



THE AGE OF ACTIVITY

2019 REPORT

David Lloyd
— CLUBS —

INTRODUCTION

By 2030, the number of people in the UK aged 60 years or over is predicted to increase to 20 million, up 31% compared to today's figure of 15.3 million. By 2040, nearly one in four people (24.2%) will be aged 65 or over; one in seven of us will be aged over 75. These are just some of the predictions made in ukactive's Reimagining Ageing report, published in September 2018.

Sir Muir Gray, former Chief Knowledge Officer of the NHS, is adamant that many of the health problems experienced by older people are not directly caused by ageing, but rather by loss of fitness – especially among people who also have long-term conditions – and that as such, they can be prevented, delayed and most importantly treated by being active.

Yet figures from the Reimagining Ageing report show just how reluctant older generations are to embrace all of this.

Approximately 38% of people aged over 55 are classed as inactive – failing to achieve 30 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity each week.

That figure rises to 48% among people aged 75-84 years, and 71% of those aged over 85 years. This compares to a population average of less than a third of people being inactive.

This is reflected in recent research by David Lloyd Clubs, which surveyed 3,000 adults aged 55 years and over. In this study – known as the Age of Activity Report – 75% of participants considered themselves 'very' or 'somewhat' active. And yet the focus was on activities, such as walking (84% of exercisers), that were unlikely to really get the heart pumping and meet the 'vigorous' or even 'moderate' intensity required.



HELPING MEMBERS AGE WELL

“The whole ethos of David Lloyd Clubs is to be welcoming to all ages. It’s something which we pride ourselves on, and something we very deliberately nurture and promote across all of our clubs, whether it’s through the diverse programming we offer, the way we select our teams, or the wonderful social aspect of our clubs.

As a result, where many operators have a skew towards younger generations, our membership truly does span the full age range. As of the end of February 2019, over 18% of our membership base was over the age of 55 years – a figure that has grown by 10% over the last 12 months alone. Given the wide range of health benefits that being active can bring, especially as we age, we are proud of the role our clubs are already playing in helping people age well.

But of course, we can always do more.

Inspired by ukactive’s Reimagining Ageing report, and specifically its call to train a world-class workforce with the skills to engage and support older people – older trainers who are able to inspire their peers – David Lloyd Clubs has made a new commitment. David Lloyd Clubs is committed to having one Fitness Trainer aged 55 or over per club on average, by the end of 2022.

As our population continues to age, we believe it’s our social duty to do this. We hope the rest of the sector will follow our example.”

Glenn Earlam, Chief Executive Officer



A SHIFT IN MINDSET

In David Lloyd Clubs' recent Age of Activity Report, 32% of non-exercisers aged 55 and over said their lack of activity was due to a medical reason that prevented them from exercising. While in some cases this may be true, it also highlights the significant challenge of misinformation.

"It's clear that the public and many health service professionals are ignorant or muddled about the effects of ageing, loss of fitness and disease, and the great potential for prevention and treatment," says public health expert Sir Muir Gray, former Chief Knowledge Officer of the NHS.

"Most people think what older people need is for more to be done for them. They assume that the onset of disease indicates the need for more 'care' and less activity - whereas, scientifically, the opposite is what's required."



CREATING ROLE MODELS

Reimagining Ageing notes that more support is required to fully equip exercise professionals with the tools to engage older people, and their unique and varied needs.

“88% of physical activity sector employers currently believe that exercise professionals could be better supported to work with older adults, and that a lack of communication and behavioural change skills is one of the key skills gaps.”

It is, at its heart, about providing relatable role models for all ages. It’s about employing people who understand first-hand the challenges faced by older members. And this has led Sir Muir Gray, former Chief Knowledge Officer of the NHS, to call for aged 55 or over – “by which I also mean over-65s and over-75s,” he clarifies – to train as Fitness Trainers.

“We need an army of older fitness instructors to lead the way, showing their peers how you can live not just longer but better, by being more physically active.”

David Lloyd Clubs has therefore made a commitment; by the end of 2022 there will be at least one Fitness Trainer, on average, aged 55 or over working in each and every one of its 100+ clubs.



Case study

THE POWER OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Dave Evans, 73, is one of a select group of older Fitness Trainers already working for David Lloyd Clubs.

