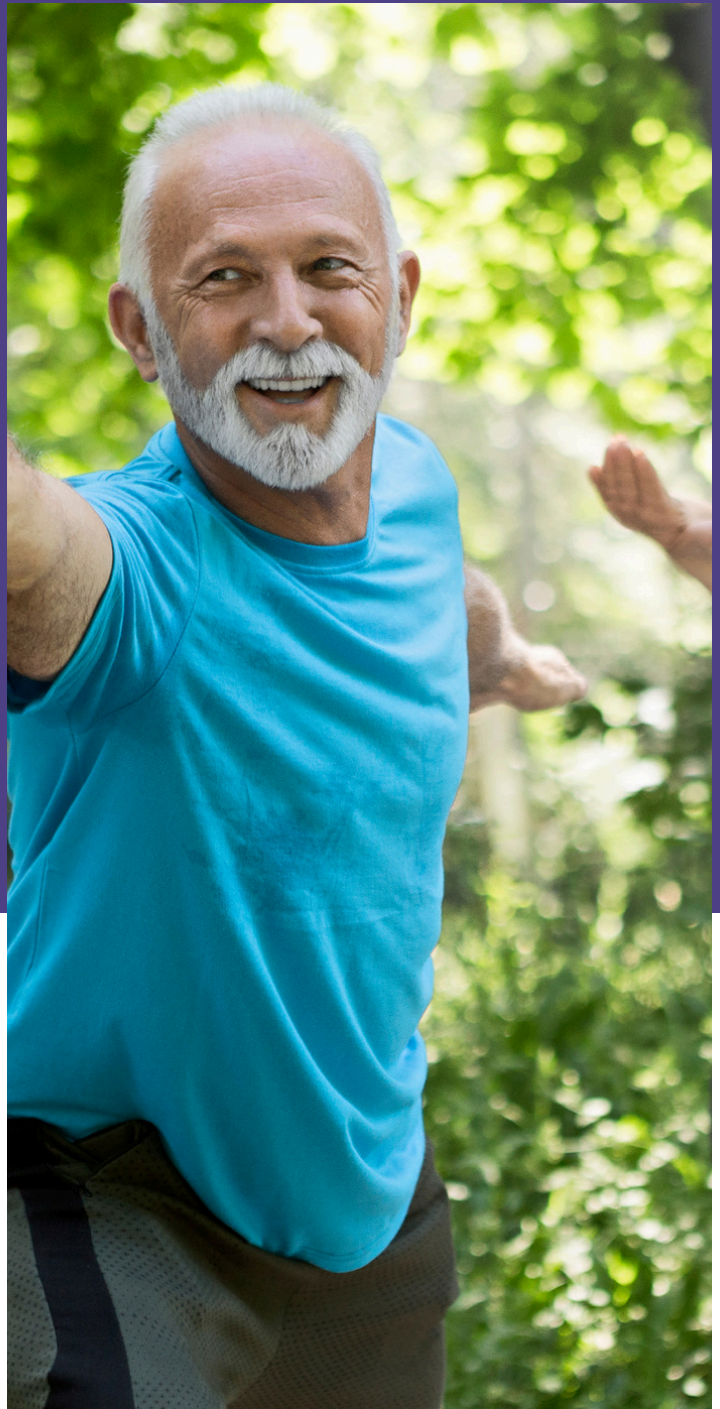


# St. Mary's Hospice

# SPORTING MEMORIES

Annual report  
2024-2025



Thank you  
to Active  
Cumbria



# INTRODUCTION

The Sporting Memories Club is an inspiring program designed to help older adults reminisce and reconnect through the joy of sport and physical activity. Staying active and engaging in regular reminiscence therapy has immense benefits, offering both cognitive stimulation and a renewed sense of purpose. As a hospice dedicated to supporting people with life-limiting conditions, such as dementia, we understand the importance of promoting a balanced approach to physical, mental, and social well-being. Dementia can often impact these facets of life, making it vital to create opportunities for those we support to thrive by engaging them in activities that enhance their health, confidence, and sense of connection.

**Sophie Murphy-  
Ayeche**

ADMIRAL NURSE



“Thank you  
for all you do”

# A very warm welcome



**Lorna Simpson**  
Activity Coordinator

Since joining St. Mary's Hospice as an Activities Coordinator, it has been my pleasure to support the Sporting Memories programme. I have truly enjoyed watching our clients with dementia share their sporting stories, reconnect with cherished memories, and grow in confidence as they engage in sports again. Seeing the joy, laughter, and sense of camaraderie this programme brings has been incredibly rewarding.

I am excited to continue developing these sessions, creating even more opportunities for our clients to reminisce, stay active, and build meaningful connections. I look forward to seeing how the programme continues to grow and the positive impact it will have in the future.

“ It was a fab afternoon. So many happy smiling faces ”



# “ I didn't know I could do that! ”

Sporting Memories has been an incredibly rewarding journey. At our hub, we've enjoyed a variety of activities, from warming up with the special 'KITbags', to conversations using our Replay cards, to singing our club song, all of which have helped to strengthen bonds among participants. Since January 2025, we have been running the club weekly at Ormsgill Community Centre, allowing us to expand our programme and create even more opportunities for engagement. We're also delighted to welcome Caroline Arnold once a month to deliver Tai Chi sessions, adding a new dimension to our activities.

