ROWING & HEALTH
Contributing to the health and well-being of local communities

BRITISH ROWING
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British Rowing is committed to helping people improve their health and fitness. In 2006 we launched Rowing & Health, a set of initiatives to support adults and young people to become more physically active through rowing. We are delighted that thousands of people have been inspired by London 2012 to get out on the water or into the gym to try rowing for the first time or come back after a break. Our section on Health Benefits has a direct link to the Chief Medical Officers’ “Start Active Stay Active” report which provides evidence that sport can play a major part in improving health outcomes.

Explore Rowing for adults is now operating in over 170 locations nationwide; over 2000 schools offer rowing activity, and around 1000 gym staff have received training from us on how to use rowing in their health and fitness programmes. All of this work has been done in partnership with local statutory, voluntary and commercial organisations.

As part of our Olympic Legacy plans we aim to expand our work further into more gyms, more watersports centres, schools and clubs across the country. We are happy to launch Rowing & Health which illustrates some of our success stories and how we have helped people and communities.

Annamarie Phelps
Chairman
Sport and active recreation inspires people and transforms the communities they live in. Great Britain’s “decade of sport”, starting with the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, aims to encourage people to try a variety of sports and activities at all levels, from grass roots through to elite.

British Rowing wants to get people active, keep them active and for many, make rowing a lifelong pursuit. Rowing & Health illustrates how rowing can make a real contribution to the health and well-being of local communities. A series of case studies describes the impact that this sport has had on people from all walks of life.

British Rowing’s Indoor Rowing for Young People programme is helping to influence young people’s attitudes towards health and well-being through competition as a successful part of the Sainsbury’s School Games. We want to continue tackling obesity, promoting young people’s self-esteem and supporting the transition into lifelong community sport or activity.

As well as producing Gold Medallists, our clubs aim to be inclusive and connect people together. “Blue Gym” research (the benefits that aquatic environments have on human health) relates to Britain’s waterways, helping people who row to reduce stress. Our programmes target young people, adults and those in their retirement with elements of strength building and moderate to vigorous cardio-vascular activity.

British Rowing is recognised as a leader on the world sporting stage; we want to continue helping our clubs, coaches and volunteers to be leaders on their local stage advocating the positive and healthy values of rowing.
HEALTH BENEFITS

Regular physical activity improves health. Activity also provides benefits for well-being, such as improved mood, relaxation and release from daily stress.

Why choose rowing over any other sport or activity?
Rowing can play a significant role in helping individuals achieve health-enhancing physical activity guidelines.

Rowing efficiently burns calories
It is possible to burn between 400 to 1000 calories per hour, making rowing great for weight loss and maintenance.

Rowing is an all body activity
The predominant muscles groups used are the legs, buttocks, lower back, shoulders and arms. Rowing regularly can improve core balance and muscle strength in maintaining the correct posture.

Rowing is low impact
Rowing has low impact on the joints and bones. Because of this many people over 60 take to rowing regularly and even compete well into their 80s. Rowing can provide rehabilitation to people coming back to activity after an injury.

Rowing is cardiovascular
Rowing is a cardiovascular, strength and endurance activity, key to maintaining a healthy heart and lungs, reducing the risk of heart disease.

Rowing improves good mental health
Exercise generally improves mood and rowing has links with “Blue Gym” health benefits. Rowing can be a very social activity.
**Rowing encourages teamwork**
Rowing is a great way for people of all ages to learn the dynamics of teamwork and how to come together to achieve a shared goal.

**Rowing is inclusive**
Rowing aims to be fully inclusive, providing opportunities for people with disabilities, or those who might have previously felt excluded, to participate in the sport.

- **Children & Young People:** Doing 60 mins or more a day of vigorous intensity activity
- **Adults:** Doing 150 mins or more a week of moderate intensity activity

Helps to prevent and manage over 20 chronic conditions including heart disease, stroke and Type 2 diabetes
CASE STUDY: Camrowers

2001
The Cambridgeshire Primary Care Trust (PCT) and the Cambridge City Council funded a GP exercise recommendation initiative for patients into an exercise scheme to encourage healthier lifestyles. After the scheme patients could then choose to continue with a number of different activities, one of which was rowing.

