



## Seriously Social About the Community Award

**Programme Title:** Power Our Minds (POM) Exercise Programme

**Organisation:** Total Wellbeing Luton (Total Wellbeing Luton is hosted by Active Luton and is a service funded by Public Health).

**Overview:** The Power Our Minds (POM) Exercise Programme is a vital initiative within the Total Wellbeing Luton service which Active Luton host and is delivered at all centres in the community. The programme is dedicated to supporting Luton residents from all walks of life, who are struggling with poor mental health from the age of 16. POM specifically supports those grappling with anxiety, low mood, PTSD, loneliness, and social isolation. The programme reflects a holistic approach seamlessly integrating physical activity with emotional health support and plays a crucial role in improving the wellbeing of Luton's diverse population, ensuring that participants can come together and regain control over their lives and wellbeing. Some examples include tailored exercise programmes, 1:1 support, group activities, social events and much more.

### Programme Highlights:

- **Deep Integration with Luton's Community Partners:** POM thrives on strong collaborations with local organisations, including ELFT, MIND, Primary Care Networks (PCNs), Luton Hospital, Housing Associations, Faith Centres, and IAPT. These partnerships ensure that our programme is deeply embedded within the framework of Luton's community, reaching less engaged communities. Through outreach, we offer workshops, group exercise, trial and taster sessions within Faith Centres and even specialised support within the inpatient wards at the Hospital, to name a few. This collaborative approach allows us to meet the unique needs of each participant, drawing on the strengths of our local partners and offering exit routes as a wider community approach.
- **Personalised Support:** POM provides 1:1 personalised guidance based at our Active Luton Centres from mental health exercise specialists, offering tailored support that addresses individual needs.
- **Group Activities:** Our group activities, such as Tai Chi, Yoga, dance, and outdoor walking groups, are not just about improving physical health, they are about celebrating Luton's diverse community. These sessions help improve social interaction, encourage cultural exchange, and strengthen community bonds, helping participants build supportive networks and a sense of belonging within Luton.
- **Mental Health Integration:** Our programme is uniquely designed to bridge the gap between physical and mental health. Alongside exercise, participants can also benefit

from our Talking Therapy team, which provides both 1:1 and group sessions focused on managing symptoms of anxiety and depression. Our connections with local partners ensure that this support is relevant and accessible, addressing both the mental and physical aspects of health in a way that resonates with our community.

- **Access to Facilities:** Active Luton are committed to making sustained physical activity accessible to everyone in Luton. Clients on the Total Wellbeing programme receive heavily discounted access to gym facilities, swimming pools, and fitness classes for up to a year, making sustained physical activity both accessible and affordable.

**Impact on the Community:** The POM Exercise Programme has made a huge difference to the lives of over 2,000 individuals in Luton since it began. By delivering a holistic approach that addresses both mind and body, we have seen significant improvements in the mental and physical health of our participants. Some key outcomes of our programmes for people with health conditions include:

- **Increased Physical Activity:** Over 80% of our clients report increased levels of physical activity.
- **Improved Emotional Health:** More than 85% of our clients experience improved emotional wellbeing after joining the programme, reflecting the positive impact of our community focused approach.
- **Reduced GP and A&E Visits:** Over 75% of our clients have reduced their visits to GPs and A&E, demonstrating the programme's effectiveness in promoting long term health and reducing pressure on Luton's healthcare services.

### **Challenges and solutions**

Engaging individuals with mental health issues in the programme has had its challenges, particularly for those facing severe anxiety, depression, or social isolation. Overcoming the stigma associated with seeking support required targeted outreach and strategies. To address this, we reframed "mental health" as "emotional health," introduced anonymous webinars and workshops, and integrated group activities with other health focused programmes to create a more inclusive environment.

To further break down barriers, we actively engaged with diverse communities, offering on-the-ground support to build trust and rapport. This approach encourages participants to feel more comfortable before transitioning into the Active Luton Centres, where they can integrate with other groups and communities, resulting in a sense of belonging and support.

### **Feedback**

We receive a huge amount of feedback from our clients, here is one below to show how we change the lives of Luton community:

*"This programme has changed my life. I have been seriously affected by personal events so therefore have had depression/anxiety which had taken over my life. Total Wellbeing has helped so much and I really appreciate the support they have given me. I am now going to the gym regularly and mixing with other people and getting out of the house which has helped me so*

*much. I am still seeing a counsellor but I am not crying as much and can think more clearly too which helps a lot”.*

**Why POM Deserves Recognition:**

The Power Our Minds Exercise Programme is not just a health initiative, it is a community movement that represents the spirit of Luton. By combining physical exercise with expert mental health support, and by working closely with local organisations, POM has created a sustainable path to wellbeing that is both innovative and deeply rooted in the needs of our community.

Our commitment to the Luton community is unwavering. We believe that by helping individuals lead healthier, happier lives, POM not only improves personal wellbeing but also strengthens the social aspect of Luton. This dedication to the community makes POM a deserving candidate for the Community Award for Best Project.

Thank you for considering our application. We are excited about the opportunity to continue making a difference in the Luton community.