



## Activate Village Halls 2024 Project Evaluation

Activate Village Halls 2024 delivered three 12-week seated exercise classes in three locations between December 2023 and May 2024. The classes, aimed at people over 65, combine 45 minutes of exercise led by a trainer and 'co-pilot' who supports participants in a range of ways including demonstrating alternative exercise moves, as well as supporting the second part of the session, the 'social' - time for tea and a chat after the exercise session. The participants pay £4 per session, if they can, and the first class is free. The sessions were run in rural locations where accessing provision of this type would otherwise be difficult or impossible for beneficiaries.

The three locations were:

- **Chieveley Village Hall** – Class established in June 2023, but funding from Get Berkshire Active ended in November 2023. Average attendance 23 per week
- **Hermitage Village Hall** – classes established in 2022, funding ended in November 2024. Average attendance 20 per week
- **Lambourn Leisure center** – new class

The 12 weeks for the Chieveley and Hermitage classes are completed, and the Lambourn class runs until 31<sup>st</sup> May this year. We have so far collected 41 evaluation forms from participants. This is planned for towards the end of the 12 weeks, and more will be collected from Lambourn at the end of the 12-week run. Therefore, the majority of responses in this report come from Chieveley and Hermitage participants, with 5 from Lambourn.

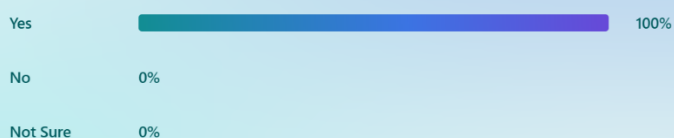
## 1. Health and Wellbeing Outcomes:



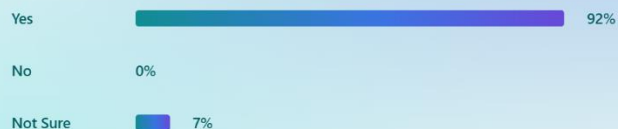
*"I have now started beginners' tai chi to improve my balance. I am stronger, I can walk further and even do a bit more gardening. The sessions have given me the confidence to try more and go out more. It would be hard to keep up with exercise on my own. I live alone and feel much less isolated now. It has given me confidence to go out now that I feel stronger."* Chieveley Class Participant

The information in the tables below comes from feedback from 41 respondents to our paper questionnaire.

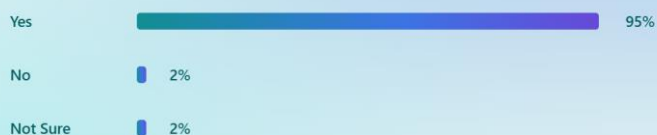
### Have you enjoyed doing the sessions?



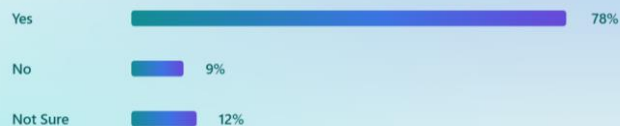
### Has coming to these classes helped you manage or improve your physical health?\*



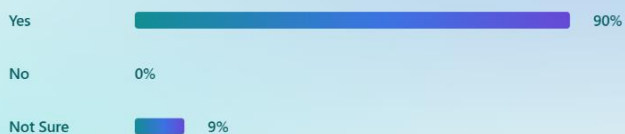
### Has coming to these classes helped you improve your mental wellbeing?\*



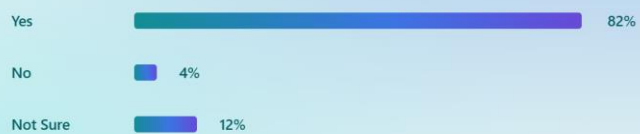
### Has taking part in these sessions enabled you to do more physical activity than you would have been able to do before? \*



### Has coming to these classes helped you make new friends?\*



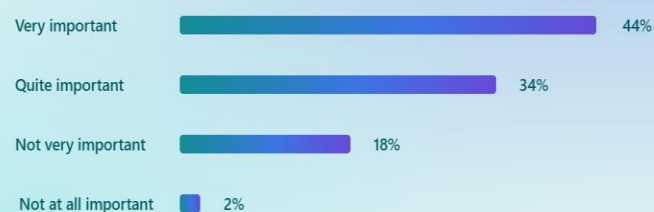
### Has coming to the class increased your confidence to be more physically active?



