and content with myself, have learned new skills, made new friends. I have experienced a health lift and am optimistic about future adventures after having a beneficial and positive experience".*

### Summary of key themes from participants case studies

- Participants on programmes reported experiencing social isolation, loneliness depression and anxiety, often because of deteriorating physical health or a change in life circumstances – for example caring for loved ones.
- Participants highlighted that bringing people with similar circumstances together over a period of several months can lead to positive changes in behaviours and lifestyle and encourage peer support.
- Programme content gave people relevant information, enabled them to learn and develop new skills and encouraged them to get outdoors and active.
- Participants reported wanting to continue with similar activities post programme attendance.

### Facilitator Feedback

- 3.6.** Facilitators from participating HLCs provided feedback post programme about the project and this was often developed in conjunction with Heritage Partners. Below is a selected sample of feedback from HLC facilitators.

#### HLC Facilitator Feedback 1 – Kilkeel Development Association

*"Overall, we feel that the H4H project was very successful and was enjoyed by all participants. We are delighted to have so many wonderful locations locally that we can avail off. Due to the success of the programmes, our partners at the Woodland Trust reached out before Christmas to offer to host a one-off host a Christmas Floral workshop with a light Christmas lunch for all participants. We are pleased to report that 12 participants took part and made beautiful floral arrangements all sourced from within the park.*

*We are also pleased to report that we met with our H4H partner at the Woodland Trust in January, and it was agreed to deliver a continuation of the project monthly at Mourne Park. In keeping with TAKE 5, this will include a guided walk, health themed activities and light refreshments so that we can continue to work in partnership to recruit a wide audience and encourage more participants to avail of fantastic outdoor heritage programme in partnership.*

*This was a very enjoyable and rewarding project to have been involved in and would welcome the opportunity to participate again and build upon the success of the 2023 programmes."*

### **HLC Facilitator Feedback 2 – Verve Healthy Living Network, Lurgan**

HLC Facilitators

*"We planned our sessions well and worked very well with our heritage partner. The group totally engaged from our first session at Brownlow House making our roles much more enjoyable. There was good learning for us with a better understanding of local Heritage and the role it can play in our own health and wellbeing."*

Heritage partner

*"We enjoyed working with our health and wellbeing partner. This was something new for us and changed our perspective on the potential role for heritage-based activities in our work. The project has led us to develop new relationships with places, businesses and people whom we previously had no relationship. There was great interaction from participants throughout the sessions, who shared their own thoughts and experiences throughout making for some fun packed sessions."*

### **HLC Facilitator Survey Feedback 3 – Waterside Neighbourhood Partnership, Derry**

*"Some participants considered that H4H was more beneficial for their overall health than anything they had attended previously both in the community and within the health service. In general, feedback was similar overall with all participants saying they benefitted emotionally and physically from their participation on the programmes. I was delighted to be involved in this project and deliver it. I feel there is great scope to develop it further."*

### **HLC Facilitator Survey Feedback 4 – South Lough Neagh Regeneration Initiative**

*"Feedback from participants, facilitators, and heritage partners about Heritage 4 Health was overwhelmingly positive."*

*Facilitators:*

- 1. Engagement and Participation: Facilitators observed high levels of engagement and enthusiasm among participants during sessions. They noted active participation in hands-on activities and a willingness to learn and try new things.*
- 2. Community Building: Facilitators emphasised the role of the project in fostering community connections and creating a supportive environment where participants could learn from each other and share their experiences.*
- 3. Positive Atmosphere: Facilitators appreciated the positive atmosphere cultivated during sessions, characterised by mutual respect, encouragement, and a sense of fun. They noted that participants seemed genuinely happy and relaxed, contributing to the overall success of the programmes.*

*Heritage Partners:*

*1. Effective Collaboration: Heritage partners commended the collaborative nature of the project, noting the seamless integration of cultural heritage activities with health and well-being initiatives. They appreciated the innovative approach to promoting both physical and cultural health.*

*2. Community Impact: Heritage partners recognised the project's positive impact on the community, particularly in promoting cultural appreciation and preserving traditional practices. They noted the importance of such initiatives in maintaining cultural identity and heritage for future generations.*

*3. Future Collaboration: Partners expressed interest in continuing to collaborate on similar programmes in the future, recognising the value of Heritage 4 Health in promoting holistic well-being and community cohesion.*

*Overall, the feedback from participants, facilitators, and heritage partners underscored the success of Heritage 4 Health in achieving its goals of promoting physical and cultural health. It demonstrated the effectiveness of integrating heritage activities with health and well-being initiatives to create a holistic approach to community development."*

**Summary of key themes from facilitator feedback**

- Facilitators noted that participants were very engaged, enjoyed taking part and found the project very beneficial to their health and well-being.
- Health facilitators reported becoming more aware of the contribution heritage assets and partners can make to their work.
- Heritage partners reported learning new ways to promote their facilities.
- Some HLCs and heritage partners reported further collaboration post programmes.
- Those who took part see opportunities to develop the project and for further collaboration in future.

### Comments made by HLCs and heritage partners

- 3.7. The information provided to us by the Project Co-ordinators also included comments from health and heritage partners about the project.

#### Health Partners

*"We have seen the huge benefits this project had on the overall health and wellbeing of the participants and would be very keen to deliver this again if available." – OAK*

*"It has given me a huge boost in confidence in terms of planning and delivering a project. The first phase was planned before knowing the group; however, the second phase was tailored on feedback from the group - and what they would like to see and do." - SLNRA*

*"This was an excellent project enjoyed by all participants and facilitators who delivered the programmes. I thoroughly enjoyed getting to know these participants each week and took great pleasure in seeing how they threw themselves into each session."- Cushendun*

*"This project was excellent as we have learned so much about local sites and local heritage. We have found new partners and new ways to engage clients from our social prescribing programmes. We have had the ability to provide people with access to new things and over a longer programme. The access to transport was brilliant." – CRUN*

*"I've gained so much from this project and found out how simple it is to blend health and heritage. Our approach both on aspects has really engaged our group and it was great to see session by session the enjoyment and the benefits for each participant." – The Verve*

#### Heritage Partners

*"The participants knew we had taken note of their interests and responded accordingly. When we asked them about their memories, they all could all remember things, it was like reminiscence therapy." – Lisnaskea Historical Society*

*"The Woodland Trust NI will be continuing monthly workshops at Mourne Park for H4H in 2024 and would like to continue to be involved in the programme" – Woodland Trust NI*

*"It allowed us to provide important outreach to groups and individuals in society sometimes overlooked." – Causeway Coast & Glens Heritage Trust*

*"The participants benefited in many ways, meeting new people, trying new things, learning more about the area in which they live and finding new opportunities to be active outdoors" - Newry Mourne and Down District Council (Strangford Lough & Lecale Partnership)*

### **Showcase Video**

**3.8.** The project co-ordinators developed a video highlighting the benefits of the project. The video contained interviews with participants and facilitators. We have reviewed the video and noted some of the key themes highlighted include:

- Those who took part in the programmes noted experiencing a better connection with the outdoors and with others in a comfortable environment. This has led to improved confidence, sociability and greater consideration of heritage.
- Participants enjoyed taking some time to themselves every week to learn about local history and engage with and find out about heritage sites they may have previously not appreciated. They also commented favourably on the knowledge of the facilitators.
- Facilitators highlighted that the programmes made a significant difference to people who participated. They noted that people were happy to participate and bond with each other, with some maintaining contact and meeting up after the programmes ended.

### **Summary of Qualitative Information presented**

Whilst the information noted in this section is self-reported and subjective there are several strong themes running through it:

1. Participants and facilitators reported the programmes led to benefits in health and well-being, particularly for people who had reported experiencing isolation, loneliness, anxiety and depression pre programme.

2. Many reported the strong level of engagement participants had with the programmes.

Factors contributing to this may include:

- The length of the programmes gave people time to bond as a group
- The content, a mix of health and heritage information, provided focus, enabled those participating to learn new things

3. Most feedback recognised that the programmes had made people more aware of local heritage and how this can play an important role in improving and maintaining health and well-being.

4. The project encouraged heritage providers to think differently about how they promote and utilise their assets and community-based health organisations to consider the role of heritage in improving health and well-being.