"I think it's a great idea to increase the number of older Fitness Trainers in the clubs," he says. "Younger team members don't always understand the mindset of over-50s coming to a gym for the first time - it's a big step for them - so older members often feel more comfortable training with someone their own age. Some of my clients are only doing personal training for the first time in their 80s!

"And there are huge benefits for the Fitness Trainers too. I find it a great way of socialising: I really enjoy meeting people and getting to know them. I honestly couldn't imagine myself retired. I think I'd be dead in six months!"

He continues: "It also makes commercial sense: I believe that with age comes a greater sense of responsibility. Just look at the supermarkets - they've worked this out, taking on people to work in their stores who've retired from their full-time careers. These older individuals don't call in sick, they aren't late. This is a very reliable workforce."



With age comes insight

Dave has worked for David Lloyd Cheshire Oaks for 23 years, starting out in the gym team before personal training was really offered. He was then offered the opportunity to train as a Fitness Trainer 10 years ago, paid for by the business, and has never looked back.

Admittedly Dave is unusual for his age: having done martial arts for 52 years, he is now one of Europe's most highly qualified practitioners, with 23 black belts across four martial arts and a 24th on the cards.

However, far from these high levels of fitness and attainment being a barrier to empathising with 'normal' members, Dave believes it's given him invaluable knowledge and personal insight into some of the challenges others might face, especially as they age.

Dave is also qualified in sports massage and works as a therapist at David Lloyd Clubs. This is invaluable for his clients, to whom all of his services are available during their sessions with him. He explains: "One of my clients is aged 87 and has lots of issues - back problems and so on. If he comes in to see me and he's in pain, I'll spend the time massaging him. Otherwise, we'll do some light work on the bike and he leaves feeling good. That's what it's all about: exercise makes people feel positive about themselves."

Don't sell, help

His sports massage offering is also an important route in to personal training, especially for older members who might not otherwise consider it.

"People come to me with an injury and I treat them, but then I show them a few exercises that could help them and it goes from there. I find out their problems, offer a solution and personal training effectively sells itself."

"That's particularly important with an older audience. You can't actively 'sell' to them. They just don't respond to that. You have to chat to them, find out about them, their interests, their gym habits. Understand what their challenges are and how you can help them.

"You also have to understand that, for older clients, the social side of personal training is hugely important. You're giving them something to get up for in the morning. You're giving them a sense of pride in themselves. People are often lonely and want to chat, so I'll regularly sit and have a coffee or lunch with them. That's just part of the job. It's certainly a lot more than just getting people fit."

With this approach it's no surprise that, although Dave's clients range from age 12 all the way up to 80+ years old, around 70% are over the age of 55.

THE POWER OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

A wealth of science shows that, once older people are engaged in regular physical activity, they are likely to benefit from a wide range of positive outcomes.

Even better, new research suggests it really is never too late to start. Published in the journal *Jama Network Open*, the study involved more than 300,000 Americans aged 50–71. In the mid-1990s, they were asked to complete a questionnaire estimating their levels of moderate to vigorous leisure exercise at different stages of their life. Researchers then used national records to track who died in the years up to the end of 2011, and from what.

Predictably, those who were active into middle age had a lower risk of death than those who had never been active, and this health-based message is starting to cut through the noise.

In David Lloyd Clubs' Age of Activity study, 69% of those who exercised said they did so "to be healthy"; 45% felt better health was also the main impact exercise had had on their life, with 21% saying it helped their medical condition.



