

Dr Yasara Naheed's Story

Earlier this year I was asked if I'd like to support the Lancashire and South Cumbria ICS 'Call to Action' campaign; the aim of the campaign was to inform and inspire people to be more active and how being active can help them reduce their weight and reduce their risk of Coronavirus. As a GP I know how important being active is to health and wellbeing and said yes.

Together an Active Future were coordinating the campaign and asked me for a photograph of myself, ideally one of me being active. I claimed I was active but in spite didn't have a photo to prove it, a photo of me sat behind my desk would have to do!



Ironically at the same time and after a year of administering coronavirus vaccinations, I received a letter from the government saying I was a high risk candidate for Covid-19. I'm an Asian lady in my mid-forties, with a high BMI and I have diabetes - I should have been shielding!

As a health care professional, I was fully aware of what I ought to be doing to maintain a healthy lifestyle, but I'd always found an excuse not to exercise. **My son had been training with Asam, a personal trainer at a local gym (@sam.ray.fitness) and I thought I'd give it a go.** At the time my PT wasn't looking for new clients and he was quite direct, he would only take me on if I wasn't going to waste his time, he wanted commitment. I'm quite a competitive person and no one was going to tell me I was going to fail!

My first personal training session was on 16th May. I was unfit and embarrassed as I puffed walking upstairs. The session was a mix of weights and circuits, it didn't involve long periods of time doing the same exercises on machines - I enjoyed the session.

Six weeks later I noticed my back pain was minimal, my ankles no longer hurt, I started to lose weight, my energy levels soared, and I felt twenty years younger. **I felt so amazing I wanted some of my patients to experience similar benefits of being more active.**

12-weeks later I went through my list of patients and telephoned all those who had a high BMI and diabetes asking them if they'd like to take part in a 12-week programme. The programme would involve attending a personal training session with myself and others. At the beginning, middle and end of the programme, I would test their blood, calculate their BMI, and measure their ONS. We also covered the importance of healthy eating and gave dietary handouts.

I recruited 11 people, I found many couldn't commit as the sessions were going to be during the day, although saying that one lady changed her working times so she could attend.



Out of these 11 people, 9 completed the programme. The sessions were held on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 1-2pm. The people who attended had a range of health conditions.

L

Attending the gym helped improve L's confidence and lifted her mood. The group gym sessions gave L the confidence to attend at other times. L also encouraged her partner to attend the gym with her. Over the 12 weeks, the couple lost weight but more importantly, the sessions instigated behaviour change to lead a healthier lifestyle. She has joined the gym going forward.

J

J, who is 65, made everyone feel motivated as she attended nearly every session and was an inspiration to the rest of the group who often thought 'if she can do it, so can we!' J saw an improvement in her diabetes and her range of movement and balance improved significantly.

The sessions were organised and delivered in my own time. I'd try to get to the gym twenty minutes before so that I could help set up the equipment. I took part in the session with my patients and inevitably I'd always stay afterwards as I found people wanted to chat. I found that my patients disclosed more to me in the gym than in the surgery. My relationship with these patients is now much more profound.

A couple of weeks into the programme, I arrived late and learnt that a lot of my patients only had the confidence to come to the gym because they were meeting me there. They told me they felt anxious when I wasn't there. Not having someone to be active with is a barrier I'd not really considered before. Some patients lack confidence and I feel Social Prescribers can play a key role in becoming gym buddy's and supporting these patients to overcome barriers, become more active and reduce their risk of long-term health conditions.





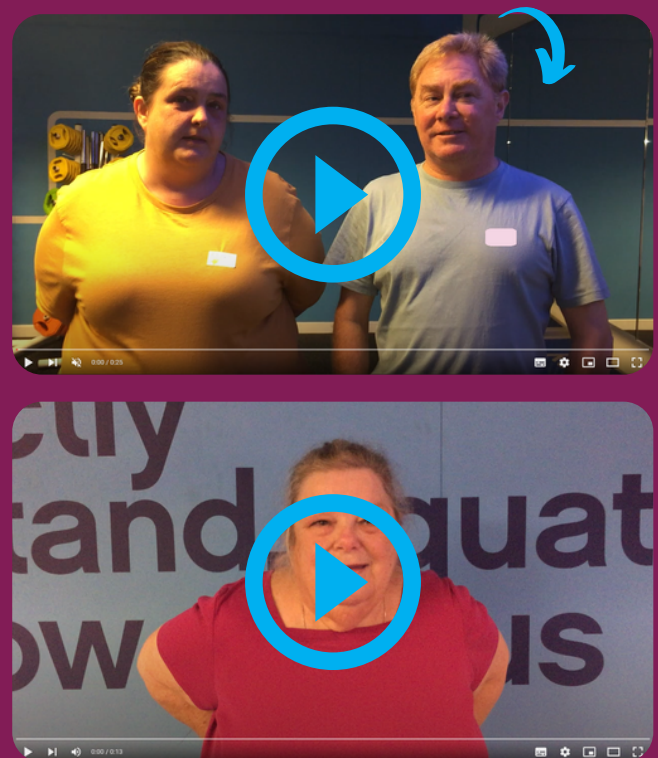
Five months later, I'd lost 18kgs and dropped 4 dress sizes. My eating habits had changed a little but the biggest factor in my weight loss was exercise! I also used an app to track my progress, which informed me of my journey, how much time I'd spent in the gym and my weight loss – I found it has motivated me to do more. **Now 18 months later, my HBA1C has dropped to from 59 to 41. I'm also 5 stone lighter so technically no longer diabetic.**

For the first time in years, I felt really happy about the way I looked and started to share photos of myself being active and the meals I cooked on Instagram - I later learnt these social media posts were inspiring family, friends and colleagues to be more active.

I informed the CCG and [Together an Active Future](#) (the Sport England Local Delivery Pilot in Pennine Lancashire). The CCG Comms Team sent a member of their team to take photos and capture individuals' stories on video at the beginning, mid-way and end of the programme. The patients were initially apprehensive about being filmed but documenting their journey has been helpful for them to realise the progress they were making. It has also helped me to understand the full impact of the programme.

Click [here](#) to watch the full video

CLICK TO LISTEN TO WHAT A COUPLE OF PATIENTS FELT LIKE



Impacts

- ☆ Dr Yasara Naheed's tremendous impact has seen '[Thursby Surgery](#)' become one of the top referrers into Pennine Lancashire's [Lifestyle Hub](#) – which connects people into a range of health and wellbeing support programmes in their local area. **Learn more about the Lifestyle Hub by clicking [here](#).**
- ☆ In September 2022, Thursby Surgery became the first practice in Burnley and one of just three across the whole of Pennine Lancashire to achieve the RCGP Active Practice Charter. **Click [here](#) to see how to become an Active Practice.**

