

Danii Vipond Houghton is a Healthwise Facilitator at Kendal Leisure Centre. She is part of a small supportive team which usually work independently with bi-monthly meetings to catch up.

Danii studied Sport, Physical Activity and Health at Leeds Beckett University and graduated with a First-Class Degree. This has given her knowledge and understanding of obesity management, rehabilitation for contemporary health issues (including eating disorders, HIV and bipolar) and how to design and implement community health improvement interventions.



She also had the opportunity to study a Level 3 Diploma in Exercise for Referred Populations at University which allowed her to learn exercise do's and don'ts for different medical conditions, learn the pathophysiology of the conditions and how prescribed medicines impact the condition. She put this into practice at a voluntary role with Active Lives in Lancaster helping to run different exercises classes targeting different medical conditions and applied for her current role a few years later after having some time out to travel around the world.

What does your role involve?

Two days are never the same working as a Healthwise Facilitator! I am always meeting with different people with a range of medical conditions who want to gently and safely become more active to improve their medical conditions and quality of life.

My role involves helping people reach their physical activity goals in a fun and safe way, from consultations to discuss medical conditions and exercise history to supervised gym sessions, group classes and monthly check-ins.

Being more active helps people improve strength, flexibility, balance and co-ordination to help with everyday life activities. There is also the potential to reduce medication and improve mental health by being more active.

What have been the best bits of your role?

It is really rewarding to see people's confidence and physical abilities improve and knowing I have helped them on their journey to better health is such an awesome feeling.

I shouldn't have a favourite, but my here is my most rewarding progress report to date. An older gentleman first came to see me after having a stroke, using two crutches and at high risk of falling. We started our one to one gym sessions with seated exercises, progressing from seated marching to sit to stands, to wall slides and more recently onto the leg press machine at 20kgs! We are still improving our 'tightrope walking' but he now takes the stairs up and down from the gym instead of the lift and leaves his one walking stick by the gym entrance.

Favourite Client feedback:

- "I've never been able to bend my knee this much."
- "I walked all the way through town without stopping to catch my breath."
- "Thanks for recommending aqua classes. I've stopped drinking as much alcohol as I used to and have lost one stone. I still have some back and hip pain but it's less than before."



What have been the challenges of your role?

Our referral scheme targets inactive people who would benefit from being more active, so our main challenge is getting people to walk through the front door – quite literally sometimes! It can seem a big scary place to people who are deconditioned and/or have low mental health.

I've even met someone outside the Leisure Centre to walk through the front door with them. It's great to see the realisation on people's faces that there are people 'just like me' using the gym and going to exercise classes and that it's a friendly Leisure Centre.

Top tips for people wanting to become a Healthwise Facilitator:

Study an Exercise Referral course and spend some spare hours volunteering at an organisation that runs a similar programme to gain some experience.

How can I find out more about Kendal Leisure Centre?

Kendal Leisure Centre, located on the market town of Kendal, South Lakeland, boasts a fantastic gym, 25-metre swimming pool, learner pool, indoor sports hall, studios, conference suites and a 900 seat theatre and arts venue.

It has a popular swimming lesson programme that runs throughout the week, providing quality ASA approved teaching for children and adults learning a life long skill.

It is one of a small number of businesses in Cumbria to provide Changing Places disability toilet facilities, helping to make the centre accessible to everyone.

You can find out more about Kendal Leisure Centre at the following link <https://www.better.org.uk/leisure-centre/south-lakeland/kendal>