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Preston brain injury charity sets up online exercise classes to help with wellbeing in isolation

A Preston charity has set up specialist online exercise classes to help brain injury survivors with their physical and mental wellbeing during lockdown.

Headway Preston and Chorley has launched a series of gentle exercise sessions which aim to stimulate both the mind and body and are specially tailored to the needs of those with a brain injury.

The online classes replicate the gentle exercise sessions usually on offer at the charity's activity days at Sir Tom Finney Way before it was forced to close last month.

From chair-based yoga to breathing exercises, there's something to suit everyone's tastes and physical abilities.

One of the charity's fitness instructors Catherine Mitchell runs the classes on YouTube. She said: "It's important that during these uncertain times, we take the time to focus not only on our physical wellbeing, but on our mental wellbeing too.

"The gentle exercise classes have proven of critical importance in maintaining positive attitudes for our members in what are incredibly unsettling times for us all.

"Just as they did beforehand, the virtual classes aim to cultivate a caring attitude towards our bodies, something that can be a struggle for brain injury survivors who may have experienced physical changes following their injury.

"These sessions help our members to accept those changes within their body and implement new forms of exercise tailored to their abilities."

More than 60 brain injury survivors have gotten involved with the virtual classes, with a great response from all participants.

The gentle exercise classes are also supported by telephone calls with members to guide them through the different movements and activities, as well as written instructions for those who may struggle to keep up with the pace of the videos.

But as with any other service, these classes have come at a cost to the charity.

Liz Bamber, Project Manager at Headway Preston and Chorley said: "Small charities like ours need help to continue supporting those who rely on us every day - both during and after COVID-19.

“The closure of our day centre has the potential to cause huge disruption to the lives and wellbeing of our service users, so it’s been our top priority to ensure that we continue to provide some kind of support to keep our members safe and connected.

“Our grants are on hold, events are cancelled, donations are down and that means our clients could be without support. Now more than ever, we rely on generous donations to continue our vital work in the community.

“Every pound donated will go directly towards supporting those affected by brain injury in Preston and Chorley and will make a huge difference to their lives.”

To donate, visit <https://www.headwayprestonandchorley.org.uk/how-to-donate/> or to find out more about the gentle exercise classes on offer, head over to <https://www.headwayprestonandchorley.org.uk/headway-preston-gentle-exercise/>.

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