The Eastern Region Rowing Council (ERRC) set up a rowing group in Cambridge, and ERRC member Mike Mansfield volunteered to coordinate and coach the participants.

2006
The group expanded owing to the launch of Camrowers Rowing Club. Links were made with the Cambridge City Council’s ‘Forever Active’ scheme, aimed at residents aged over 50, and the University of the Third Age (U3A) leading to an increase in both participants and number of sessions.

2011
Membership reached 70 aged between 50-85 years, two of whom have disabilities. Over 30% of the members were exercise recommendations for medical reasons (including mental health, cardiac rehabilitation and cancer recovery).

John Hunter, 79 has angina, and realises the benefits that rowing has had on his health and says it ‘Keeps my ticker in good nick!’ He joined Camrowers via a GP exercise recommendation. ‘I look forward to Mondays and come out every day in all weather. I wish I’d taken it up earlier.’
Case Study: Camrowers

**Simon Merrington, 66** says, ‘I have angina and needed to get more exercise. At first I was limited on the ergo but now I can row further and I am much fitter than I was five years ago.’ He was referred to Camrowers through John Hunter. Simon continues, ‘Rowing has generally helped with other forms of exercise; I can now hike and cycle further.’ Simon also describes the club as a ‘social meeting point’.

**Pauline Knighton, 62** contacted Camrowers after seeing it listed in a ‘Forever Active’ brochure. Pauline says: ‘I am a member of a gym but I prefer to be out on the water. Rowing is excellent exercise and coming up to retirement I want to stay as fit as possible.’

**Fiona Westlake, 52** contacted Camrowers through a GP exercise recommendation and has now been rowing for 10 years. Fiona lost her sight when she was 11 and says that ‘Rowing at Camrowers is the most stunning opportunity because it is difficult to exercise if you are visually impaired as you need help for most things. Camrowers has given me more freedom and independence.’

**Martin Aitken, 64** began rowing after having surgery to remove his left leg. Martin says; ‘I have had no particular problem with rowing with one leg, I have just had to adjust my seat position slightly. Rowing is a brilliant form of exercise and I really feel I have had a good workout. It is so enjoyable and it’s lovely to be out on the river in the open air and rowing independently.’
CASE STUDY: Elena Foulkes

Name: Elena Foulkes
Age: 14
Condition: Scoliosis, a condition where the spine curves sideways, twists the spinal column, and pulls the ribcage out of position. It affects 3-4 children in every thousand and can cause extreme discomfort.

At the age of 11 Elena was diagnosed with scoliosis and was referred to the Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital (RNOH). Within 6 months Elena’s curve had increased to 45 degrees, and her specialists recommended surgery. Instead, Elena’s parents took her to an osteopath and enrolled her in pilates and sessions at the London SOS clinic.

At 13, Elena started rowing at Weybridge Rowing Club. Her training sessions involved a mixture of indoor rowing, circuits, core training, weights and water sessions. Her follow-up appointments showed notable improvements in her condition; her curve had lessened by 10 degrees, and her specialists decided surgery was unnecessary.

Elena believes rowing has prevented her condition from worsening; she rarely experiences back pain, and her once prominent right shoulder is now not as noticeable. Elena says, ‘I am able to do whatever I like knowing back pain will no longer limit me, I feel more freedom and more like a teenager again. Rowing is honestly the best thing that has happened to me!’ In 2012 she achieved 10th place in her age group at the National Junior Indoor Rowing Championships.

Elena’s parents, Mary and Adrian, are adamant that the strength and fitness Elena has gained through rowing combined with specialist knowledge, has ultimately led to the improvements in her condition. Mary says, ‘Her back and muscles have certainly increased in strength, she seldom suffers from back pain and has grown several centimetres.’
Case Study: Elena Foulkes

“I am able to do whatever I like knowing back pain will no longer limit me, I feel more freedom and more like a teenager again.” Elena
Case Study: Judith Reader

**Name:** Judith Reader  
**Age:** 49  
**Condition:** Autosomal Dominant Polycystic Kidney Disease (ADPKD), a hereditary condition affecting approximately 1 in 800 adults in the UK. ADPKD causes cysts to develop in the kidneys, which eventually replace healthy tissue, impeding normal kidney function. Two thirds of ADPKD patients will develop high blood pressure, and more than half will require dialysis or a kidney transplant by the age of 60.

