

# Stay Active this New Year

by June Peebles CEO of Edinburgh Leisure

Last year was one many of us weren't sad to see the back of. Covid-19 stopped everyone in their tracks – introducing so many changes and uncertainty into all our lives.

We watched lockdown have a huge impact on people's health and wellbeing. While some people were more active than ever, using their daily exercise allowance to get outside and walk, run, cycle or do a spot of wild swimming, many others struggled. For people who already faced barriers to being active, such as those with long term health conditions, unpaid carers, and families living on low incomes, lockdown resulted in a sharp decline in their physical and mental health.

[Edinburgh Leisure](#) is a charity on a mission to help everyone in Edinburgh lead healthier, happier and more active lives. We are passionate about the positive impact physical activity has, which is why we are proud that our Active Communities programme supports over 10,000 people affected by disabilities, health conditions, poverty and inequalities to be active each year.

We know that the people that [Active Communities](#) supports were amongst those hardest hit by lockdown, with a sudden loss of routine, an abrupt end to the support networks they relied on

and increased social isolation exacerbating the problems they already faced. Edinburgh Leisure has been working hard to ensure our Active Communities projects remain safe and we have been delighted to start welcoming participants back since the end of last October.

We are currently supporting people with a combination of in-person and virtual activities. We have adapted programmes so that when Edinburgh was placed in the Scottish Government Level 3 and we were unable to deliver adult group sessions indoors, we moved some activities outdoors, pre-recorded sessions for people to try at home and will shortly be launching a live streaming service so that people can work out alongside their instructor and group in real time.

One project that recently re-started is [Active Mums](#), which supports mums and their families affected by poverty to get active. They have swapped indoor sessions at Leith Victoria Swim Centre for outdoor sessions at nearby Pilrig Park.

One mum, Laura, said: "I'm loving being part of the Active Mums group. The instructors have been so creative, finding ways for us to exercise together outside. Not only are the sessions fun, but we feel like a community of friends who are there for one another."

Although a vaccine has arrived and brings some element of hope, winter still lingers and so does the virus.

If there is one thing that we have learnt in 2020, there has never been a more important time for us to look after our health and wellbeing. As well as improving our physical health, it can improve our mood, boost our energy levels, reduce stress and help us to switch off.

With our venues and services reopened and our Active Communities programme having re-started, we are looking forward to supporting everyone affected by lockdown to rebuild after a challenging year and work towards a healthier, happier

and more active 2021.



Group of four females adults stretching in this lovely landscape, on a sunny summer day.