## **4. What difference has Heritage 4 Health made?**

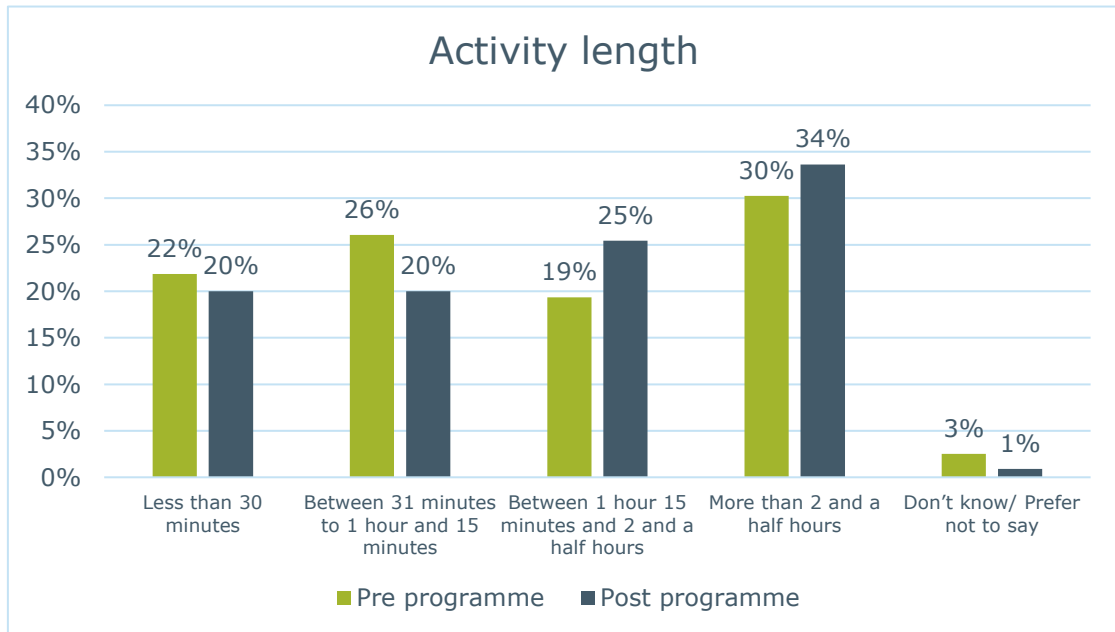
### **Introduction**

- 4.1.** This section considers the difference the project has made. The information contained in this section has been derived from questionnaires completed by participants.
- 4.2.** As noted previously, these questionnaires were developed before the programmes commenced and participants were asked to complete them before they participated in the programmes (pre) and after participation (post). Completed questionnaires were uploaded to the SurveyMonkey platform by facilitators and analysed by us as part of this evaluation.
- 4.3.** By seeking information before and after participation on the programmes, the questionnaires aim to gather participants' views on the impact of the programmes. The questions seek to ascertain the impact of the programmes from a health and lifestyle and a heritage engagement perspective based on the desired outcomes suggested by HLCA and NIEL.
- 4.4.** As part of the health and lifestyle aspect, the questionnaires included the Short (form) Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (SWEMWBS) statements. SWEMWBS is used universally to monitor mental well-being in the general population using 7 statements about thoughts and feelings. Further information on these statements is provided later in this section.
- 4.5.** The post programme surveys conclude with two questions that seek participants' views on the programmes overall. A free text section is also included to provide an opportunity for participants to add further comments if desired.
- 4.6.** It should be noted that not all participants completed questionnaires. Section 2 highlights that 215 people commenced the programmes across participating HLCs and 168 completed these. . In total, 119 pre-programme and 110 post-programme questionnaires were completed by participants taking part in both series and phases of the project. It has not been possible to attribute responses to individual HLCs, so the information from the questionnaires has been analysed collectively.
- 4.7.** As noted previously, we have sought to identify trends and patterns from the information showing the impact of the programmes.
- 4.8.** In addition to the questionnaires, a group of participants were also asked to complete a further monitoring tool, the well-being star. The well-being star is one of Outcomes Stars, a series of self-reported, evidence-based tools for measuring and supporting change. The well-being star has been designed for people living with long term health conditions, and measures progress in eight outcome areas that together enable people to live as well as they can. This tool has been used by HLCs in other social prescribing programmes and the project

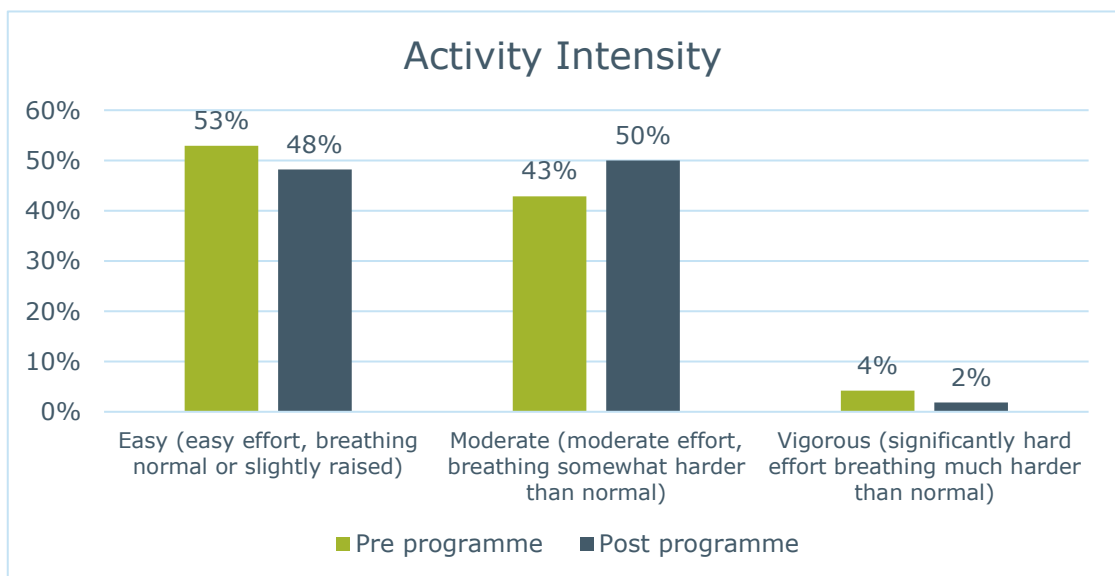
co-ordinators decided to use it in a limited way in to measure outcomes in the H4H programmes. The results have been summarised below.

**Health Impact**

**Activity**

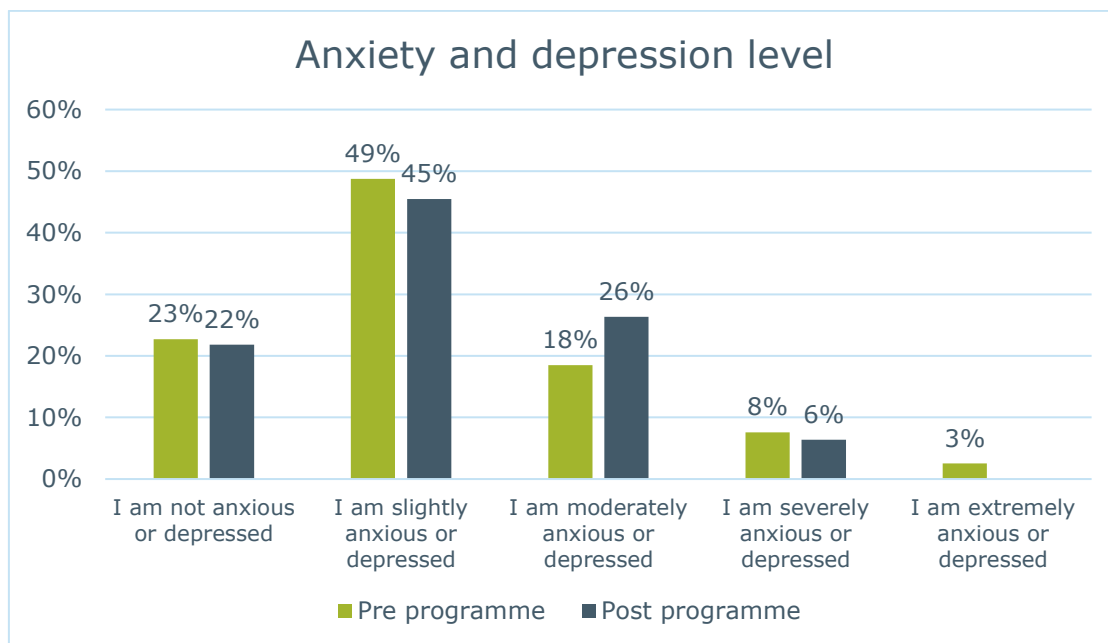


**4.9.** Participants were asked to indicate the length and level of physical activity they undertook weekly before and after participating in the programmes. The chart above shows that post programme, participants who completed questionnaires indicated that they spent longer taking part in physical activity, with 59% indicating they undertook physical activity lasting at least an hour and 15 minutes, compared to 49% pre programme.