Beyond the hospice, we've ventured out into the community, trying crown green bowling, touring the Barrow Raiders rugby grounds, playing walking football and pickleball at Barrow Park Leisure Centre, and participating in the 'Active Minds, Healthy Hearts' event hosted by the Furness Dementia Partnership,

where we enjoyed boxing and tai chi and a special visit from the pupils of St. James's Junior School.

Our collaboration with local artist John Hall on the 'Let's Talk About Football' memory-making project has been particularly special, enabling our members to share their cherished sporting memories and preserve their stories for future generations.

What makes Sporting Memories truly unique is how it has evolved around the people who take part, shaped by their feedback to remain meaningful and engaging. It also allows us to deliver high-quality hospice care and promote therapies beneficial in palliative care in a way that reaches those who may be less likely to engage with traditional hospice services. Along the way, we've shared laughter, taken on new challenges, and grown in confidence, making Sporting Memories a truly uplifting experience for all.

# Data

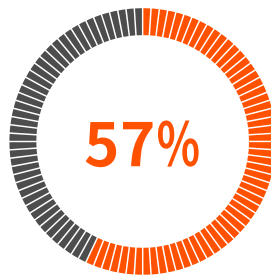
Since we started in June 2024

We have reached

**24** participants  
and held...

**21** Sessions

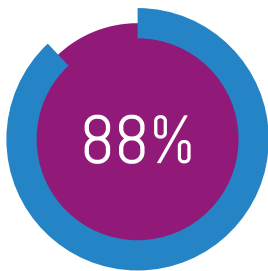
**NO CHANGES TO  
LONELINESS OR QUALITY  
OF SOCIAL INTERACTION  
REPORTED**



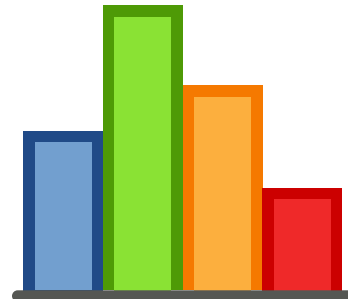
of respondents said  
they get active  
'whenever they can'

Q4 satisfaction survey

5 stars



One respondent's quality of  
life increased by one star  
since they began Sporting  
Memories



**DESCRIBE HOW YOU FEEL  
ABOUT GETTING ACTIVE**

Don't have a  
goal

**VS**

Be more  
healthy

Not keen but  
enjoy it when  
I do

**VS**

Good once  
I get  
Started

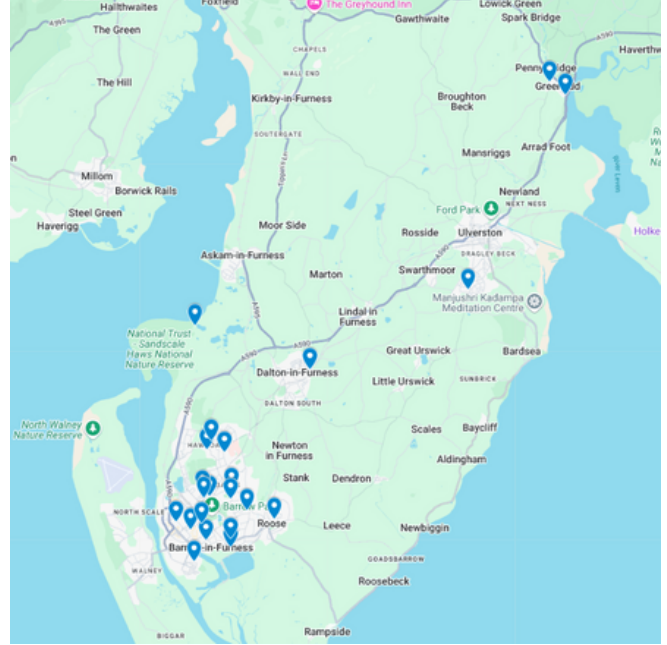
**WHAT ARE YOUR AMBITIONS FOR  
GETTING ACTIVE?**

Keep active for as  
long as I can

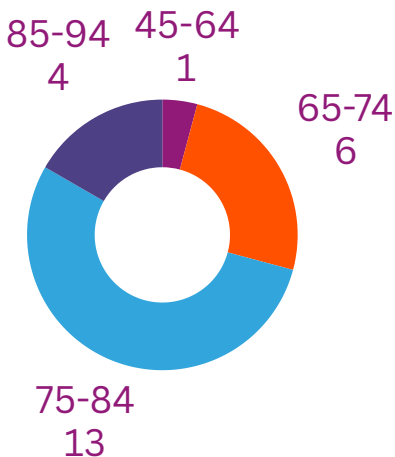
Unfortunately, engagement with our outcome  
measures was low, and many participants were  
discharged during the data collection period, making  
it difficult to capture meaningful results over six  
months.