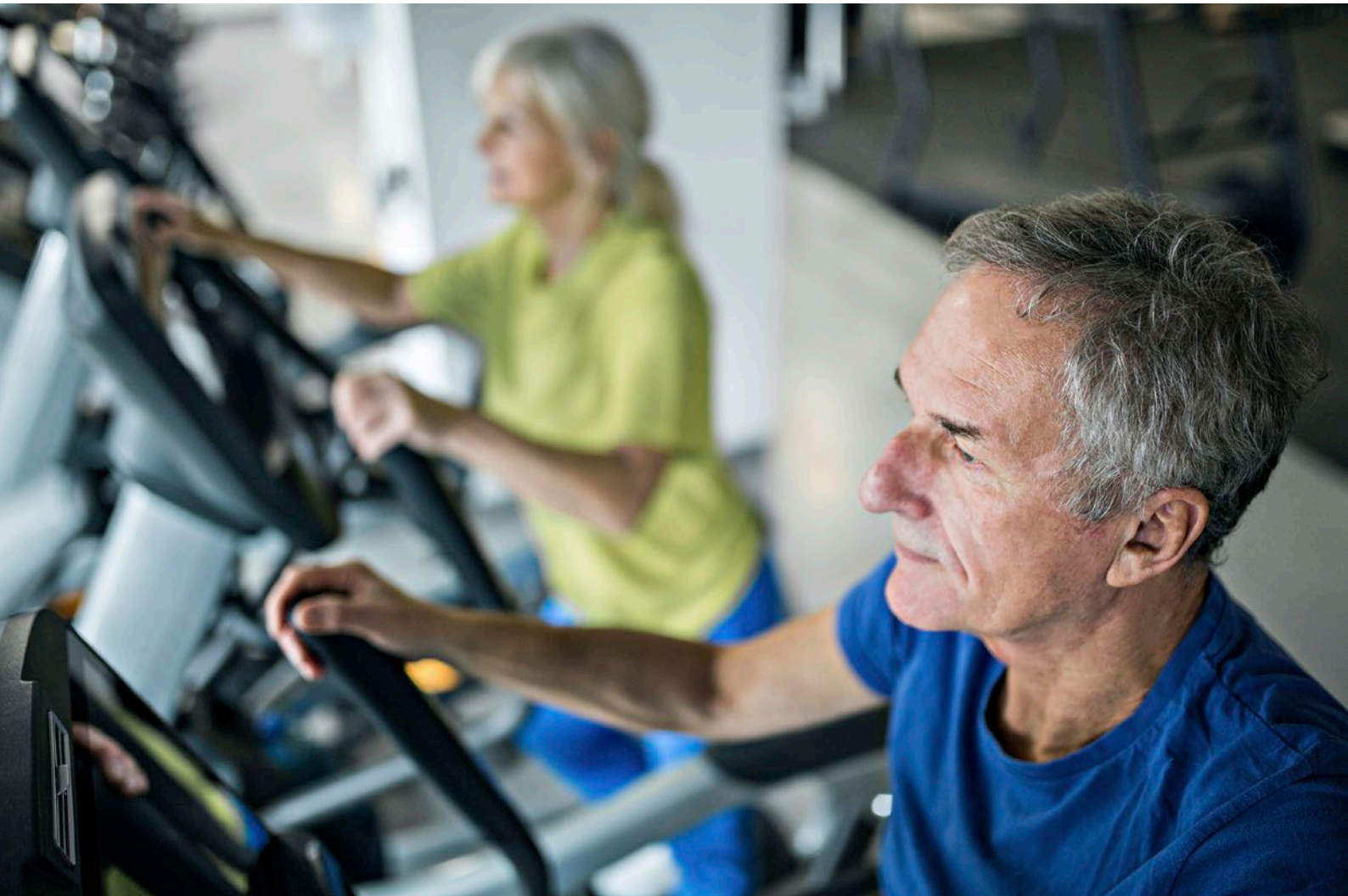
BRAIN HEALTH

Dr John Ratey is an associate Clinical Professor of Psychiatry at Harvard Medical School, and one of the world's pre-eminent experts on the positive impact of exercise on the brain - including cognitive decline.

"Exercise has a proven role in preventing cognitive decline," he says. "It can keep our brain's cognitive abilities alive as we age, and research even suggests it can cut the incidence of Alzheimer's disease in half. Indeed, exercise has been shown to push back cognitive decline by as much as 10-15 years."

But it's not only through this direct impact that exercise benefits the brain. Its role in helping people manage their weight also has a clear link to maintaining brain function, as Ratey explains:

"We know that the fat content in the body is negatively correlated with people's cognitive performance. A lot of studies are showing that, as early as childhood and throughout adulthood, obesity begins to kill brain cells."



COMBATting LONELINESS

In 2014, the charity Age UK found that 41% of Britons over the age of 65 referenced the TV or a pet as their main source of company, and the situation is only getting worse as the population ages. Age UK is now predicting that the number of over-50s experiencing loneliness will reach 2 million by 2025/6, up from around 1.4 million in 2016/7 – an increase of 49% in the space of 10 years.

Collectively, this is having a hugely negative impact on people's health and mental wellbeing. In data released by the Department of Health, 89% of older adults who reported hardly ever feeling lonely also reported high levels of life satisfaction, compared with 38% of older adults who reported feeling lonely often. So, what's the solution to this loneliness epidemic?