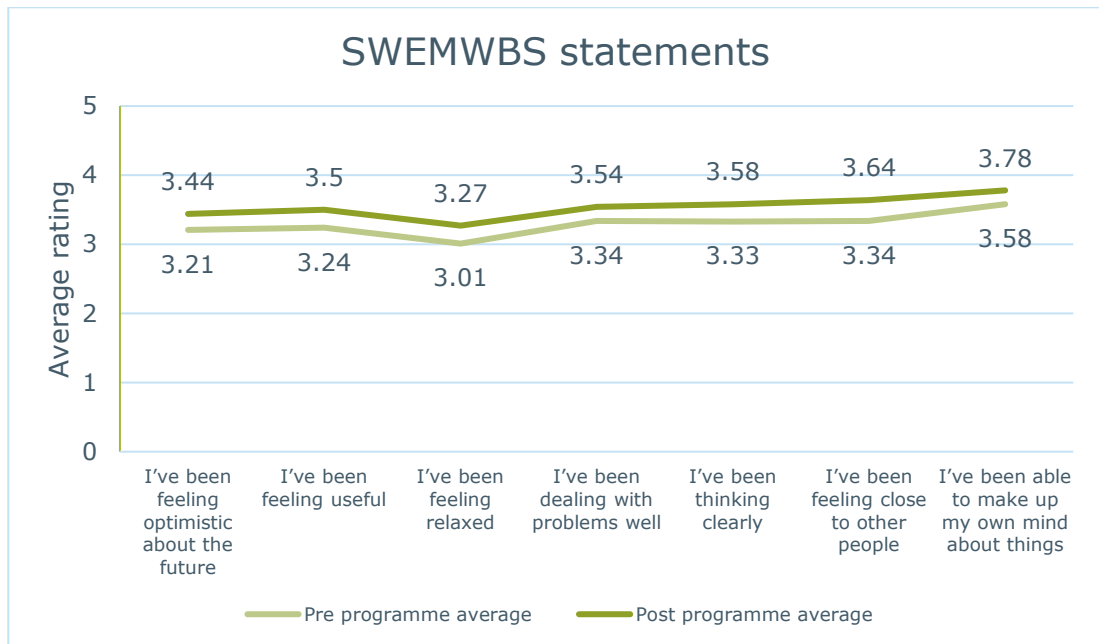
**4.10.** Regarding the level of physical activity, the chart above shows that post programme, 52% of participants who completed questionnaires indicated that they took part in moderate or vigorous physical activity compared to 47% pre programme.

**Mental Health**



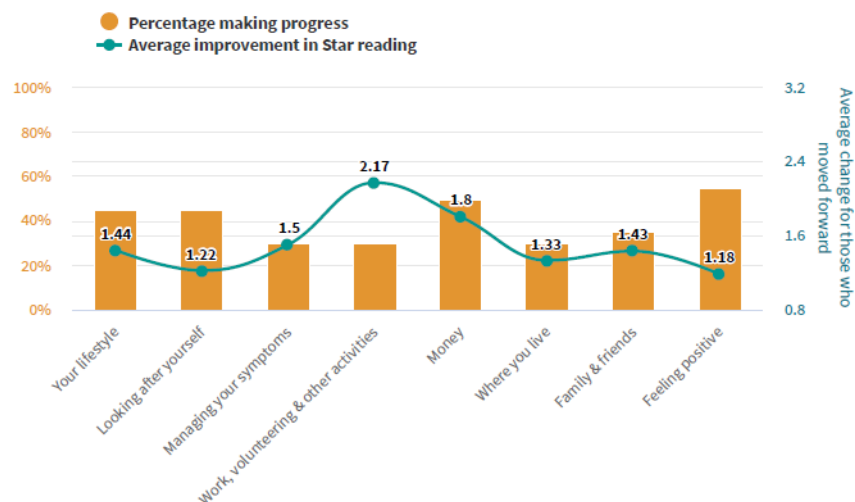
**4.11.** Participants were asked to indicate the degree of anxiety and depression they felt pre and post programme participation. The chart above indicates that pre programme 11% of participants who completed questionnaires felt severely or extremely anxious or depressed, whilst post programme the % of those participants in these categories reduced to 6%. This may indicate a reduction in people who reported feeling anxious and depressed post programme.

SWEMWBS



**4.12.** As noted previously, the questionnaires included the Short (form) Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (SWEMWBS) statements. SWEMWBS is used universally to monitor mental well-being in the general population using 7 statements about thoughts and feelings. There are 5 possible response categories to each statement ranging from 'none of the time to 'all of the time. Participants were asked to respond to each SWEMWB statement pre and post programme participation. The chart above shows that post programme, weighted average scores were higher for every statement with the most substantial improvement being where participants were feeling close to other people. It should also be noted that the total average score increased from 23.05 to 24.75, which indicates that in general those who completed questionnaires felt more positive post programme.

### Well-being star



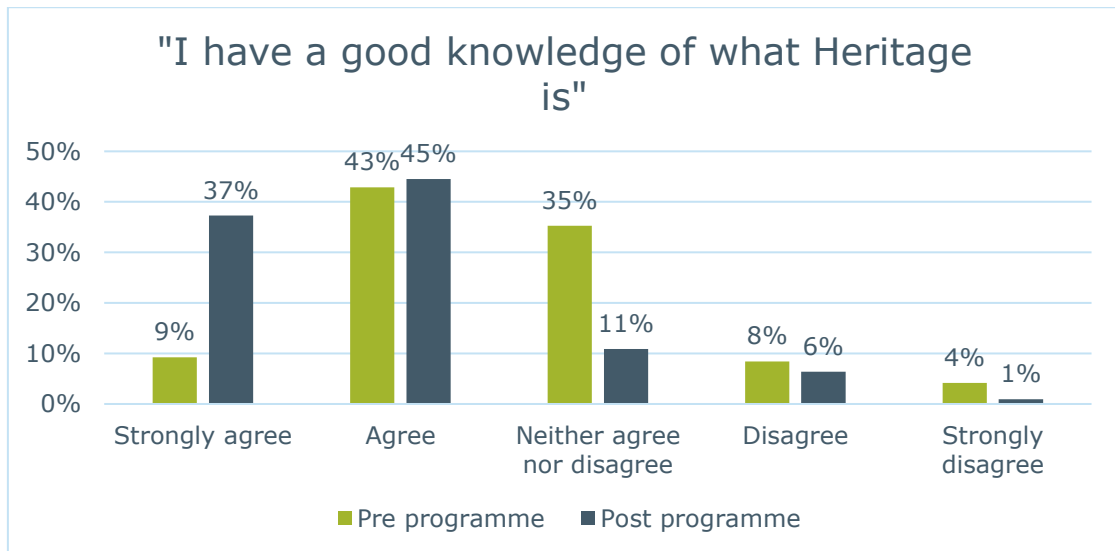
In each outcome area, by how much are people dropping back?

**4.13.** We have noted above that a group of participants completed the well-being star tool pre and post programme participation. This measures progress in eight lifestyle and health related outcome areas that together enable people to live as well as they can. The chart above summarises the results presented to us by the project co-ordinators. Although the sample is small, the results show that all outcome areas had at least 20% improvement, indicating that those who took part felt more positive following programme participation.