### Has coming to these classes helped you to feel more connected to your local community?\*



### For you, how important is it to have time for refreshments at the end of the exercise session?



Other benefits participants have experienced, in their own words:

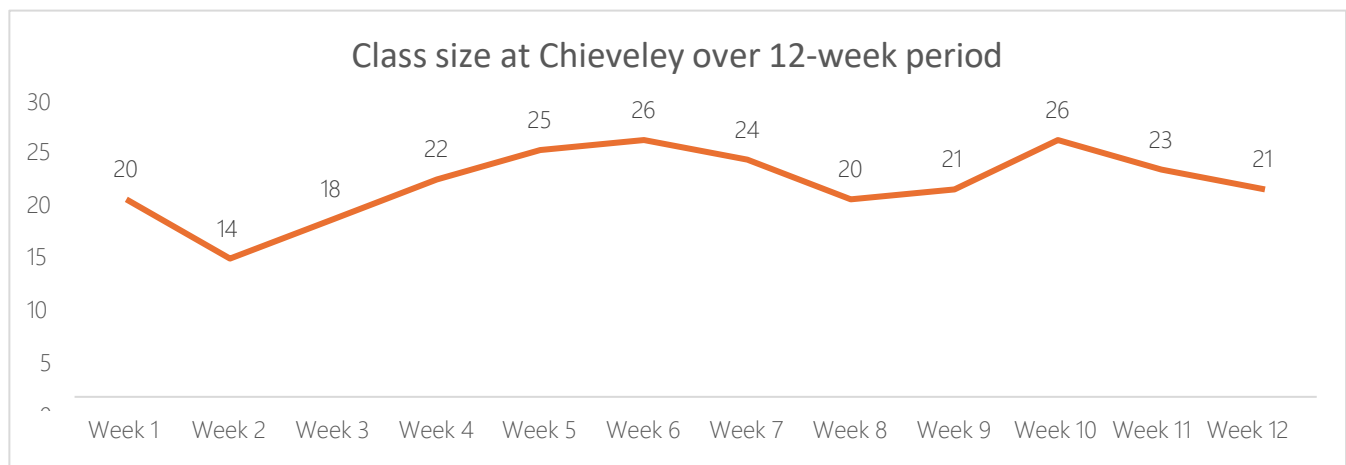
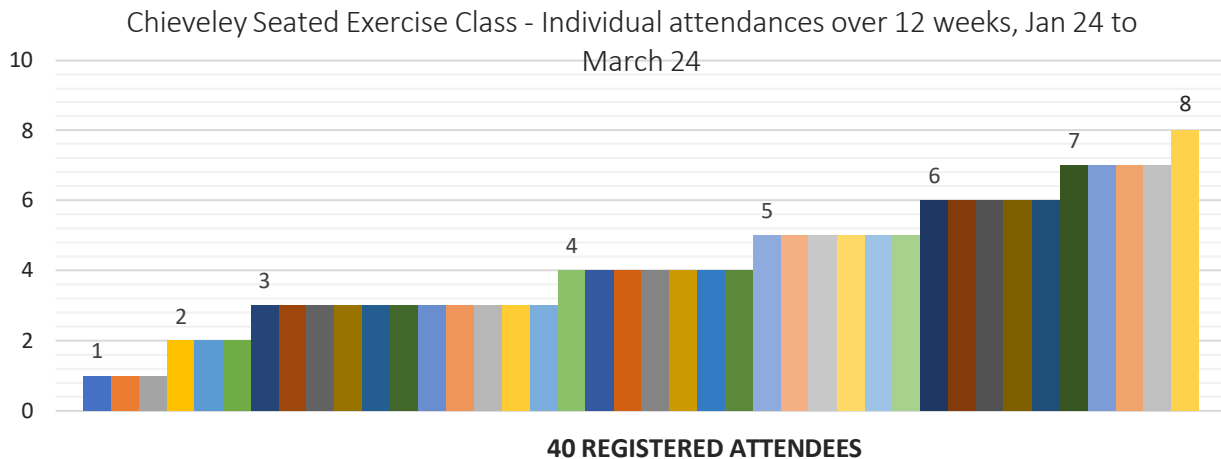
<i><b>"Leg cramps were a problem and since have undertaken the stretching exercises after walking or gardening this has been better. Also relaxation."</b></i>	<i><b>"Huge encouragement to positive thinking at a time of diminished capability."</b></i>
<i><b>"I'm able to get out of my chair better."</b></i>	<i><b>"I have more social interaction."</b></i>
<i><b>"Before starting the classes, my joints were stiff, and I kept having leg cramps, so it has helped a lot. Plus, it has helped my asthma as well."</b></i>	<i><b>"I feel that the classes have given my week some structure, not sure what I would do without them."</b></i>
<i><b>"As I child I did ballet, so now not being very mobile I enjoy moving to music."</b></i>	<i><b>"Walking and cycling more easily."</b></i>
<i><b>"Following the advice from my GP, from 4 sessions attended I have found the experience very beneficial."</b></i>	<i><b>"My chiropractor has noticed the difference when treating my neck, upper back, and shoulder areas since I have been doing the Movability exercises."</b></i>
<i><b>"Self-confidence."</b></i>	<i><b>"I enjoy the exercises and the social interaction has been really good."</b></i>
<i><b>"I enjoy the social side at the end of the session."</b></i>	<i><b>"I have health problems which make it hard to do new activities, but I am able to do more on the allotment and travel to town."</b></i>
<i><b>"I'm walking further, stronger joints, more supple."</b></i>	<i><b>"It encourages me to leave the house even on a cold or wet day. Otherwise, I might stay at home watching rubbish telly!"</b></i>
<i><b>"Community spirit."</b></i>	<i><b>"Making new friends. Nice happy class."</b></i>



