

# Otley Leg Clubs response to COVID-19



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Otley Leg Club was started in March 2018, using the Lindsay Leg Club model. The Club offers individualised care to people with lower leg problems and chronic leg wounds in a non-medical setting at the Over 60's Club, in Otley.

Otley Leg Club is staffed by the Practice Nurse Team, District Nursing Team, Foot Health Practitioners, Otley Action for Older People Volunteers with support from the Leg Club Industry Partners. Unfortunately, in March 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Otley Leg Club had to close.

## BACKGROUND

There are currently 297 Leg Club members in Otley. The average weekly number of people attending the Leg Club is 39, this is divided between medical contacts (average: 19; 49%) and social contacts (average: 20; 51%). This results in 950 medical contacts per year and up to 1000 social contacts annually.

The Leg Club accepts referrals from Chevin Medical Practice, Westgate Surgery and Aireborough Medical Practice. The majority of members are registered with Chevin Medical Practice.

## HOW MEMBERS' NEEDS HAVE BEEN ADDRESSED SINCE LOCKDOWN

The 19 members needing medical care at closure, have all been contact by text and phone, over the lockdown period to assess their limb health. We felt it was an ideal opportunity to ask for members' feedback about Otley Leg Club, to assess the value of the Leg Club and to help prepare for reopening.

Members who were able to self-care have been encouraged to do so, others members have been referred on to the District Nursing Team.

Practice Nurses appeared to be treating more members than the District Nursing team before closure. However, the District Nurses were always willing and able to help the Practice Nurse team with treatments and dressings. The COVID-19 pandemic has created an increased work load for the District Nursing team, who need to visit vulnerable and isolating people at home.

Members were all given appropriate contact details to access further support as needed.

Members who were able to self-care, were

referred to an 'Otley Action Volunteer.' Members receive weekly telephone contact and general support from their named volunteer. Identified health needs of members are referred back to Otley Action and then passed to Leg Club clinicians.

A new system Accurx, enables Service Users to take photographs of their legs, which can be forwarded to their GP Practice. The photographs are uploaded on to SystemOne which forms part of the Service Users medical record. This enables clinicians to make medical decisions about treatment quickly and effectively. This service can be used as needs arise, but does rely on the use of a smart phone. In addition, hospital consultations can be carried out over the phone using the photographic evidence to help plan future treatment.

During lockdown the Foot Health Practitioners have been unable to work. Members have been given the Foot Health Practitioners contact details, so they are able to book home appointments when the service resumes.

Dopplers have continued to be recorded by District and Practice Nurses during lockdown, which has facilitated earlier intervention and appropriate treatment. In addition, Leg Club Industry Partners have been available by email and phone. This has proved to be an invaluable service, so that the most suitable and correctly fitting compression hosiery can be prescribed. Compression therapy provides an important part in healing and ulcer prevention. It directly assists the venous and lymphatic return, improves microcirculation and reduces inflammation. (Lim et al, 2018). We have favoured the use of hosiery and wraps rather than layered bandaging, to reduce face to face contact, with the associated risk of spreading infection.

## MEMBERS THOUGHTS ABOUT OTLEY LEG CLUB

▶ Members were asked if they felt the health needs of their legs were being met during lockdown.

Of those who responded 'No', comments included;

-The elastic has gone in my hosiery.

-I can't cut my own toenails.

-My support hosiery is too loose.

▶ Members were asked if their legs had;

improved, stayed the same or become worse during lockdown.

A positive 42% of members' legs had improved, during lockdown.

We are aware that members need continued support and monitoring to prevent recurrence of ulceration. Following healing, recurrence rates of venous ulceration are reported to be as high as 70% (Franks et al, 2016). Many clinicians propose that venous ulceration should be viewed as a long-term condition (Brown, 2010).