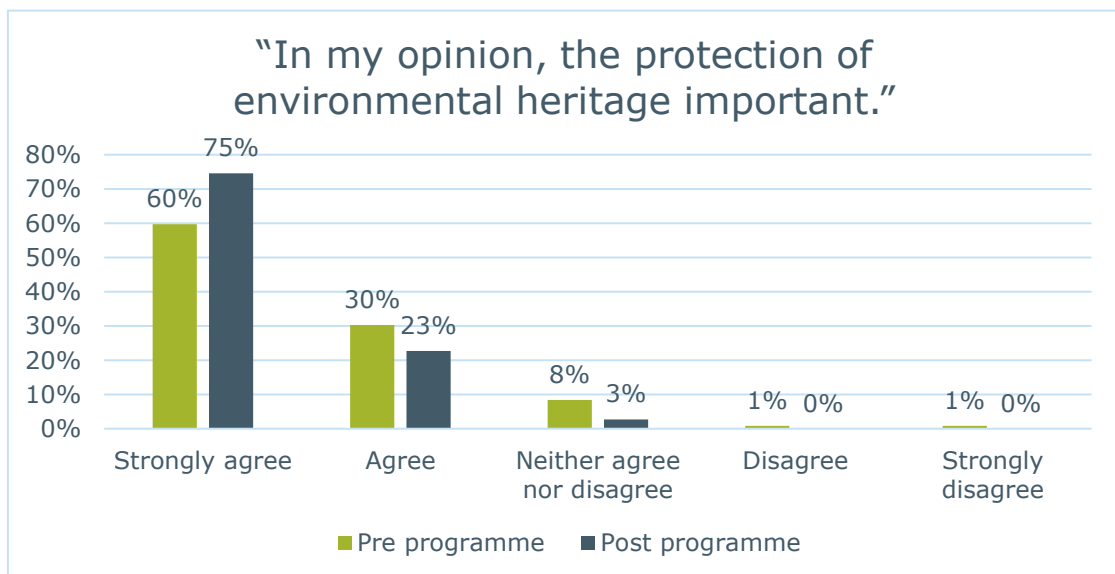
#### Summary of key themes from Health Impact information

- Post programme participants who completed questionnaires indicated they:
  - Spent longer taking part in physical activity and were more likely to take part in moderate activity.
  - Were less likely to feel severely or extremely anxious or depressed.
- The weighted average SWEMWBS scores were higher for every statement indicating that in general those who completed questionnaires felt more positive post programme participation.
- For the small sample of participants who completed the well-being star, the results show that all outcome areas had at least 20% improvement, also indicating that those who took part felt more positive following programme participation..

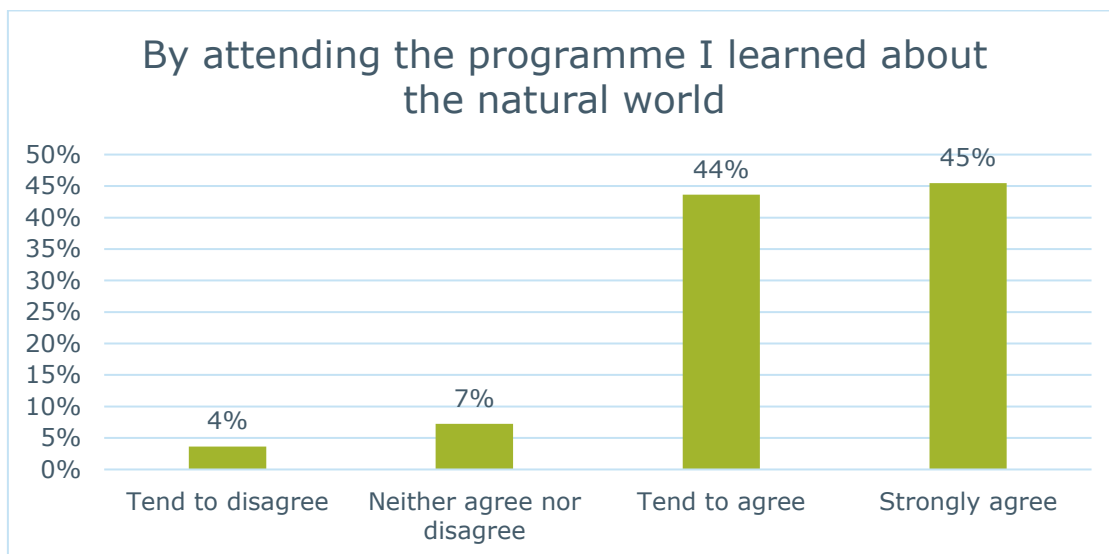
Heritage Impact



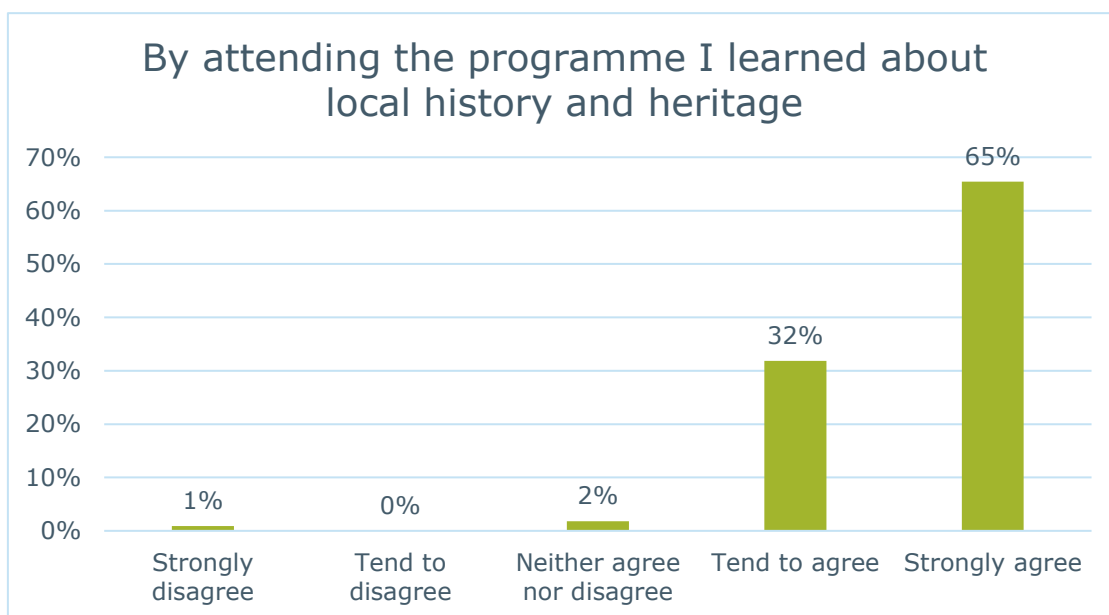
**4.14.** Participants were asked to indicate if they had a good knowledge of heritage pre and post programme participation. The chart above shows that post programme 82% of those who completed questionnaires agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. This increased from 52% in similar categories pre programme, indicating an increase in knowledge of heritage for participants post programme participation.



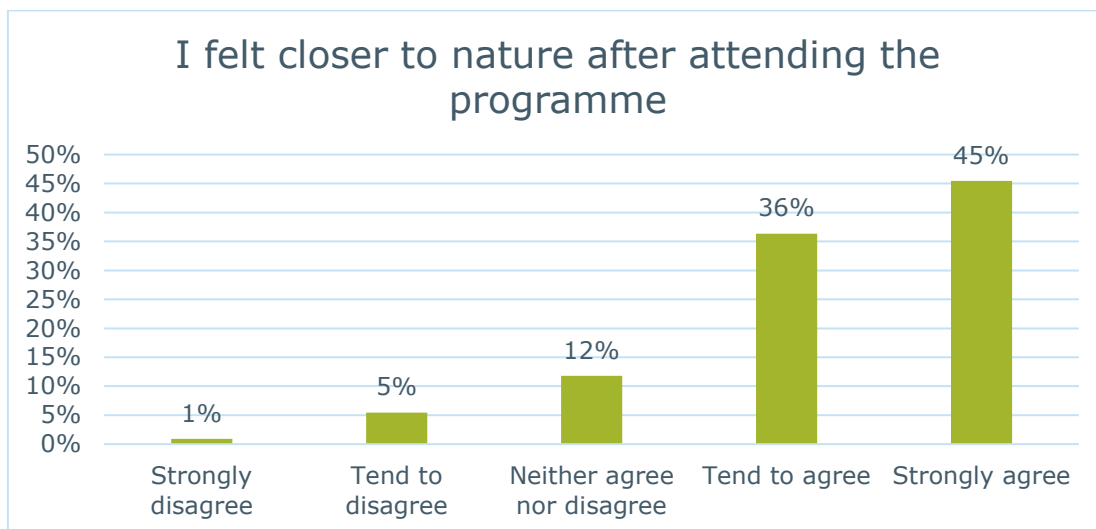
**4.15.** Pre and post programme participation, participants were asked their opinion on the importance of the protection of environmental heritage. The chart above shows that 75% of those who completed questionnaires indicated that they strongly agreed with this statement post programme participation. The corresponding % pre programme participation was 60%, demonstrating that those who completed questionnaires were more likely to feel strongly about the importance of environmental heritage protection after attending programmes.



