



Get Out Get Active- Bassetlaw

Returning to Activity- Walking Tennis



The Get Out Get Active (GOGA) project in Bassetlaw, Nottinghamshire is working to support those who are inactive or have a long-term health condition to get active by taking part in fun, safe and inclusive activities. GOGA aims to provide support to encourage greater activity in a genuinely inclusive environment, helping to build friendships, maintain health, increase independence, reduce stress, and boost self-esteem.



In Bassetlaw, GOGA will aim to introduce active recreation into a voluntary sector led health initiative which supports those with long term illness. The approach maximises the chance of securing full buy in from local health professionals but also helps Bassetlaw develop an approach which connects those with health conditions into local communities through integrated activity provision.

Paula Graham and Sarah Bagshaw the GOGA Coordinators in Bassetlaw had planned GOGA delivery for the year but due to the ever changing COVID- 19 pandemic they have had to adapt the original delivery of GOGA to support many individuals to be active at home during this time and slowly reintroduce the return of activity. Here we hear from Paula and Judith from the Bassetlaw Action Centre how the GOGA Walking Tennis sessions have got off the ground and are supporting them during this time.

Paula's GOGA story

My name is Paula Graham and I am the GOGA Development Officer for Bassetlaw. I started my role with GOGA in April 2020. Our initial focus of GOGA has changed significantly from delivery to concentrating efforts on the mapping of the region to establish what physical activity opportunities there are, what will be there when we emerge from lockdown and any gaps in provision for GOGA to support.

Over the last few months GOGA Bassetlaw has adapted to running the Staying Well Programme virtually and through continued communication and programme attendance envisages those taking part in the programme to naturally transition to become GOGA participants. Through GOGA all staff at the Action Centre have been busy calling existing clients (approximately 300) on a weekly basis talking about the



benefits of keeping active during lockdown. For those that have access to the internet they have been recommending different websites and for those that don't they have been posting gentle activities and exercises out to them, this has been followed up during weekly wellbeing calls to continue engagement.

As soon as Tennis became a permitted sport during lockdown, the plan was to start a Walking Tennis session at Retford Tennis Club. A group of 10 individuals were identified and all have attended every week adhering to social distancing guidance. There are 2 coaches one of which is provided by the club and the other is Sarah the GOGA Activities Officer, both have a group of 5 participants. To start the tennis club provided the rackets but as weeks have gone on people have enjoyed it so much, they have started to buy their own.

The impact this activity is having on this group of people is incredible, I participate in this myself having been diagnosed with Fibromyalgia and depression. At the start I was not doing any other activity apart from walking my dogs, I am now really enjoying the sessions and it feels good to be more active. I also now enjoy the occasional game of tennis with my son. Other ladies in the session say it is the highlight of their week and they really look forward to it, it is improving their mental health and that it is nice to get out and do something following lockdown. What really has an impact is that they feel they are learning the rules and techniques to play tennis rather than just hitting the ball.

GOGA is very different to our other programmes because most of our other projects are aimed at older people whereas our GOGA project is for anybody, it fits really well with our 'Staying Well Programme' which is a course for people with long term health conditions and our aim is to encourage individuals after the initial 6 weeks to continue into) an activity of their choice with the support of our GOGA Activities Officer.

Our ambition over the next 3 years is to make Bassetlaw become more active and encourage people to realise the importance of being active for both your body and brain. I also would like this project to become so successful that we can obtain funding to continue it and expand further.

Judith's GOGA story

My name is Judith Sinclair and I am 47 years old. I work for Bassetlaw Action Centre, the lead organisation for GOGA as the Finance Manager. Having previously been diagnosed with hemiplegic migraines, a single mum to two teenage boys I really struggle to find time for myself as I am constantly taking the boys to their clubs to ensure they lead an active lifestyle. Due to these commitments I have not been active at all in the last few years.

I have recently become involved with GOGA not just as the Finance Manager but also as a participant. I became involved in the new Walking Tennis sessions through Paula and wanting to support the team.

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Previously I would not have looked twice at an opportunity like this, I naively thought that walking tennis was just walking around a tennis court. Having been involved I love the fact that I am being taught by qualified instructors and we are learning all the rules and regulations of the game, as well as playing the game itself.

When starting the sessions, I did not know anybody apart from Paula, this did not matter at all and now the whole group has gelled and are on first name terms it's lovely. After our first training session had finished, I can honestly say I did not want to go home, I just wanted to keep on playing.

Never once have I ever felt uncomfortable or inadequate and the tips and support from the coaches is just amazing. I love the start time of the group as it fits in with my children and my work. I enjoy getting out in the fresh air and having some adult company for a change, it is most definitely benefiting me both physically and mentally. I feel more awake and livelier with more get up and go for myself.

My advice to others wanting to get active would be step out of your comfort zone and give it a go. Everyone is so welcoming and friendly. This is an activity for all ages and abilities, and you are never judged. Enjoy!