Judith Reader has been a member of the local Torridge Pilot Gig Club since 2006 as an active rower, coach and cox. In 2007 Judith was diagnosed with ADPKD.

Judith’s kidneys have more than doubled in size, less than 20% of her kidney function remains, and she will eventually require a kidney transplant. Cysts on her liver and spleen put pressure on her abdomen and diaphragm, reducing her ability to breathe properly. However, Judith continues to exercise four times a week; she attends body pump and spinning classes at her local gym, cycles and swims. She also rows during club training sessions with the aid of a back strain belt to relieve the pressure on her organs.

Judith says ‘I feel that being fit is a major factor influencing how I feel; rowing and exercise makes me feel better, fitter and happier. It is easier to cope with an illness when you are fit.

Being fit helps to control my blood pressure, one of the major factors in kidney deterioration. It also helps to keep my heart muscle strong as there is an increased risk of heart valve damage. It will help me cope with the operations I have ahead of me.’

Judith is convinced keeping fit and strong has prevented her condition from advancing at a quicker rate and says she has fewer complications than many other people at the same stage of the illness.
Case Study: Judith Reader

“Rowing and exercise makes me feel better, fitter and happier. It is easier to cope with an illness when you are fit.” Judith
CASE STUDY: London Youth Rowing

London Youth Rowing (LYR) is a charity that aims to increase participation in the sport of rowing in schools, youth clubs and organisations for disabled people, primarily in deprived areas of London.

In 2008 LYR initiated a five-year project called Row East London (RoEL!) funded by Sport England and British Rowing; a team of dedicated Community Coaches work year-round with over 70 state secondary schools in the East London Olympic and Gateway boroughs to introduce young people to a sport most of them may never otherwise try.

LYR believes that rowing delivers whole-life health benefits: fitness, self-development, teamwork and enhanced self-esteem. Professional rowing coaching inspires all of their young participants, from beginners through to those with the ambition to compete at national level and beyond. LYR Managing Director Matt Rostron says, ‘We are proud to say that more and more of the juniors that we work with are continuing their rowing after graduating from the junior sections that we run. We believe that our clubs are now creating the platform for juniors to move into the senior club structure if they do not go to university’.

The charity works at a number of rowing clubs and venues across London. Through an innovative project called Mobile Learn2Row (supported by British Rowing’s ‘Explore Rowing’) boats are towed to waterways where no permanent facilities exist, such as Fairlop Water and Danson Lake, extending rowing to new communities. LYR also runs the annual National Junior Indoor Rowing Championships (NJIRC), which attracts around 2000 young competitors every year.

LYR has the support of an excellent group of volunteers, including many from the Metropolitan Police who recognise the value of their work among disaffected youth. Liam Downes, a participant in LYR’s programme in East London says, ‘Growing up in Hackney, I have seen lots of young people choose the wrong path, and the outreach programmes that LYR runs have helped many of them. I will never forget the impact that this organisation has had on my life and I am more grateful than you would ever know.’

londonyouthrowing.com
CASE STUDY: The Specialist Health Promotion Service, North East Lincolnshire

Indoor Rowing in Schools Programme (IRIS)

The Specialist Health Promotion Service (SHPS) has developed and part funded IRIS in partnership with the Schools Sports Partnership (SSP). IRIS promotes the use of indoor rowing during and after school as a fun activity to encourage healthy living, increased physical activity and the re-engagement of young people that are dissociated from Physical Education (PE).