**4.16.** Post programme participation, participants were asked to indicate if they had learned about the natural world by attending the programmes. The chart above shows that 99% of those who completed questionnaires agreed or strongly agreed that they had.



**4.17.** Similarly, post programme participation, participants were asked to indicate if they had learned about local history and heritage. The chart above shows that 97% of those who completed questionnaires agreed or strongly agreed that they had.



**4.18.** Participants were asked to indicate if they felt closer to nature after attending the programmes. The chart above shows that 81% of those who completed questionnaires agreed or strongly agreed that they felt closer to nature after attending the programmes.



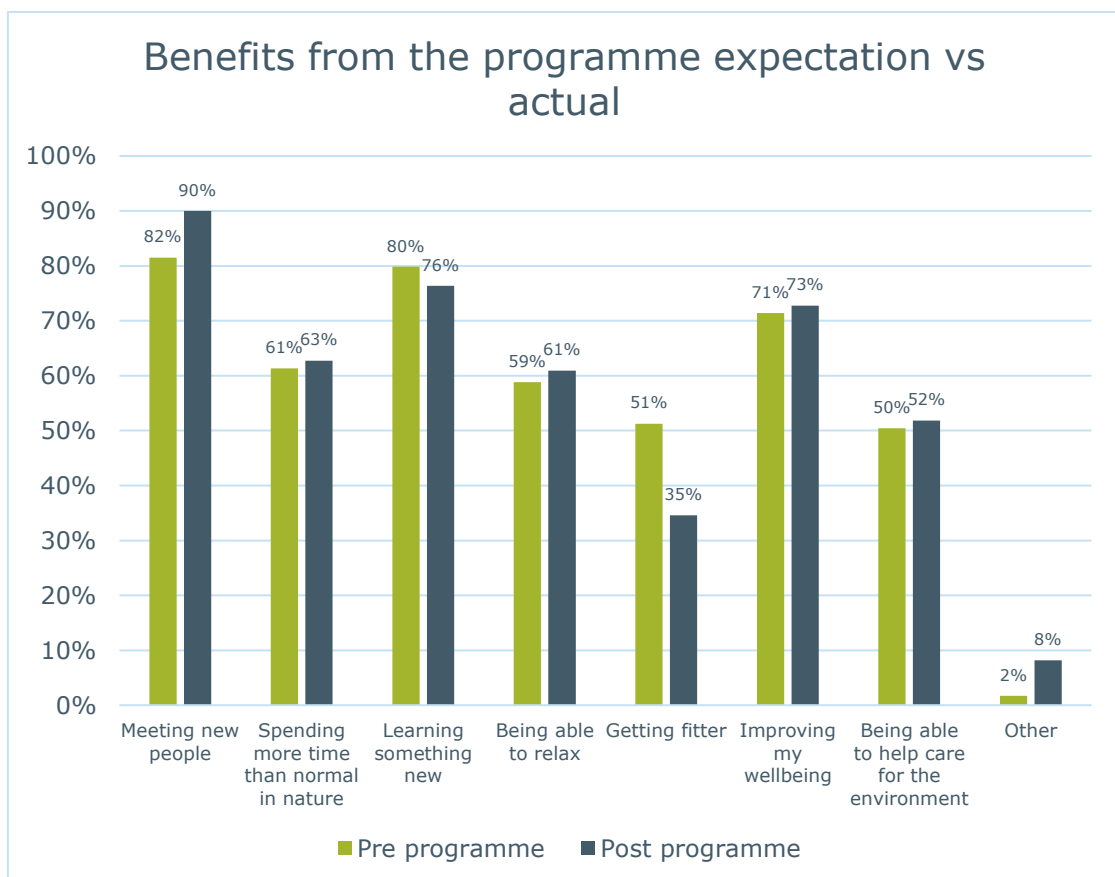
**4.19.** Finally, post programme participation, participants were asked if they would be inclined to visit more heritage sites after completing the programmes. Everyone who completed a questionnaire indicated that this would be the case.

**Summary of key themes from Heritage impact information**

- Post programme participation, those who completed questionnaires indicated;
  - in general, they had a better knowledge of heritage and were more likely to feel strongly about the importance of environmental heritage protection.
  - they had learned about the natural world and local history and heritage (almost all)
  - felt closer to nature (vast majority)
  - would be inclined to visit more heritage sites (all)

**Overall Impact of the Programmes**

**Anticipated v actual benefits from programmes**



**4.20.** Pre-programme participation, participants were asked to indicate the benefits they anticipated from attending the programmes against a list of pre-determined possibilities. Post-programme participants indicated the actual benefits they had gained from attending the programmes against the same list. The chart above shows that those who completed questionnaires agreed that the anticipated benefits had been achieved or exceeded in all areas apart from getting fitter. This is a strong indication of the success of the programmes. The finding in relation to fitness is unsurprising as the programmes focused more on lifestyle than physical fitness.

**4.21.** The post programme questionnaires also provided participants with an opportunity to add further comments on the benefits of the programmes. These included:

*"Improved mental health and more confidence",*

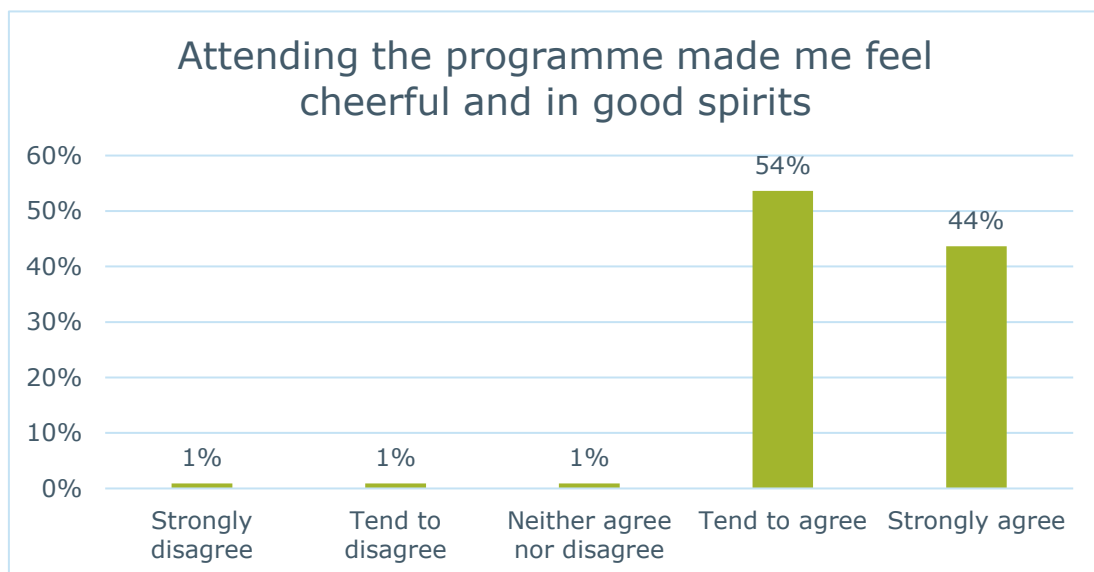
*"A sense of community and appreciation of nature",*

*"Improving my wellbeing, spending more time than normal in nature",*

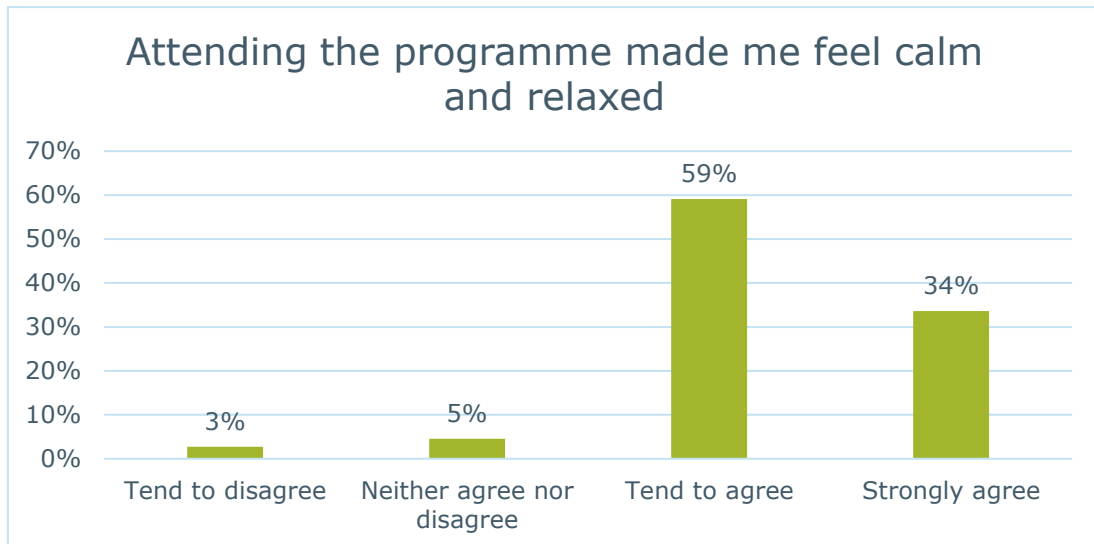
*"A thoroughly enjoyable and relaxing programme. Getting the opportunity to talk to other people helps you to feel positive and part of something very good and helpful".*