Physical activity certainly has a role to play; simply being active has been shown to be highly beneficial for mental health. Published in 2017, an 11-year study of 33,908 adults found that 12% of the cases of depression could have been prevented if participants had taken part in just one hour of physical activity each week; these mental health benefits were experienced regardless of age or gender.

Meanwhile, 2014 data from the Department of Health highlighted longitudinal research that showed a higher incidence of depression among sedentary versus active individuals (33% compared with 12%). And in David Lloyd Clubs' Age of Activity Report, 29% of exercisers said the main benefit of activity was the way it made them feel "more positive".

But the biggest impact comes when physical activity opportunities are combined with a sense of community – and this is why health clubs are ideal hubs to tackle loneliness. Alex Smith, Founder of The Cares Family – an organisation set up specifically to combat loneliness in our cities – sums it up:

"The opportunity for activity is key in keeping people healthy, but perhaps more important still is the interactivity – people being with people, sharing experiences and feeling part of a community at a time of rapid change."



MANAGING THE MENOPAUSE

The symptoms of the menopause are a burden for many women; for some individuals, symptoms can be so severe that quality of life is reduced and day-to-day tasks become a struggle. Yet relatively few treatment options are available.

Good news, then, that a small but growing body of research suggests that exercise can help manage, and lessen, the symptoms of menopause.

One small-scale UK study, conducted by Liverpool John Moores University, divided a group of previously inactive menopausal women, average age 52, into active and sedentary groups. The active group took part in a four-month, gym-based cardio exercise programme; the others carried on sedentary life as normal.

By the end of the four months, the active group were experiencing significantly fewer hot flushes, falling from 64 to 23 a week on average. These women also said the flushes they still got felt two-thirds less severe than previously.

The benefits of exercise for menopausal and post-menopausal women don't end there either. Being active can also help this group manage their weight and improve bone density – both of which become far more of an issue after the menopause – as well as helping prevent other diseases.

Marie Graham, Group Exercise Product Development Manager at David Lloyd Clubs, adds:

“During and after the menopause, due to the decrease in oestrogen levels, women are at higher risk of heart disease and osteoporosis; weight-bearing and strength-based training can help keep joints mobile, improve bone density and increase muscle mass.

“Increased muscle mass accelerates the metabolism and helps fight the risk of weight gain associated with menopause.”



STAYING STRONG

Frailty among older adults is a growing problem. It can affect people's ability to carry out everyday activities, have a negative impact on quality of life and increase the risk of other health problems.

Contributing factors include sarcopenia: the loss of muscle mass and strength as we age. As a result, NHS guidelines recommend that – alongside regular cardiovascular exercise – adults over the age of 65 years should undertake strength training at least twice a week. This should involve working all the major muscle groups (legs, hips, back, abdomen, chest, shoulders and arms) to build muscle strength and muscle mass and preserve bone density – and with it, independence and vitality as we age.

“There is lots of research to support the benefits of older adults participating not only in regular cardiovascular exercise, but also strength training at least twice a week,” says David Lloyd Clubs’ Marie Graham.

“After the age of 60, we lose approximately 3% of our muscle mass and associated strength every year. Strength training not only helps combat this, but also slows down the ageing process, making us feel younger, reducing the risk of injuries, and increasing strength and mobility – which, in turn, improves daily movement patterns, independence and quality of life.

“Strength training can also improve bone density and combat the risk of post-menopausal osteoporosis.”

And this rationale is already gaining traction among an older audience, with 42% of active respondents in David Lloyd Clubs’ Age of Activity Report saying they exercised “to keep muscles strong” and 38% “to keep bones strong”. But there is more to do to further drive awareness of these benefits.

“Strength training should be the core of any fitness programme for over-50s,” confirms celebrity Fitness Trainer Mark Anthony.

“Proper programming is key. The objective must be to produce lean muscle mass and avoid injury. For best results, opt for super-slow repetitions and ensure adequate rest in between strength-based workouts: seven days’ rest is advisable.”



NUTRITION

“While regular weight-bearing and strength-based training is hugely important in combating a reduction in muscle mass and strength as we age, this must be supported by an increased intake in protein-rich foods,” confirms David Lloyd Clubs’ Marie Graham.

