**NHS Lanarkshire / North H&SCP**

**Wishaw Locality Support Services - A time to take up a new hobby – chair aerobics!**

The challenges of spending more time than usual at home due to shielding or maintaining physical distancing have been keenly felt by many of our service users.

Wishaw Locality’s support service recognised, at an early stage, the challenge of spending a lot of time at home whether that be alone or with family that COVID-19 has meant.

The service provides personalised support to adults in their local community who have a disability or long term health problem. The team supports people to identify personal outcomes - things they are unable to achieve without the team’s support which will make their lives better.

Prior to COVID-19, the team supported people to engage with activities which met social or health outcomes. Their commitment to supporting people to be as independent as they can be meant service users relied on public transport and community services and facilities.

As a result of COVID-19 the team had to change the way it supports people; there were no longer activities or community groups meetings, and health and well-being opportunities were restricted. Physical distancing and the importance of keeping people safe meant the team had to think differently about how to support people to stay well and have a good life at home.

Morris Howat, senior officer – younger adults, said: “Our priorities are to keep people safe from COVID-19 and maintain their general health and wellbeing.

“We know our service users and their families well which has meant we are able to anticipate, to a degree, who would find isolating most difficult and were able to make welfare calls to people in their homes from the very beginning of the ‘lockdown’.

“We have heard first-hand how much these calls are appreciated while for others a ‘through the window’ visit has made their day. As time has gone on, people who can manage the safe distancing requirements have been supported to take their hour of outdoor exercise.

“We even have one person being supported to do some ‘chair aerobics’ at their front door. This person has Multiple Sclerosis and had previously attended a chair aerobics class to maintain her mobility at a local sports facility which was no longer accessible.

“Her physiotherapist had given her exercises to complete, however she knew herself that she was unlikely to do this alone at home. One of our locality workers who knows the woman well encouraged her to bring her wheelchair to the front door and complete her exercise while our staff member led from the garden.



“Bringing along one of the women’s friends, a man who also uses the service, to the garden adds a social – and physically distanced - element and this in turn has led to neighbours joining in when the weather is good.

“I went along recently to ask both service users for feedback about their support. Both told me that it has become an important part of their lives. It has helped maintain their emotional and physical well-being during the pandemic and they look forward to it each week.

“I am proud to be part of a team that has responded so enthusiastically to the challenges of COVID-19 and one where we continue to offer support that is absolutely person centred.

“People will be getting more weary and frustrated by their own situation and we will continue to think creatively about how we can play a part in helping families manage.”