## 2. Attendance

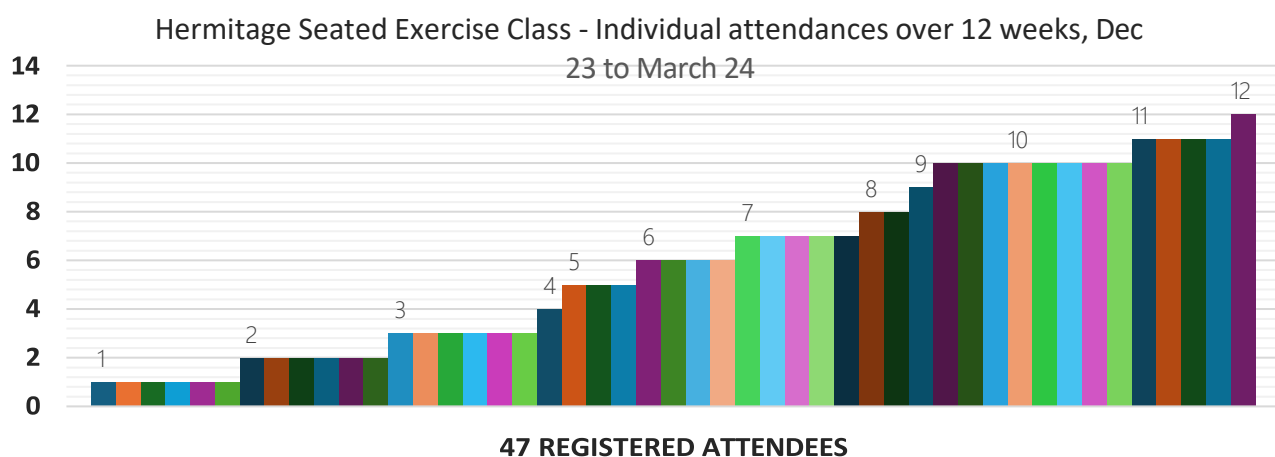
Attendance at Chieveley and Hermitage is constantly high, and on one occasion has reached over 30. This demonstrates the need and enthusiasm for these sessions from older people living in the local area. Lambourn has been slower to pick up, however as both Village Hall based classes accessed Village Hall networks in promotion, this may have given them an edge when it comes to reaching people in the community. Lambourn Leisure Centre is underused and not well known for social/community activities. We are only now starting to get connected with more local community networks in the Lambourn area.