“As we age, we tend to eat less protein, whether that’s due to a loss of appetite, potential dental issues or even the financial cost of protein-rich food, especially when catering for one. This can accelerate the ageing process, lowering the body’s ability to fight infection or recover from illness.”

“With a reduction in muscle mass and strength also come lower bone density, reduced strength and mobility, all of which may result in injury or a loss of independence.”

“While there is no research to suggest eating more protein will stop the ageing process, there is lots of research to suggest maintaining the recommended daily intake of protein – 0.8 grams per kg of body weight per day – along with regular weight-bearing and strength training will stabilise a healthy muscle mass, improve strength and mobility and sustain daily functional movement and independence.”



BOOSTING THE IMMUNE SYSTEM

A study published in 2018 in the journal *Aging Cell* found that doing a lot of exercise in older age can boost the immune system, and with it protect individuals against infections such as flu and conditions such as rheumatoid arthritis.

The researchers studied 125 long-distance cyclists, aged 55–79 years, who had cycled for much of their lives. Specifically, they were looking at levels of T-cells in their blood, which help the immune system respond to new infections.

Typically, the immune system declines by 2–3% a year from our 20s. However, in spite of their age, these cyclists had the same levels of T-cells in their blood as 20-year-olds who weren't regularly active, and significantly higher levels than inactive older adults. They also maintained their muscle mass and strength and did not see an increase in body fat – all of which are commonly associated with ageing.

The even better news, especially if you haven't been a cycling enthusiast all your life, comes from Steve Harridge, co-author of the report and Professor of Physiology at King's College London: "You don't need to be a competitive athlete to reap the benefits, or be an endurance cyclist. Anything that gets you moving and a little bit out of puff will help."



PREVENTING CHRONIC DISEASE

Extensive research highlights the role of exercise in preventing a number of diseases, from heart disease to type 2 diabetes and even some cancers. Indeed, data from the World Health Organisation indicates that “the failure to enjoy adequate levels of physical activity increases the risk of cancer, heart disease, stroke and diabetes by 20–30% and shortens lifespan by three to five years”.

As public health expert Sir Muir Gray, former Chief Knowledge Officer of the NHS, notes: “It’s now recognised that inactivity is a major preventable cause of our modern epidemics, where cancer, heart disease and type 2 diabetes – as well as frailty and dementia, which are perhaps even more feared than cancer – have replaced cholera and typhoid.

“Furthermore, we now know not only that activity can prevent many common diseases, but also that it can transform their treatment. It is – in the words of the Academy Medical Royal Colleges – ‘the miracle cure’ and it’s been agreed that the NHS needs to promote activity therapy alongside drug therapy, operative therapy and psychological therapy.”

“Of the 15 million people with long-term health conditions in the UK, about three million receive rehabilitation from highly skilled professionals.”

“However, the remaining 12 million are simply given a pill, or a psychological intervention or some combination of the two. What’s clear now is that all these people need activity therapy.”

Crucially, obesity is also a contributing factor in many of these diseases – indeed, as Tam Fry, Chair at the National Obesity Forum observes, “obesity is a disease in itself” – and here, too, physical activity has an important role to play.



SLOWING AGEING

Research shows the secret to staying young could simply be exercising on a regular basis and adopting healthy lifestyle habits – and it isn't just a case of looking younger. Our body, at a fundamental cellular level, will actually be younger.

At the heart of this lies the science of telomeres: caps at the ends of our chromosomes which prevent them from fraying as our cells replicate. As a cell ages, its telomeres become shorter; when they fall below a certain length, the cell can no longer divide and it dies. It's this cell loss that causes ageing in the body.

David Lloyd Clubs members can use Boditrax scanners that tell you how 'old' your body is today – but the main point to understand is this: the human body can actually 'be' younger than its chronological age if you look after it well, with further lifestyle improvements leading to further reductions in biological age.

Those improvements aren't just to do with exercise, but also things like nutrition, stress management and sleep quality – all things that health club operators can provide advice on, and in many cases that being physically active can positively contribute to.



Case study

ACTIVE AGEING AT DAVID LLOYD CLUBS

In David Lloyd Clubs' recent Age of Activity Report, 22% of those surveyed had never trained with a Fitness Trainer. Yet 24% of inactive respondents said their main reason for not exercising was lack of motivation; 31% felt they had insufficient knowledge about exercise to start doing it; and 12% said they would exercise if they felt more confident in their abilities – all things a Fitness Trainer can help with.

