

## Patient Testimonial

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Between 2009 and 2012 was a quite difficult period for me dealing with bereavement, personal injury, health problems and redundancy.

In September 2012 for health and financial reasons, I decided to stop smoking and contacted the local smoking cessation.

Everyone was telling me how I was doing well and spoke of all the health benefits being a non-smoker but I didn't feel well at all – I actually felt worse and was wondering if it was worth it. I was putting on a lot of weight resulting in feeling bloated, my joints were hurting and I also was feeling down as I couldn't get into any of my clothes so stopped going out. I was feeling unfit, a little depressed and quite anxious.

The smoking cessation advisor referred me to ACE. I met with the Project Officer in January 2013 and we discussed how I was feeling and how the programme could help me. I was surprised learning about all that was available within the community and more so that there were fitness classes suitable for all ages and levels, as I always thought of the sports centre being for the young and healthy. After taking my weight and blood pressure, which was a little high so I would have to contact my doctor, we worked out a programme of some low impact classes suitable for me to start off with and I was given a six month leisure pass to help me financially. This was a huge incentive and whilst I felt quite anxious, I also felt excited and motivated.

My doctor gave me the go ahead, his preference being for me to exercise opposed to prescribing medication for my blood pressure and anxiety/depression, and I went along to my first fitness class 'the funky 50s' which was a low impact aerobic class and I thoroughly enjoyed it. Everyone was friendly and supportive and over the following weeks I found myself getting fitter and I was losing weight. I was making new friends and joining them in other activities – swimming, aquafit, pilates, yoga etc and the nicest thing of all was that whilst exercising I was enjoying myself – I was having fun and I was laughing again – something I had not done for a long time. For the first time I was now feeling the benefits of having stopped smoking.

In August 2013, six months later, I visited the doctor for a check up. I had lost 23lbs, my blood pressure was normal and I had no signs of depression or anxiety – I felt really well. The money I saved from having the leisure pass helped me buy sports gear and when my pass expired, I took out a full membership. Now I continue to go to the sports centre and exercise daily and I feel really well.

I really benefited from all the support I received from ACE (and the smoking cessation) and I hope the ACE programme continues to thrive as in my opinion it is a valuable resource within the community.