► Members were asked for their thoughts and feelings about Otley Leg Club

Of the comments we received 95% were positive these included:

-Social contact was highlighted by nearly all members (talking to other people and helping others out)

-Getting my legs dressed, the good treatment and everyone is happy

-The contact with other patients. It helps me if I'm low as I can chat to other people who understand

-Support from the Reps, the nurses talking to their colleagues to get me the best care

-The entertainment, tea, cakes and especially the singing as it lifts my spirits. Confidence and getting out of the house. It's my only weekly outing.

I liked not having to wait in at home for the nurses to visit and I was seen promptly at the club.

-Having my feet and toe nails done.

-Seeing my friends and mates.

-The laugh and chat on the minibus journey. I miss

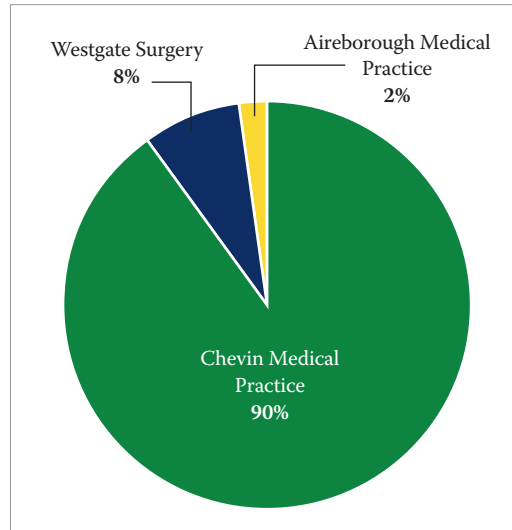


Figure 1. GP Practice of Attendees

everything about it.

The 5% negative comments included:

-I wanted my leg to heal and one year on, it's still not healing

-Toilets are unsuitable especially for disabled people.

► Members were asked if they knew who to contact if they had a problem with their legs

There were 67% who said they did know who to contact. We were concerned that 33% of members did not always know who to contact, if they had concerns regarding their legs, especially given the common rate of recurrence. As a result, a number of members were directed to contact their GP or Practice Nurse.

► Members were asked how the Leg Club could

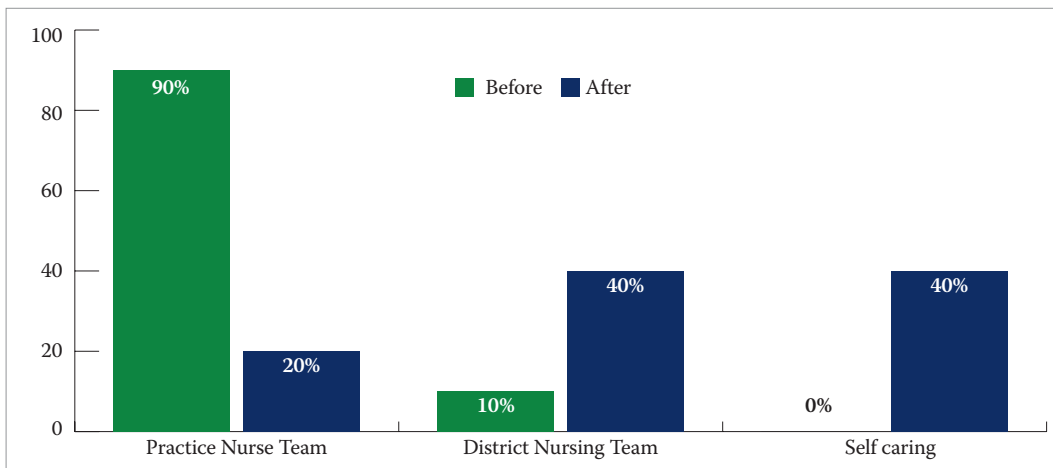


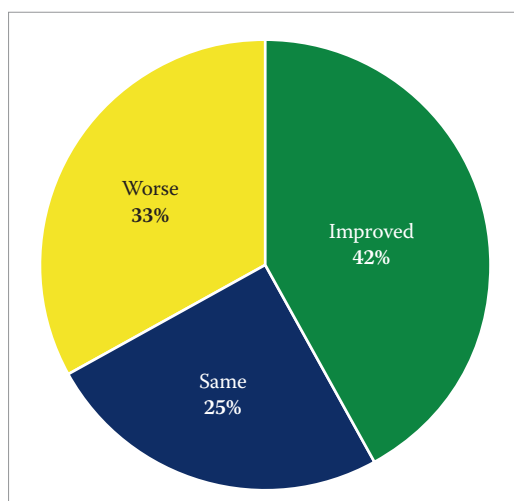
Figure 2. Members' Treatment before and following COVID-19