**Impact of the programme on mood**

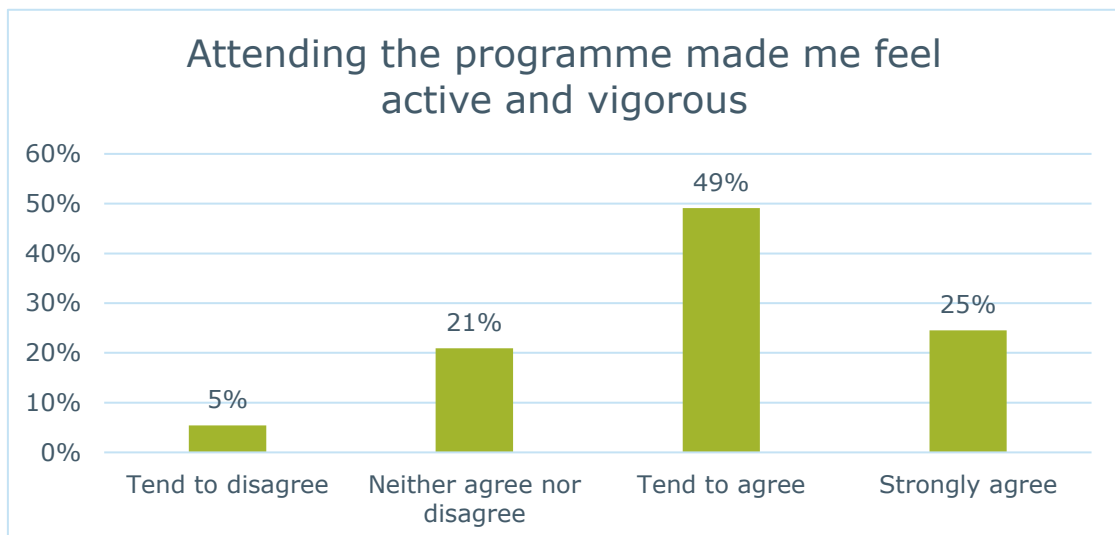
**4.22.** Given that the programmes were targeted at individuals experiencing low level mental health issues several of the post programme questions sought to find information about the impact of the programmes on the feelings and mood of participants. The results from these questions are shown in the next few charts.



**4.23.** Participants were asked if the programmes made them feel in good spirits. 98% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that the programmes made them feel cheerful and in good spirits.



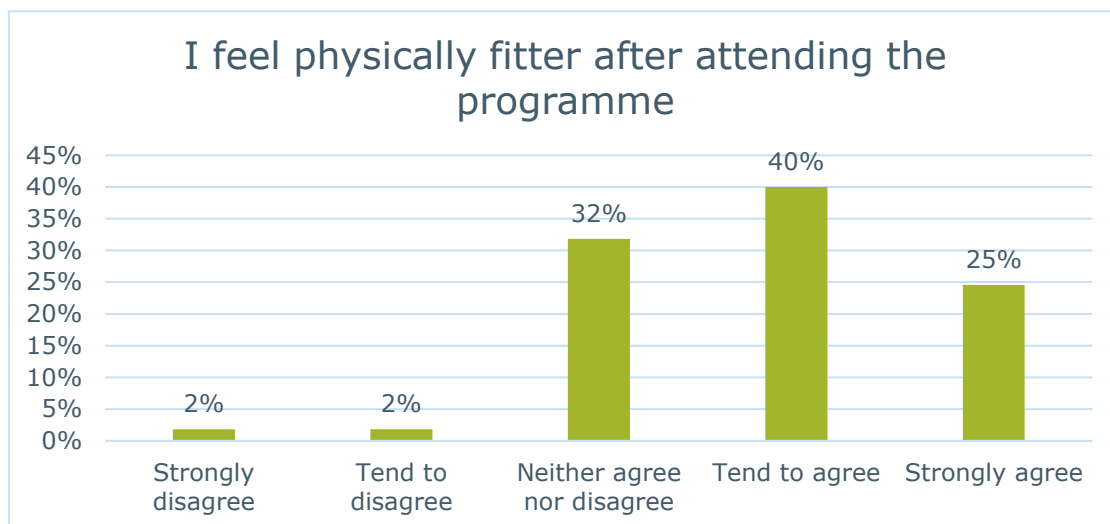
**4.24.** Participants were asked if the programmes made them feel calm and relaxed. 93% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that the programmes made them feel calm and relaxed.



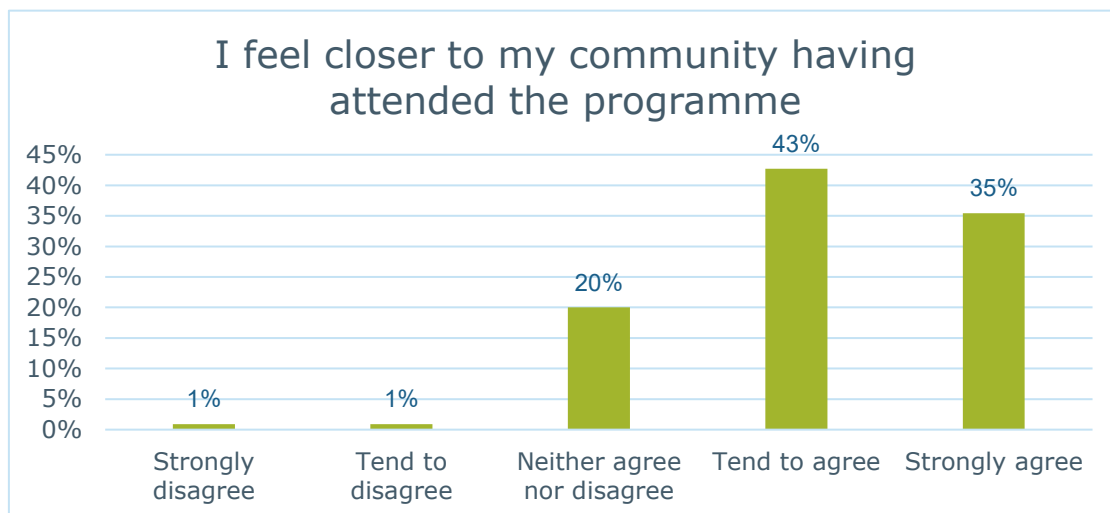
**4.25.** Participants were asked if the programmes made them feel active and vigorous. 74% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that the programmes made them feel active and vigorous. The slightly lower % in this category may be in keeping with other findings regarding the impact of the programmes on fitness.