### Chieveley



CLASS SIZE SHOWS THE CLASS IS CONSISTENTLY WELL ATTENDED.

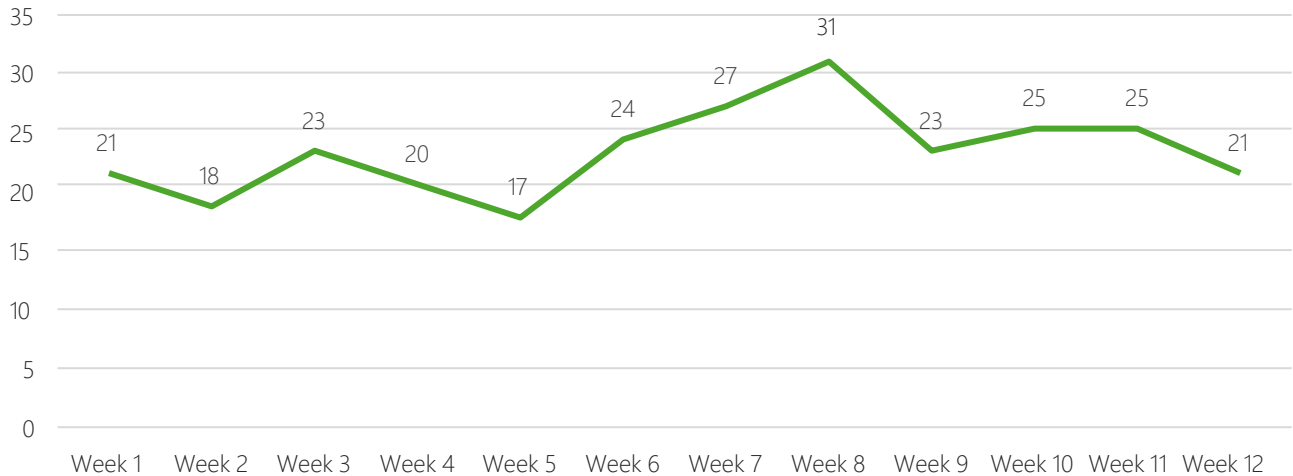
### Hermitage



HERMITAGE HAS A HIGH NUMBER OF VERY REGULAR ATTENDEES.