Eight secondary schools in the North East Lincolnshire area have loaned or part-bought 49 indoor rowing machines used by over 4000 students. The SHPS and SSP have formed strong links with a staff member in each school in order to sustain regular use of rowing machines within the PE curriculum, during lunch and after school. Between 2010 and 2011, 10 instructors completed the Level 1 Indoor Rowing Coaches qualification and 28 teachers within five schools attended the Introduction to Indoor Rowing Instruction workshop. These measures have ensured that students receive high-quality sessions. Students’ continued participation has been reinforced by providing them with personal challenges to progress through a tiered bronze, silver and gold award system, including School House Challenges and the Annual Inter-School Competition.
Cardiac Rehabilitation Service

The Cardiac Rehabilitation Service is a SHPS programme catering for individuals between the age of 40-90 who have undergone Angioplasty, Coronary Artery Bypass Graft, Valve Repair or Valve Replacement surgery. The service provides structured exercise sessions and education to help patients adopt and maintain a healthier lifestyle to improve their overall health.

Patients who have been pre-assessed can participate in one exercise and relaxation session a week. The exercise session consists of a circuit of 12 stations, one of which is indoor rowing; initially patients row for five minutes and then progressively increase the duration as their fitness levels improve.

The Cardiac Rehabilitation Service has access to 10 indoor rowing machines. Since the programme started in 2007 over 500 patients have had access to rowing machines and they now take part in an annual indoor rowing competition. Two patients have completed a million metre challenge within a year, and a number of other patients are now working towards the same challenge on their own rowing machines at home. The service also raised money for charity through a sponsored Rowathon.
CASE STUDY: Durham Rowing Club & Explore Rowing

‘Changing the Physical Activity Landscape’

County Durham Sport was commissioned by the NHS County Durham to develop, coordinate and manage the ‘Changing the Physical Activity Landscape’ (CPAL) programme. The CPAL programme aims to increase the level of participation in physical activity for people aged 40 – 74 who are at a higher risk (greater than 20%) of cardiovascular disease. The project was endorsed by the County Durham Health and Wellbeing Partnership in May 2009.

‘Explore Rowing’ opportunities have been included into the CPAL programme and sessions are held at Durham Amateur Rowing Club. The project provided boats, transport, coaching and a part-time Project Leader to run recreational sessions for residents living in areas of high deprivation within the club’s catchment area.

Working with local partner programmes in the selected areas, the club has been able to support participants taking part in various levels of physical activity. Many participants did a Learn to Row course using stable boats with guidance provided by the Project Leader and a group of volunteer ‘Explore Assistants’. On completion of the course participants were provided with various pathways from which to join the club.
Case Study: Durham Rowing Club & Explore Rowing
WHAT NEXT?

I am interested in establishing sustainable projects with local rowing clubs...
Contact British Rowing locally to discuss ways in which we can add value when local health interventions are being considered. britishrowing.org/about-us

British Rowing believes that for rowing to make a positive impact on a community we need to work in close partnership with other key strategic and local delivery groups. At a grass-roots level we feel that those partners will be the network of 45 County Sports Partnerships.

I know an adult who wants to get involved in recreational rowing...
Point them to britishrowing.org/club-development/explore-rowing

Explore Rowing introduces adults to water based activity in a fun, friendly and non-competitive environment. Through accredited Learn to Row courses in community clubs and water sports centres British Rowing aims to provide an accessible way for adults to get involved in physical activity.

I know someone who has never done indoor rowing before and belongs to a gym but is worried about risk of injury...
Contact British Rowing locally britishrowing.org/about-us

I know a parent of a child who is interested in taking up rowing...
Point them to britishrowing.org/schools/indoor-rowing

Our Indoor Rowing for Young People programme includes resources and training developed to promote learning, physical activity and appropriate competition. British Rowing provides support to schools and youth groups to establish a positive first experience and sustained participation in rowing. Our competition structure is part of the Sainsbury’s School Games and we are encouraging the transition of young people into Clubmark clubs and water sports centres. Through continued support we hope to advocate this approach at a local level.
I know someone with a disability who would like to find out more about rowing...
The British Rowing website has a list of UK clubs offering Rowability programmes.
britishrowing.org/taking-part/rowability

A number of our coaches specialise in Rowability development and can give advice on ways of getting people with disabilities involved, both indoor and on the water. Our Adaptive Rowing: A Guide is also a great starting place for clubs who would like to offer Rowability programmes.

I know someone who is showing a general interest in rowing and would like to learn more about it...
The British Rowing website has lots of information about how to get involved, finding a local rowing club, safety, safeguarding and competition. www.britishrowing.org