**Impact of the programmes on fitness, community and lifestyle**

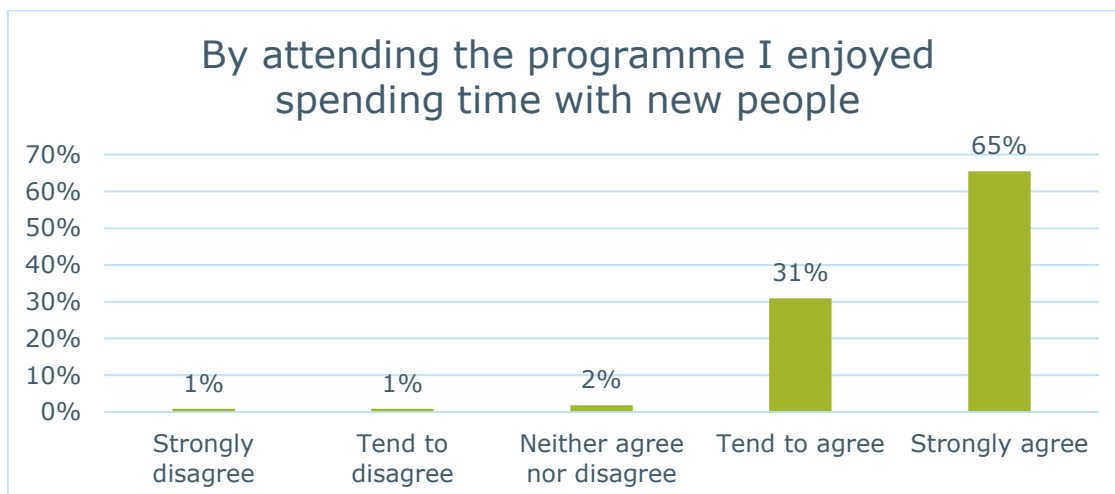
**4.26.** The post programme questionnaires also sought information on impact of the programmes on the fitness, community and lifestyle of participants. The results from these questions are shown in the next few charts.



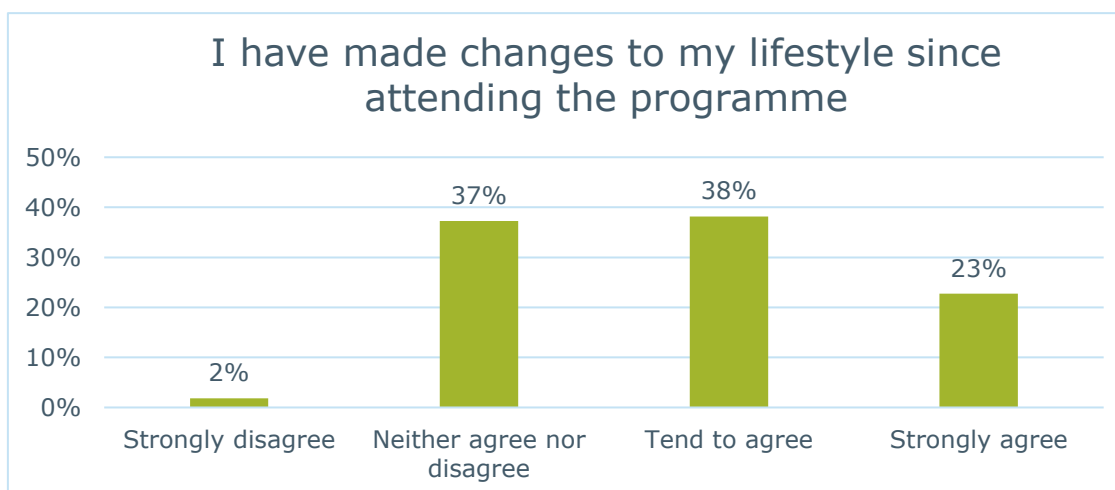
**4.27.** Participants were asked if they felt physically fitter after attending the programmes. 65% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that they felt physically fitter after the programmes. Once again, the slightly lower % in this category may be in keeping with other findings regarding the impact of the programmes on fitness



**4.28.** Participants were asked if they felt closer to their community having attended the programmes. 88% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that they felt closer to their community after participating in the programmes.



**4.29.** Participants were asked if they enjoyed spending time with new people by attending the programmes. 96% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that they enjoyed spending time with new people by attending the programmes.



**4.30.** Participants were asked if they had made changes to their lifestyle since attending the programmes. 61% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that they had made lifestyle changes since attending the programmes.

**4.31.** The post programme questionnaires also provided participants with an opportunity to add further comments on lifestyle changes because of attending the programmes. These included:

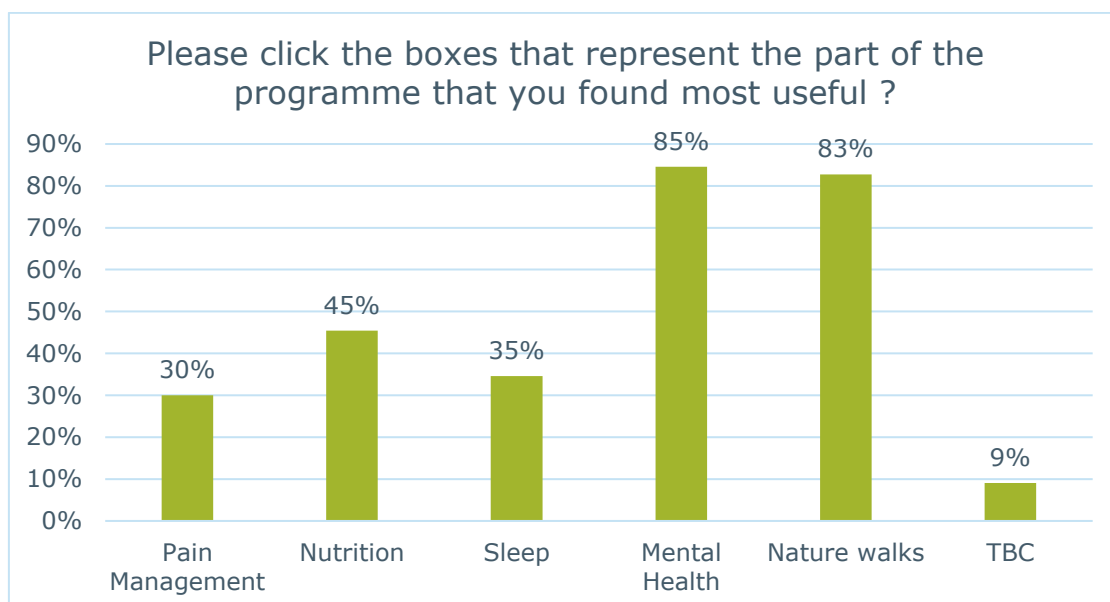
*"I have enjoyed the food demonstrations and tried to incorporate some of the recipes into my diet. I have felt more confident and enjoyed going out with my dog for walks in nature more."*

*"Each session was so interesting I wanted to learn more. It taught me that getting out helps with my anxiety. I also have made more time for me - as I care for my husband, and I devote a lot of time to him."*

*"I am no longer the couch potato I had been. I make a conscious effort to get out of bed before 9:00 am and go out for a walk, hail, rain or snow. I take the car less when I need to go somewhere".*

#### Areas of the programmes participants found most useful

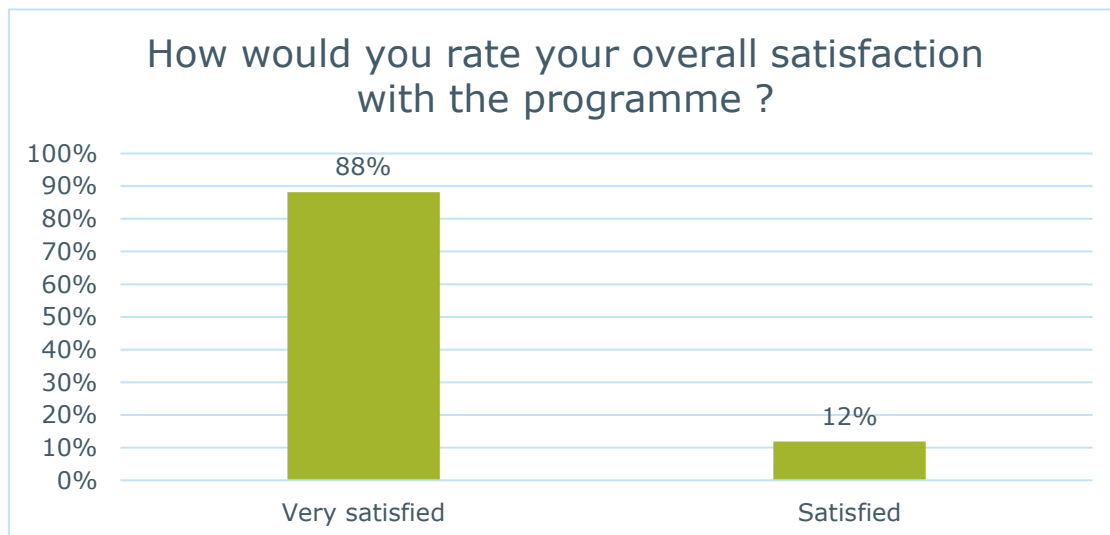
**4.32.** The post programme questionnaires sought information on areas of the programmes that participants found most useful. Participants were asked to respond to options on a pre-determined list and could select more than one option.