SUPPORT US

The world is going through a very difficult time right now and charities need your support. To support The Lindsay Leg Club Foundation, please visit this website: <https://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/charity-web/charity/finalCharityHomepage.action?charityId=1001744>

## REFERENCES

- Kar-Purkayastha I (2010) An Epidemic of Loneliness. *Lancet* 376(9758):2114–5, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(10\)62190-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(10)62190-3)



**Figure 3.** During COVID-19 how did members describe the condition of their legs

move forward or be improved.

Valuable suggestions from members included;

- A regular weekly Foot Health Practitioner
- Taking photographs of my legs which could be sent to the Vascular Team before my hospital appointments
- Nothing it's perfect, a good match of health and social partnerships.

## SUMMARY

It is difficult to record the healing rates of wounds during this lockdown period. Many of the members have been isolating and have been seen by District Nursing Teams. Members have expressed worry over not walking for such a long time and how this will affect their leg health.

At the time of writing (19 June 2020) the Otley Leg Club has been closed for three months, due to COVID-19. Members who were in need of medical treatment in March 2020 have all been contacted. They are either self-caring or being seen by one of the nursing services. On questioning, a third of Leg Club members did not feel that the health needs of their legs and feet were being met since the closure.

The self-caring members have been 'buddied' with an Otley Action volunteer for weekly phone calls and contact. Members have described looking forward to the weekly contact, which has helped partially to reduce social isolation and supported people in managing their own health. This will continue until our vulnerable members are safe to resume their lifestyle.

The Over 60's Club has closed and all activities ceased. The venue is an old, unmodernised building and plans have been passed for much needed refurbishment. This work was due to start at the end of June 2020. Work finally started on Otley Over 60's club in September 2020. The new premises will include downstairs offices to provide easy access for clients and full disabled facilities. Manor Clinic in Otley was going to be used as a temporary venue for the Leg Club, however, Manor Clinic is now being used as a 'hot zone' for patients, with possible symptoms of COVID-19, to be medically assessed. At present, Otley Leg Club does not have a venue.

Otley Leg Club is a partnership between Otley Action for Older People and three local GP practices. The majority of members are from one GP practice. The volunteers are invaluable and work tirelessly, without them Otley Leg Club would not be able to run. We thank them sincerely.

Otley Leg Club does far more than treat leg problems. We had underestimated what a life line it provides for the community, for socially isolated people, friendship groups, compassion between members, non-stigmatisation of leg wounds, an informal setting which supports the mental health needs of people, an opportunity to review healed ulcers and minimise reoccurrence, camaraderie, having a laugh on the minibus with door to door transport and the empowerment of members to care for themselves. In addition, the professional development for staff around wound treatment and compression through discussion and teaching with Leg Club Industry Partners and other nurses.

I hope we will be able to reopen Otley Leg Club when safe to do so at our new refurbished venue. We will need to ensure the safety of our members and ourselves by working differently. We have already adapted to new ways of working e.g. members taking photographs of their limbs, telephone consultations. We need to continue to use alternatives to routine practice, this will help to provide the best practice in leg ulcer management and prevention.

Otley Leg Club is such a valuable asset. The people of Otley and local area deserve to have this service provision. In the words of our 100-year-old member, 'I can't wait to return when it opens, if I'm still here'. When Otley Leg Club reopens, we will have new facilities, old and new members, volunteers and staff. The party will be well over due.