# Demographics

Service users are primarily based in Barrow, with some engagement from individuals in the wider St. Mary's Hospice locality. However, participation remains lower in areas such as Ormsgill and Walney, despite a higher prevalence of poor health, long-term conditions, and disabilities. This may be influenced by factors such as transport accessibility, awareness of the service, or social barriers to engagement. To address this, we need to strengthen connections with these communities to ensure they have equitable access to the program and meaning our new venue is an ideal choice.



## AGE GROUPS



## MALE

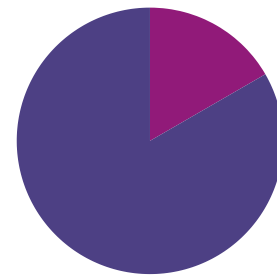
67%

## FEMALE

33%

## SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Not known or specified  
16.7%



Heterosexual  
83.3%

WHITE  
ETHNICITY



# Observations & recommendations

The demographic data highlights several key observations. All service users identify as white ethnicity, which may reflect the wider population of Barrow-in-Furness but could also indicate barriers to engagement for minority ethnic groups. There is limited representation from people with young onset dementia, with only one participant, suggesting a gap in outreach to this group. The majority of service users are male, which may be influenced by interest levels, referral patterns, or gendered perceptions of sport and reminiscence activities. Additionally, while most participants identify as heterosexual, a lack of responses from others could indicate discomfort with disclosure or a need for a more inclusive approach.

To address these disparities, outreach efforts should be strengthened to engage underrepresented groups. Working with local minority ethnic communities could help identify and overcome barriers to participation, while collaboration with young onset dementia networks and healthcare providers could increase referrals. Encouraging more female participation may require adapting

activities to be more inclusive and ensuring women are represented in marketing materials, alongside gathering feedback on how best to engage them.

Creating a more inclusive environment is also essential. Marketing and communications should reflect diversity across age, gender, and background, while providing optional and anonymous ways for participants to share personal information could help improve understanding of the service user demographic. Finally, potential barriers to engagement should be explored, such as location, timing, and the nature of the sessions, to ensure they are accessible to all. Working closely with LGBTQ+ groups and young onset dementia communities will support the development of targeted engagement strategies and help ensure the service is as inclusive as possible.



# Case Study



Susan Birkby

Susan has always been an active and social person, and when she joined the Sporting Memories group, she was looking for a way to stay connected with her community, meet new people, and keep moving. From the start, she embraced the sessions with enthusiasm, enjoying the mix of activity, conversation, and shared memories.

One of her favourite experiences was crown green bowling in Barrow Park over the summer. She also enjoyed taking on an unexpected challenge, boxing sessions with Jeff at the leisure centre. It was something she had never tried before, but her adventurous spirit meant she threw herself into it and loved the experience.

For Susan, the best part of the group is the people. She has formed strong friendships and values the sense of belonging it brings. Open and candid about her dementia, she speaks with humour and warmth, helping others feel at ease and encouraging them to share their own stories. Her natural ability to connect with people makes her a much-loved member of the group.

Staying active has always been important to Susan. She fondly recalls participating in park runs across the country and even living in Africa, experiences that have shaped her outlook on life. While she no longer takes part in park runs, she remains determined to stay active, whether through group activities or spending time outdoors with her grandsons.

A natural caregiver, Susan enjoys supporting others in the group. She helps with activities, welcomes new members, and delights in interacting with children when they visit. Her openness about living with dementia is inspiring, breaking down stigma and encouraging a supportive and inclusive atmosphere.

For Susan, Sporting Memories is more than just reminiscing, it's about connection, confidence, and continuing to live life to the fullest.

# Community Connections

Since launching Sporting Memories, we have built strong connections within the community, fostering meaningful relationships with a range of local organisations. We've partnered with nursing homes like Park View Gardens, who joined us for Crown Green Bowling, and engaged with St. James's School, Caroline Arnold, Jeff Moses Boxability, Barrow Park, Barrow Raiders, John Hall, Barrow Leisure Centre, and our new base at Ormsgill Community Centre. Moving forward, we are committed to expanding these partnerships, welcoming new club members, and offering a diverse range of activities to keep our sessions engaging and inclusive.



# What's next?

The future of Sporting Memories is full of exciting possibilities. We look forward to continuing our partnership with Ormsgill Community Centre and we are incredibly grateful for their generosity in providing such a fantastic space for our sessions. As we grow, we aim to expand our range of activities and build new connections with community organisations that promote movement and wellbeing.

With summer on the horizon, we'll be making the most of Barrow's outdoor spaces and exploring new opportunities beyond the town, bringing fresh experiences to our participants. Our activity coordinators are continually developing their skills and have recently completed chair-based exercise training, ensuring they can safely and effectively deliver these sessions within our

groups.

We are also excited to extend our activities to those attending our sessions in Ulverston, Millom, and South Lakes, encouraging more people to stay active in a way that is both enjoyable and accessible. Sporting Memories is growing, and we can't wait to see where this journey takes us next.



“ My body feels great now ”