"At the age of 65, I'd noticed that my body was beginning to stiffen, to slow up. So I took what to me seemed a radical step: I decided to join a gym to see if, through exercise, I could stave off the ageing process for a while.

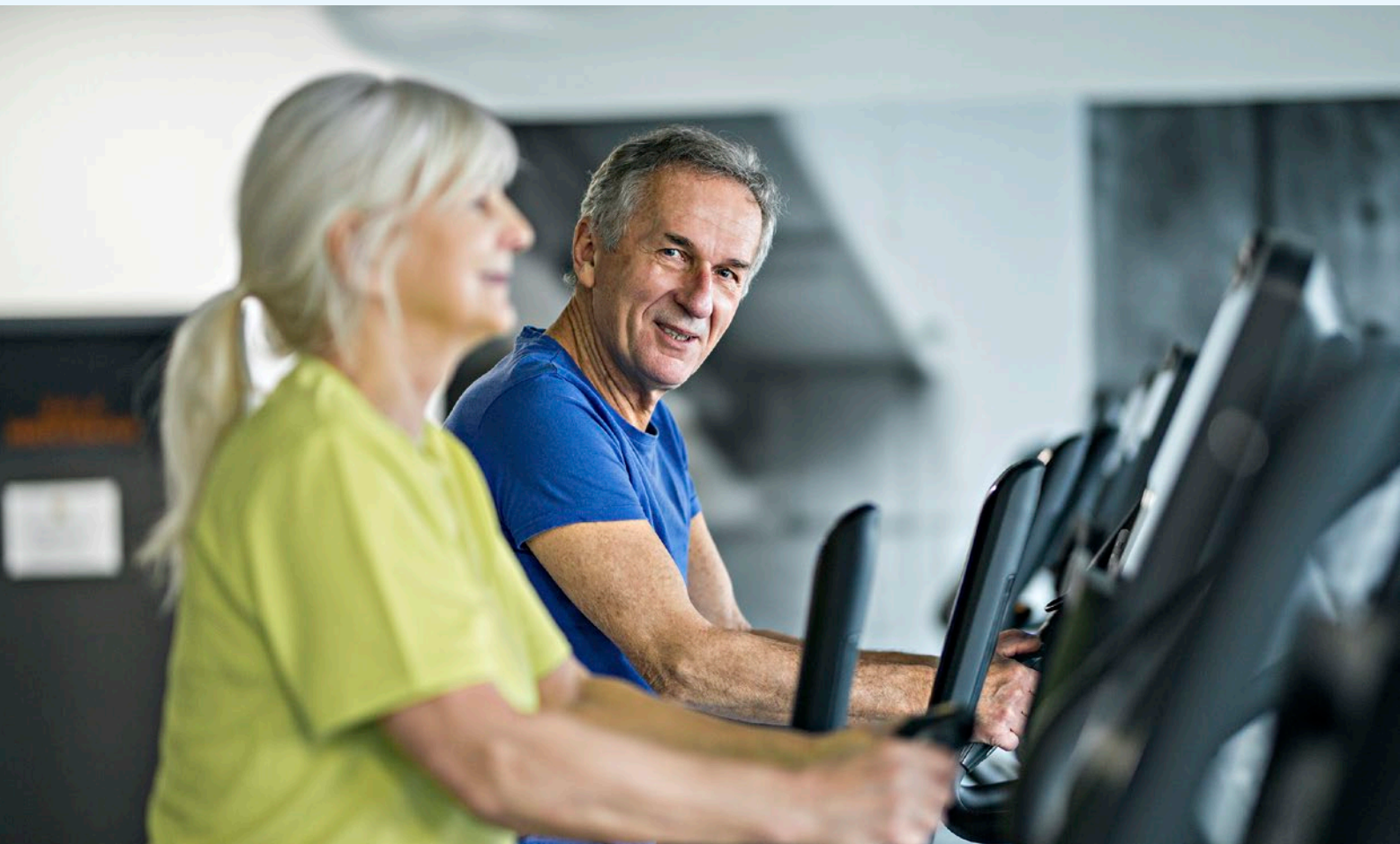
I went online and booked a meeting at David Lloyd Edinburgh Corstorphine, about a 25-minute drive from my home. It was there I met the woman who would ultimately become my Fitness Trainer. She had an irrepressible personality and an infectious enthusiasm for her world: the world of physical fitness and health. I signed up there and then.