**4.33.** The chart above shows that the two areas of the programmes participants who completed questionnaires found most useful were the mental health section (85%) and the nature walks (83%).

**Overall satisfaction with the programmes**

**4.34.** The post programme questionnaires asked participants to rate their overall satisfaction with the programmes. Options ranged from very unsatisfied through to very satisfied.



**4.35.** The chart above shows that all participants who completed post programme questionnaires were very satisfied (88%) or satisfied (12%) with the programmes.

**4.36.** The post programme questionnaires also provided participants with an opportunity to add further comments on the programme. These included:

*"I have really enjoyed the topics covered and trying out new things and getting to know the people participating",*

*"Would highly recommend this programme. it has helped me so much and was so varied the sessions were really enjoyable",*

*"Very good programme, met new people and it give me a purpose to get up and go to every week",*

*"I felt like this programme was really beneficial on getting me out of the house each week".*

### **Summary of key themes in relation to overall impact of the programmes**

- Responses to questionnaires indicated that participants felt the programmes met or exceeded anticipated benefits in most areas.
- With regard to mood,
  - 99% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that the programmes made them feel cheerful and in good spirits
  - 93% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that the programmes made them feel calm and relaxed.
  - 74% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that the programmes made them feel active and vigorous.
- In terms of impact on fitness, lifestyle and community,
  - 65% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that they felt physically fitter after the programmes.
  - 88% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that they felt closer to their community after the programmes.
  - 96% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that they enjoyed spending time with new people by attending the programmes.
  - 61% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that they had made lifestyle changes since attending the programmes.
- The areas of the programmes participants who completed questionnaires found most useful were the mental health section (85%) and the nature walks (83%)
- All participants who completed post programme questionnaires were very satisfied (88%) or satisfied (12%) with the programmes.

## 5. Summary of Findings, Lessons Learned and Overall Conclusions

### Introduction

5.1. This section summarises the findings from our evaluation and the views of the project coordinators on lessons learned from taking part in the project. It also sets out our overall conclusion on the project.

### Project aims

5.2. Section 1 highlights that the key aims of the project include:

- A wide range of people will be involved
- People will have developed new skills
- People will have improved wellbeing
- Heritage will be in better condition

5.3. We have summarised our findings in relation to each of these aims below based on information contained in this report.

### A wide range of people will be involved

5.4. The quantitative information contained in Section 2 highlights that:

- 168 people completed the 7–8-month programmes with a high retention rate (78.5%).
- 68% of participants were female, 62% were aged 55+ and 64% were retired.
- The programmes were delivered by 10 different Healthy Living Centres (HLCs) and their chosen heritage partners across N. Ireland.
- Participants came from a range of sources including other schemes and programmes being run in HLCs, and through primary care and self-referral. Most participants were unlikely to have engaged significantly with heritage before attending the programmes.
- The approx. cost per participant who completed the programme was £1,215.

5.5. Based on the above, in our view it is reasonable to conclude that a wide range of people were involved in the project.

**People will have developed new skills**

- 5.6.** The participant case studies contained in Section 3 highlight examples of new skills and learning from the programmes attended. These include:
- Making butter (Case study 1)
  - Initiating a well-being plan and introducing stepped lifestyle changes (Case study 2)
  - Making time for self (Case study 3)
  - Improving social skills and learning about gardening, woodwork and different plants and animals (Case study 4)
  - Learning new skills in general (Case study 5)
- 5.7.** The feedback from HLCs and heritage partners contained in Section 3 also highlights learning for these organisations because of the project, including how to better utilise heritage assets.
- 5.8.** Section 5 highlights that post programme attendance 80% of those who completed questionnaires highlighted 'learning something new' to be a benefit from attending the programmes. This section also notes that 61% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that they had made lifestyle changes since attending the programmes.
- 5.9.** Based on the above, in our view it is reasonable to conclude that a people developed new skills by taking part in the project.

**People will have improved wellbeing**

- 5.10.** Section 2 notes that in the months before commencing the programmes:
- 57% of those who completed a pre-programme questionnaire reported experiencing anxiety,
  - 40% reported experiencing depression,
  - 40% social isolation, and
  - 27% mild to moderate covid effects.

Note: people could report more than one condition

- 5.11.** The participant case studies and feedback from HLC facilitators in Section 3 highlight that in general participants reported improved well-being from taking part in the programmes. The case studies also give specific examples.

- 5.12.** The health impact information at Section 4 shows that post programme attendance, participants who completed questionnaires indicated they spent longer taking part in physical activity, were more likely to take part in moderate activity and were less likely to feel severely or extremely anxious or depressed.
- 5.13.** The health impact information also highlights that responses to the Short (form) Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (SWEMWBS) and Well-being star monitoring tools indicate that those who completed questionnaires felt more positive post programme attendance.
- 5.14.** Section 4 also highlights that post programme attendance, 73% of those who completed questionnaires highlighted 'improving my well-being' as being a benefit from the programmes and demonstrates that many participants who completed questionnaires agreed that the programmes made them feel cheerful and in good spirits, calm and relaxed and active and vigorous.
- 5.15.** Based on the above, in our view it is reasonable to conclude that people have experienced improvements in well-being by participating in the project.

**Heritage will be in better condition**

- 5.16.** The feedback from facilitators at Section 3 notes that health facilitators reported becoming more aware of the contribution heritage assets and partners can make to their work and Heritage partners reported learning new ways to promote their facilities because of taking part in the programmes.
- 5.17.** The heritage impact information at Section 4 shows that post programme attendance, participants who completed questionnaires indicated in general, they had a better knowledge of heritage and were more likely to feel strongly about the importance of environmental heritage protection.
- 5.18.** It also notes that most of these participants indicated they had learned about the natural world and local history and heritage, felt closer to nature, and would be inclined to visit more heritage sites because of taking part in the programmes.
- 5.19.** Based on the above, whilst it is not possible to conclude that heritage will be in better condition because of the project, it is reasonable to conclude that people have a better knowledge of heritage and the importance of its protection and would be more likely to visit heritage sites after taking part in the project.

**Lessons Learned from taking part in the project**

**5.20.** We asked the project co-ordinators to identify lessons learned from the project that might be relevant to similar projects in the future. Their thoughts are summarised below:

- 1) Programme facilitators should be encouraged to increase the emphasis on natural heritage in programmes and provide educational opportunities for participants to learn how to protect our natural heritage.
- 2) Organisations participating in the project should be encouraged to form partnerships with a variety of environmental organisations to deliver nature-specific workshops to compliment the activities delivered by heritage partners.
- 3) Steps should be taken to acknowledge each participant’s contribution to heritage and the natural environment to encourage positive changes in behaviour.
- 4) Consultation should take place with local community support groups to increase participant diversity.
- 5) Connections should be explored with local Councils in participating areas to understand about initiatives for protecting the environment and addressing climate change and how to learn from and engage with these.

**Overall conclusions from the evaluation**

- a)** Having considered the above, in our view there is clear evidence that Heritage for Health has achieved the anticipated aims for the project. A wide range of people have been involved throughout N. Ireland and participants have reported developing new skills and experiencing better well-being. The project has provided participants with better knowledge of heritage and the importance of its protection and those who took part have indicated that they would be more likely to visit heritage sites post-programme attendance.
- b)** In our view, key factors contributing to the success of the project include:
- The funding provided by The National Lottery Heritage Fund.
  - The strategic partnership between HLCA and NIEL.
  - The local collaboration between HLCs and heritage partners and flexibility in programme design at a local level to meet the needs of those taking part.
  - The specific skills, knowledge, and expertise of HLCs and heritage partners meant that programme content was relevant, tailored, and interesting and people’s individual needs could be addressed.
  - Programme groups comprised people experiencing similar circumstances, and this encouraged peer support.
  - The programme content gave people relevant and interesting information, kept their attention, enabled them to learn and develop new skills and encouraged them to get outdoors and active together. This also contributed to a high retention rate for the project.
  - The programme length of several months was sufficient to build trust amongst those taking part and encourage positive changes in behaviours and lifestyle.
  - The dedicated project co-ordinators provided focus and support at a strategic programme level.
- c)** In our opinion, the content of this report provides evidence that the Heritage for Health project has had a positive impact on those who participated and that the overall project and the programmes delivered could be replicated or further developed in the future.

**CavanaghKelly**

**September 2024**

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