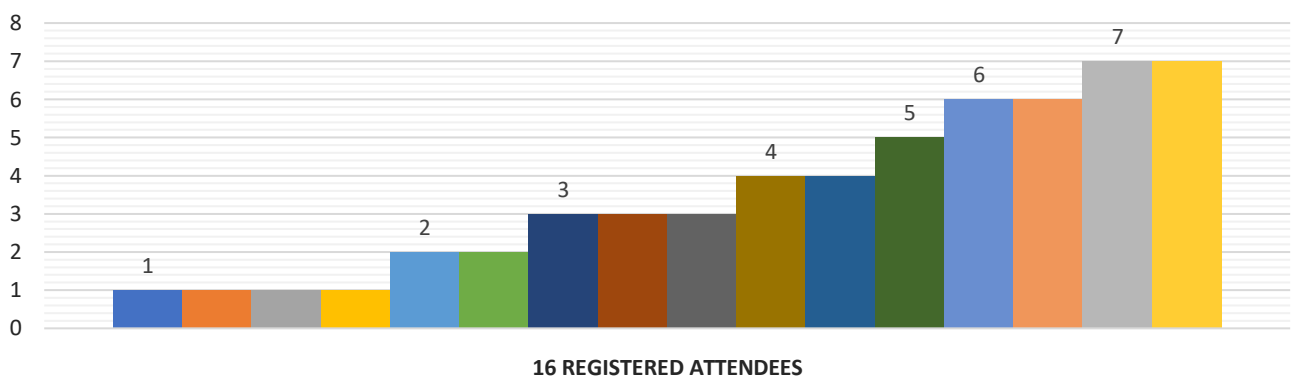


Class size at Hermitage over 12-week period

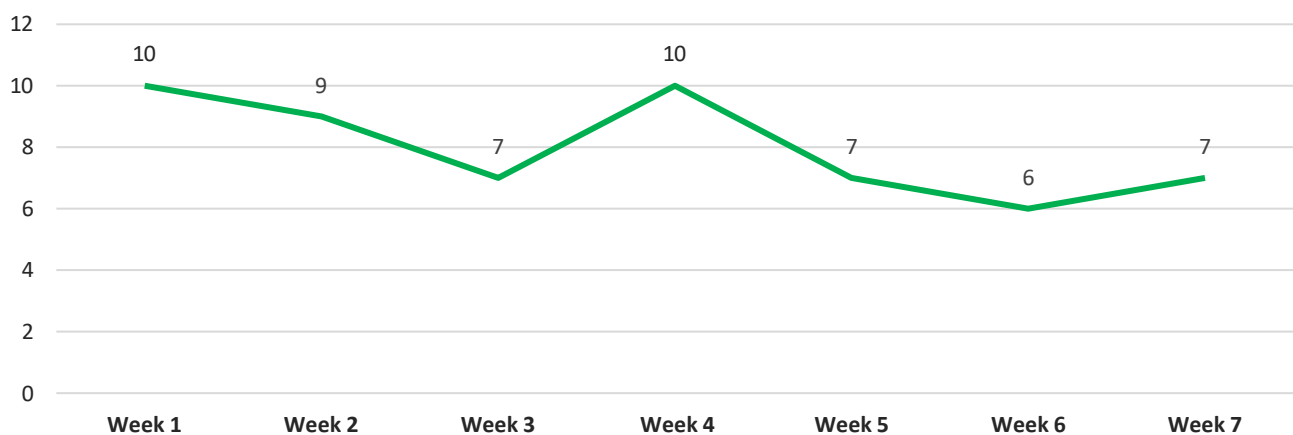


## Lambourn

Lambourn Seated Exercise Class - Individual attendances over 7 weeks, Feb 24 to April 24



Class size at Lambourn over 7 weeks (5 weeks remaining)



**Lambourn:** At the time of writing, evaluation information is still being collected on the Lambourn Exercise Class. Responses so far are overwhelmingly positive. All 5 respondents from the Lambourn class said that the classes had helped them manage or improve their physical health, their mental wellbeing, and have increased their confidence to be physically active. Four out of five respondents said that coming to the classes had helped them feel more connected to their local community. Follow the link below for a short testimony from a Lambourn class participant:

[https://www.instagram.com/reel/C69lFx7MTkf/?utm\\_source=ig\\_web\\_copy\\_link](https://www.instagram.com/reel/C69lFx7MTkf/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link)

### 3. Working in Partnership

Initiating and sustaining the Activate Village Halls project would not be possible without our partners and supporters, who include:

- **Funders:** Berkshire Community Foundation (BCF)/Pargeter Trust, Sovereign Network Group (SNG), class participants (Subs contributions).
- **In-kind contributions:** Chieveley Village Hall, Hermitage Village Hall, Everyone Active, CCB and Movability
- **Delivery partners:** CCB, MOVEabiliy, Everyone Active, Chieveley Village Hall, Hermitage Village Hall

CCB has been the lead partner in fundraising, managing the finances and project evaluation. MOVEabiliy, CCBs longtime associate and partner, led on session delivery and building relationships with clients and communities. Everyone Active became involved in the project when we met with their Activity & Wellbeing Manager, who was piloting activities in rural areas and village halls. We had each identified Lambourn as an area of need, and each were able to contribute time and resources to getting a class established there. The Lambourn classes would not have taken place without the support of Everyone Active.



*“Our motivation is to bring services and opportunities to people living in rural communities, who might not otherwise be able to access them -and reduce the impact of the isolation and that can come with living in a small rural community. We have worked with MOVEabiliy for a couple of years and have been successful in establishing seated exercise classes in several locations, but sustaining the classes after short term funding has ended is a challenge – they just don’t work on a commercial model. Working with Everyone Active in Lambourn allowed us to trial the classes in a location that we would not otherwise have the resources to deliver in. People who come to these classes depend on them, and every bit of funding we can access is important for keeping them going. Without the support of our funders and project partners the Hermitage and Chieveley class would have ended, there would be no Lambourn class and no evaluation data demonstrating the huge positive impact of the classes. “*

**Maria Kelly, Project Development Officer, Connecting Communities in Berkshire**



“Barriers to physical activity in Lambourn include limited access to facilities, lack of public transportation, long distances to amenities, sparse social infrastructure, and limited awareness of available activities. Working with CCB & Moveability helped to reduce barriers as we can maximize resources, expand reach, combine expertise, foster community engagement, and enhance sustainability of initiatives. Our aspiration was to further engage with the Lambourn community and to promote physical activity and reduce social isolation through a range of initiatives, fostering increased participation and enhanced social connections.

Our collaboration with CCB and Moveability has been enjoyable and successful, as our shared knowledge and resources have been instrumental in making this project possible. Our efforts have led to increased levels of physical activity among individuals and facilitated the formation of meaningful friendships within the community.

Through this project, we've discovered firsthand that networking is not just important but essential, as it enables us to leverage diverse resources, expertise, and support systems, increasing the impact and effectiveness of our projects.” **Callum Yates, Activity & Wellbeing Manager, Everyone Active**



*“Working with CCB is always such a joy, they are supportive and a great team to be involved with. Working directly with Everyone Active for the first time has been interesting as we normally work with village hall venue partners, and It has been good making a connection with Callum which hopefully will lead to further collaborations. Not having a charitable status can sometimes act as a barrier to obtaining the valuable funding needed to keep MOVEability classes running, so working with CCB hugely helps to overcome this. I have enjoyed the challenge of running a successful class in a very rural area, where previously classes of this type have not taken off, bringing together a small community of people within the Lambourn area, who are enjoying and seeing health benefits from having 'something different' to attend. For me, reaching out to rural communities, providing a beneficial service to residents and valuable resource to local GP's and social prescribers is very rewarding - long may it continue.”*

**Debbie Medlin, Director and Trainer, MOVEability**

## 4. The Future of the Project

We are seeking a long-term funding partner to ensure the classes and benefits they are providing can be sustained over a period of years rather than months. At the same time, we are actively fundraising for smaller grants to keep the project running even on a short-term basis. We will continue to collect evaluation information to build a stronger picture of the impact of these classes on attendee's health and wellbeing. We are also looking in more detail at potential barriers to participation and gathering more evidence to support our approach. For example, it is essential that the classes remain affordable and do not need to be booked in advance. We also have strong anecdotal evidence that cashless payment methods are a barrier for a lot of participants, but we need to collect more information on this subject so that we can better understand the needs of project beneficiaries.