Having started out not knowing what to expect, I was (and continue to be) amazed at the depth of knowledge she brings to her discipline, by which I mean her encyclopaedic understanding of the physiology of the body in general and of muscles in particular. She is able to analyse any pain or ache and suggest effective treatments.

I recall, at an early session, being asked to demonstrate how many press-ups I could do. I tried. Answer: none. "Don't worry", she said "it'll come." And come it did, as I can now knock off 10 press-ups with ease. Well, relative ease!

I look forward to my training sessions and always leave the gym tired – sometimes exhausted – but happy. I've entered my 68th year lighter, stronger and fitter than I have been for many years."

Joseph Giacopazzi, David Lloyd Clubs member, Edinburgh Corstorphine



A SOCIAL SCENE

Equally important at David Lloyd Clubs is the social aspect that's present in every club. "David Lloyd Clubs cater for both the exercise experience – what I like to call 'movement nutrition' – and the sociable aspect that older members in particular tend to seek out," confirms Alastair Crew, David Lloyd Clubs' Head Trainer Fitness Product and Studio.

That social aspect may simply involve relaxing in the café clubrooms with friends after class, but as Michelle Dand, Head of Fitness and Programming for David Lloyd Clubs, explains:

"Each club also leads its own social and community agenda, and there are so many examples of great initiatives across the group – from bridge clubs and walking groups, to quiz nights, social squash and tennis events."

"Tennis is hugely beneficial to older members," adds David Lloyd Clubs' Group Racquets Manager David Bulgin. "It isn't just about the physical benefits, although these are extensive: improved flexibility, balance and co-ordination, often resulting in fewer falls; enhanced brain function as the game requires creativity and tactical thinking, which keeps our brains active; better bone health as it's a weight-bearing form of exercise; and a reduced risk of heart disease thanks to the cardiovascular element."



Case study

PIGEON-HOLE AT YOUR PERIL!

But while data from David Lloyd Clubs shows that mind-body and aqua aerobics classes tend to be particularly popular among older members at its clubs, of course not all older members fit that mould.

Within the broad age range that falls under the 55+ umbrella, there are individuals who debunk all the myths around the types of activity older people 'should' do. Forget lower impact options – they're out there doing the same classes as people 30 years their junior.

Peter Thorburn, a 76-year-old member of David Lloyd Derby, is a great example of exactly this. He tells his story...

"I started running at the age of 50 and did my first marathon when I was 52. I've since done 56 marathons, logging a personal best of three hours and 27 minutes. That was back in 1997; by the time I did my final marathon seven years later, at the age of 63, my time had gone up to about six-and-a-half hours. I walked a lot of it and felt very breathless.

"I went to see a doctor and, after a number of tests, they found a problem with my heart, so I had a heart operation. This was in 2004, by which point I was a member of David Lloyd Derby – my wife and I joined the club 16 years ago. For the first couple of months after my operation, I just used to go for a walk by the canal while my wife did her aqua classes, but after two months I felt ready to resume full membership.

"I had to do battle with my wife, who kept warning me not to overdo it, but the medical professionals were all encouraging me to exercise, and I felt ready."

He continues: "I now try and come to the club five times a week: BodyPump on a Monday, Sprint on a Tuesday, Blaze on a Wednesday, Synrgy every other Thursday – I meet up with old work friends the other week – and bootcamp circuits on a Saturday. Sometimes I'm at the club with my wife – she does aqua aerobics on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays – but the other days I come on my own.

"I'm very happy doing these tougher classes. I know I won't go as fast on the treadmill as younger members in Blaze, or do as many burpees in circuits – but in the end, you just do what you can and the instructors are wonderful. They're there to encourage and motivate you to push yourself, but if you're already doing your best – whatever your best is – then that's enough for them.

"That's the main piece of advice I'd give to others my age who might feel intimidated by gyms. You don't need to feel that way. You can only do what you can do, and people will understand that."

He concludes: "In the end, I enjoy how healthy being active makes me feel. Of course, like lots of things in life, it's impossible to know how much of a difference it's making, because I don't know how I'd feel if I didn't exercise. However, I can imagine myself being bored, a couch potato at home... or worse, toes turned up! You never know what's around the corner, but I certainly like to believe that being fitter makes me healthier and more likely to live longer."



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