

Opening the door to all

At present, too many disabled people living in Gwynedd do not get to take part in any sport or physical activity because there is simply not enough opportunities open to them.

The Community Club Challenge event - which was funded by the Health Challenge Gwynedd Alliance - was held earlier this year with the aim of making Gwynedd a more active and inclusive county.

The goal for the day was to encourage disabled people to try something new - from sailing and climbing to walking tours or archery and shooting. Since then, the challenge for sports and community clubs has been to create positive opportunities for disabled people to join in a new activity and to achieve their sporting potential.

In September 2009 the main challenge day was held for school children from across the county. This was followed by a number of sessions at individual clubs, which were encouraged to open their doors to people of all abilities to give a new sport or activity a go.

The activities held were for visually impaired, wheelchair users, and pan disabilities (all disability groups). Some activities were disability specific opportunities whilst others were integrated opportunities within existing mainstream sports clubs.

Marcus Politis, Disability Sport Wales Development Officer for Gwynedd, said:

"Our challenge is to ensure that people with disabilities, of all ages, have access to activities of their choice at a level of their choice. For mainstream sports clubs and associations, this can mean simply changing their attitudes and opening up to be more inclusive. Or it can mean training volunteers and buying new equipment so that people of different abilities can join in.

"We all need to ensure that sport is enjoyable and meaningful to all and we have a responsibility to include everyone."

If you're interested in trying your hand at a new sport, want to volunteer, or you're already involved with a sports club or association and want to be more inclusive, contact Marcus Politis, Disability Sport Wales Development Officer for Gwynedd on (01758) 704109 or 07766 505320; e-mail marcuspolitis@gwynedd.gov.uk

For more information about opportunities in your area, or about Clubmark, visit www.disability-sport-wales.org



The first sports club in Gwynedd to be awarded the Clubmark standard - Disability Sports Wales' benchmark quality standard - is the Bangoroo Trampoline Club. To achieve this, a club must demonstrate recognized protection checks and policies. In return, a Clubmark association receives support for grants and guidance in producing development plans.

All of Gwynedd Council's 150 leisure centre staff will have had disability equality training as part of their regular on-going development by 2010.

Gwynedd's the place to be

Over the last few years, disability sports take-up in Gwynedd has gone through the roof. It has grown from 1,005 sessions attended in 2004 to a staggering 8,700 in 2008 and the county is on target to reach 20,000 in 2009.

Through various grants and sponsorship deals, £40,000 will have been invested in disability sports in Gwynedd during 2009 - probably the largest investment in any Welsh local authority.

Specialist equipment has been purchased including

rifles and scat training systems for the Paralympics sport of target shooting for wheelchair users. During February a VI shooting with acoustics initiative is to be launched - the first club of its kind in North Wales.

Marcus Politis, Disability Sport Wales Development Officer for Gwynedd, said:

"There are now 23 community based initiatives based throughout the county, and the picture is improving year by year."

Supporting Gwynedd's carers

The priceless care of a family member, friend or neighbour means that hundreds of vulnerable people across Gwynedd are able to continue living in their own homes.

The Gwynedd Health Improvement Alliance, in partnership with Carers' Outreach, has been holding training sessions with volunteer carers to help them to look after themselves and the people they care for.

Three healthy eating, nutrition and exercise days were held recently at Talysarn, Blaenau Ffestiniog and Pwllheli.

The event was aimed at helping carers to learn about the importance of healthy eating and nutrition through cooking demonstrations and tasting sessions. They were also shown it is achievable on a tight budget.

Nordic Walking - the fastest growing form of fitness activity in the world - was also on the menu. This is aimed at encouraging carers to take on exercise to help them look after themselves, so that they are best equipped for their demanding role.

Lyn Hughes from the Gwynedd Carers Outreach Service said:

"This was a great opportunity for carers to come together for a day to learn something new as well as to socialise.

"Organising this sort of event is our way of helping carers to look after themselves, as they carry out an invaluable service not only to the people they care for, but also the wider community.

"We hope to organise further health and wellbeing sessions in the future."

For more information contact Gwynedd Council's Health and Wellbeing Facilitator Llinos Owen on (01286) 679731 or e-mail: llinosannowen@gwynedd.gov.uk



■ Volunteer carers get to grips with the cooking demonstration



■ Volunteer carers enjoy the end result



■ The carers put their best foot forward

Good health to the MEND programme

The building blocks for a healthy and happy life includes a healthy diet and plenty of exercise and a scheme open to Gwynedd families aims to instil good habits in children early.

The way we live nowadays means many of us, especially children, have fallen into unhelpful habits but the MEND programme is a fun way for families to improve their lifestyle.

The programme has been developed by child health experts and is aimed at children aged seven to 13 whose weight is above the healthy range for their age and height.

MEND is free to join. Participants can be referred by a doctor or other health professional or self-referred.

Children and parents will join in 20 two-hour sessions over 10 weeks.

Ceinwen Stokes, MEND coordinator for Gwynedd and Môn, said: "These days, modern life can mean that we're a lot less active. With so many opportunities to watch TV or play computer games, and with so much convenience and fast food available, we don't move about as much, or eat as well as we used to.

"An ever increasing number of children could grow up to be over-weight. This can cause life-threatening diseases like cancer, diabetes and heart disease.

"Taking part in the MEND programme means that children and their families learn about nutrition and how to eat a balanced diet. We also encourage them

to be more active and they learn that keeping fit can be fun."

What happens at MEND?

- Learning that physical activity can be enjoyable through games and fun things to do.
- Activities aimed at improving children's behaviour and self-confidence.
- Demonstrations, games and tips on foods, food labelling and portion sizes.
- A chance to try new foods.

There are MEND programmes starting in your area in January 2010. For more information, and to find out how to join the scheme, contact 01248 384103 or 0800 230 0263. www.mendprogramme.org