



Keeping well through movement, nutrition and hydration

Dr Sarah Alden, April 2024



Enhance



Introduction

Enhance is funded by [Leeds Community Healthcare NHS Trust](#) (LCH) and managed by [Leeds Older People's Forum](#) on behalf of [Forum Central](#). Enhance brings together 13 third sector delivery partners with LCH teams across the city. Enhance provides person-centred, community-based support to individuals to help avoid delayed hospital discharges and readmissions, and to enhance capacity throughout the health system. This short thematic report draws on learning from the second year of Enhance delivery.

How does movement, nutrition and hydration impact on health?

Supporting movement, nutrition and hydration are linked to improving physical health functioning and the prevention and management of frailty. Evidence indicates that social determinants of health accelerate the development and progression of frailty, with strong negative associations based on socioeconomic position. Within this, physical inactivity is one of the most common risk factors associated with frailty in older people¹. A data analysis which covered 9 delivery partners showed that nearly all participants have some level of frailty (at 85.2%) and at least one long term condition (at 97.4%), with many having several conditions (4.89 on average). In line with this, 85% of questionnaire respondents described their health as 'poor' or 'fair'.

Enhance participants provided examples of where the ongoing impact of ill health had caused them to make poor food choices or forget to eat or keep hydrated. This led to some losing weight, being more prone to picking up infections, hindering progress or exacerbating the impact of long standing health conditions.

What approach is being taken by Enhance?

Enhance supported nutrition and hydration in a range of ways, such as linking people to: educational support (e.g., sessions around healthy eating), social support (attending food based activities in the local community), tackling inequalities (provision of food hampers, vouchers), direct support (prompting someone to set reminders to drink fluids, make a meal, check dates on food) and setting up long term provision (online shopping, meal delivery).

Enhance is helping to empower people to improve their physical health functioning through supporting exercise and movement - which ranges from getting people out into the community through walks, social or physical activities to prompting people to carry out prescribed exercises. As most delivery partners are [Neighbourhood Networks](#), Enhance workers could navigate directly into classes that supported a range of needs, such as chair based Tai Chi, dance and Yoga. One delivery partner used Enhance funding to resource a weekly exercise class which aims to improve confidence and support mobility. Another offered chair-based exercise sessions at a recovery hub to older people who were too unwell to return home or awaiting their care package, another helped to facilitate a movement class in an Extra Care Housing Complex.

Physical activity was also incorporated into social or practical activities – which some felt offered an easier route into exercise as it was not 'sold' as exercise. A good example of this was arranging shopping trips, where walking was incorporated through visiting lots of shops.

¹ Angulo et al.2020, available [here](#); Hale et al., 2019, available [here](#); Liang et al., 2021, available [here](#); Lin et al., 2022, available [here](#); Valenzuela et al., 2023, available [here](#) (all accessed 09.04.24)

Outcomes for participants

Follow up questionnaire responses indicate that Enhance has led to improvement in overall physical health and ability to carry out physical activities with participants:

- A fifth less likely to rate their physical health as poor, with assessed health functioning overall increasing by 10%,
- Over a fifth (21%) less likely to report that they were unable to carry out any everyday activities,
- 13.5% increased ability to carry out social activities, and over a quarter (27%) less likely to rate this item as poor and 71% more likely to assess it as good to excellent,
- 28% less likely to report severe to very severe fatigue levels,
- 29% less likely to record a high pain score (7 or above out of 10),
- Assessed quality of life increased, with respondents 28% less likely to rate as poor and 13% more likely to record it as good to excellent.

Supporting people to carry out prescribed exercises at home has proved beneficial to recovery plans and progression. Several participants noted that having someone to prompt them in-person and to supervise them during their exercises had provided good motivation to engage with their recovery plans, particularly if they struggle with memory issues:

“I have got a balance problem – the physio came and gave me some exercises, this really helped me get back on my feet – I had 6 weeks with physio, and the [Enhance worker] keeps me at it, and reminds me what to do, she said even if I am waiting at a bus stop I can do some stretches, which I do...I put 80s music on YouTube and do it around the living room – I am doing it now as I am talking to you.”

Housebound participants talked positively about home-based chair exercise or being supported to mobilise where they can at home.

The evaluation identified strong overlap between exercise and emotional support – with a lack of confidence frequently referred to as a barrier to embarking on more physical activity. Participants referred to lacking the confidence to get around in an electric wheelchair or using a walker outside – and reported how being accompanied and encouraged to do so had helped them build the confidence to do this independently. One participant described how encouragement from her Enhance worker was supporting her to try out different physical activities:

“We go for a walk [the Enhance worker] tries her best to get me out – there is a local park – she goes there with me...Where I live they have started doing exercise on a Friday morning –the worker persuaded me to go so I have just started – she makes me feel that the pain can get better if I keep going...she is always trying to get me moving.”

One delivery partner used Enhance funding to plug an identified gap within an exercise pathway as the following example shows:

Moving On

Moving On is a weekly gentle exercise class aimed at improving confidence, reducing falls and supporting mobility. It evolved through observation that some people who attended a 20 week strength and balance course run by Active Leeds started to deteriorate after completion as they had nothing else to move onto, and also lacked the motivation without a social aspect. Funding was used to: recruit an exercise tutor, provide transport, offer refreshments and for Enhance staff to attend and support sessions. The instructor and illustrative leaflets provided advice around safe and gentle exercises to carry out at home and how to get up safely at home following a fall.

Moving On has supported 27 people to date. Participants talked of enjoying the social element and also achieving goals and seeing how exercise made them feel better. Some have gone on to join other social groups - including five who joined a lunch club. Ongoing contact with peers was seen as a key motivator to continuing to apply what had been learnt through the sessions. Outcomes reported include improved balance, being able to use a stick instead of walker, feeling more supple, improved muscle and wrist strength and increased ability to lift light objects (which supported food preparation and getting up from chairs). Another talked of using the supplementary leaflet to start doing exercises at home and had not had a fall since doing so (which happened frequently prior). Participants interviewed explained how Moving On had made them more aware of the importance of exercise:

“I was so insecure; I had been in hospital 6 weeks – I plucked up courage and went. The leader is so considerate and kind – you get out what you put in, it has changed my mindset, I now make sure I stand and move around more at home...there was a time when I couldn't raise my arm above my shoulders – now I am able to reach out to top shelf – I feel more supple – within the class such a variety of ailments – they can come back if you don't work them...I also found out about cooking classes through this – and I am learning more about making a variety of meals.”

“It made me more aware of the necessity of exercise – I was a sedentary person...now I won't just sit in a chair and watch TV for couple of hours – I will walk around and do things.”

LCH staff felt that Moving On particularly saved time for low risk patients, as it would allow physios to focus their time on more complex cases.

Moving On is presently operating on a waiting list. There is high demand across the pathway, meaning those who may be ready to move into more advanced exercise sessions are unable to do so. One participant reported that they did not wish to move on as they enjoyed the social aspect. Though they continued to get something from the sessions – they felt they had progressed enough to try something more advanced.

The service continues to encourage people to maintain progress through social avenues. There are also discussions around how to replicate this model across Leeds and an Enhance Referral Pathway to address this.

Achieving long term impact

As highlighted in the case study above, supporting people to change their mindset is key to motivating participants to continue to maintain outcomes beyond Enhance. Participants reported that Enhance felt tailored to the level that they were at, whilst encouraging them to continue to push themselves to do more. Based on longitudinal interviews, Enhance has led to improved ability to carry out every day physical activities - with some continuing to progress beyond Enhance through adopting better eating habits. One interviewee explained how support around diet improved her mental health:

"I was offered medication [for depression] from my doctor but I don't want to be a zombie...I talked to [the Enhance worker] about it and we looked some things up on the internet. I decided to try gluten free and it is really helping my health, I am feeling so much better I feel better overall and was motivated to give something a try – [the Enhance worker's] encouragement really helped."

Some kinds of support – such as helping people get used to a walking aid and feeling more confident getting outside – had longer term impact, but for those where it had taken time to recover enough to start taking these actions, a few participants were reportedly not ready to increase their physical activity until near the end of the 12 week support. Enhance supported someone to build enough confidence to go for an accompanied walk using a walker rather than a wheelchair, but they had only gone on two outings. The participant felt that she would revert back to a wheelchair as she had no-one to support her as her confidence continued to build.



Impact and outcomes on the LCH role

LCH staff reported a number of ways in which supporting patients to keep well eased pressure through enabling them to reduce home visits, close cases (either due to a clinical need being met, or through no longer needing a home visit) and reducing the likelihood of a patient deteriorating and returning to services – particularly where housebound patients are supported to get out into the community:

“[When] patients no longer meet our service criteria and we cannot justify keeping them on our caseload ...but we know they will benefit from extra sessions to build their confidence... This is where the Enhance service has been really useful to bridge that gap, I feel it makes it more likely for the patient to continue working towards their goals once discharged from our team and less likely to come back on the service in the future.” (Physio)

A Community Matron talked of carrying out a joint visit with Enhance staff due to ongoing concerns about a patient’s poor diet. Due to Enhance intervention the Matron has now reduced her involvement to a weekly check in with Enhance worker.

Physios and Occupational Therapists provided a number of examples of how support around prescribed exercise helped them reduce visits, close cases quicker and they felt optimistic that it would reduce the likelihood of someone returning to their service:

“The Enhance worker was proactive about exercise - he suggested a joint visit so he could see what I was asking the patient to do... The [patient] had mental health issues, reduced motivation and lack of routine - so I went through the exercises with her - then spoke with [the Enhance worker] and he was happy to take this on...I went on a work placement for 6 weeks...I trusted him to work with her - I would have had to get someone else to see her but instead gave him contact details of an OT so he could liaise with her if needed...he is still working with her and I was able to discharge.” (Physio)

LCH Neighbourhood Team staff also felt that offering a targeted class for more low risk patients eased pressure and allowed them to focus on those with higher level needs. Yet others recognised the importance of patients being supported into wider activities as a way to maintain motivation, adopt more positive habits and reduce the likelihood of people returning to LCH services due to deterioration.

Supporting nutrition and exercise also has a reported impact on the wider system, such as through improving balance and reducing the likelihood of falls.

Further reading

Please visit the [resources section of the Leeds Older People’s Forum website](#) to read more short thematic reports sharing learning from the evaluation of the second year of Enhance delivery, and to access the full range of Enhance reports and briefings.