

UK Living Well Report 2021



Scope

The purpose of this report is to give an overview of the UK Wide Living Well Programme, focussing primarily on the year January to December 2021.

Background

The Living Well programme transformed into a wholly online programme as a result of the pandemic in 2020. It consists of virtual information webinars and wellbeing sessions for those living with and affected by MS. The activities have been co-produced with our Living Well volunteers.

Webinars provide information on a variety of topics such as diet and health, latest research, meditation and relationships. They are presented by an expert speaker alongside volunteers who have lived experience of MS and facilitated by a livingwell facilitator.

Wellbeing sessions are a way for groups people with or affected MS to learn more about how to live well with MS. They are a means to share experiences, learn new skills and connect with others living with MS. They are aimed at different groups including those living with MS, newly diagnosed and family and friends of those with MS.

Outcomes

50 activities took place in 2021 and **1,169** people took part. The target number for participants was 882 which means that 133% of the target was met (see table 1 below):

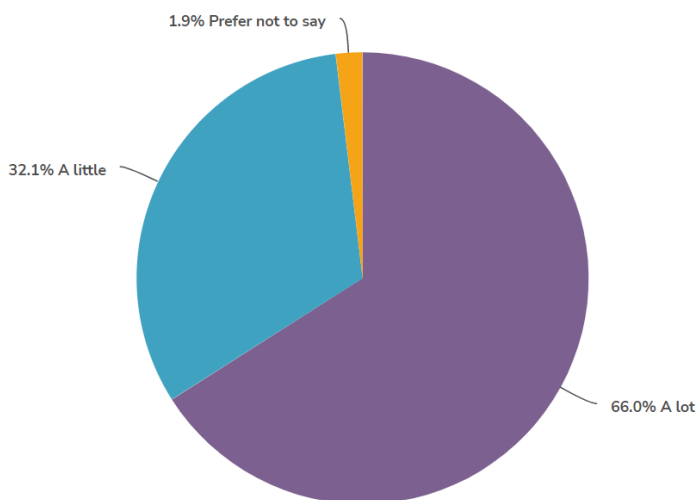
Table 1	Number of participants attending sessions		
Sessions	Target	Actual	% of target met
Wellbeing Sessions	126	138	110
Information Webinars	600	1313	219
Time to Chat Family and Friends	60	45	75
Time to Chat - Webinar follow up	96	123	128
TOTALS	882	1,169	133

Impact

An evaluation of the programme spanning the period 2020-2021 took place and this involved participants of Living Well activities being asked to complete an online survey shortly after the activity and then 4 to 6 weeks later. Some of the results of the survey are captured below. These are followed by quotes from some of our 2021 participants.

Post session (n=65)

- When they registered to attend the session, participants were asked to think about what they wanted to gain from attending. They were then asked to say to what extent they felt that they had achieved what they wanted to. 66% said they had achieved most of what they wanted to. See diagram to the right.



- 85% of participants said that they had a better understanding of what self-management is after attending the session
- 61% said that they had more information to know how to manage the symptoms of MS
- 81% said that they had identified where they could apply what they had learned to their daily life
- 81% said they felt more confident to set goals in their daily life

4 to 6 weeks follow up (n=56)

- 94% said that they felt they had achieved what they wanted to achieve by attending the session
- 61% of participants said that they had changed things in their daily lives as a result of taking part in the session
- 80% reported that they felt more confident in setting themselves goals

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Quotes from participants:

Session	Activity Type	Date	Quotes
Cognition and MS	Webinar	16/09/21	This has been SO beneficial - knowing that I'm not stupid just because I can't recall words was something I valued hearing!
			Thank you we are not ALONE. THANK YOU VERY MUCH I am not the only one!!!!
			Thank you - now I know it's not just me who struggles sometimes with 2 things at once! Only diagnosed this summer, so it's all quite new.
Making Life Style Choices that are Right for me	Webinar	23/06/21	Absolutely inspirational evening. Everyone has been fantastic with so many great ideas and so much positivity. Huge thank to all the volunteers for sharing with their personal experiences.
			Inspiring, encouraging, brought me out of a dark mood that day, it's nice to know I'm not alone and it's nice to hear that it's not all positives - there are some barriers along the way and the panel showed this and how they overcame it.
Friends and family time to chat	Wellbeing session	23/08/21	This was my first connection with support and meeting others in a similar situation. My "little win at the moment" is taking this first step and talking to others.
Living Well with MS	Wellbeing session	03/06/21	Thank you again for organising the chats and all the sessions, and for facilitating them in such a friendly, supportive and inclusive way. They have really helped me come to terms with my diagnosis, and given me more confidence to engage with others about my MS, which all makes life a little easier.
Newly Diagnosed	Wellbeing session	17/05/21	Thank you so much for everything. The sessions have been really helpful!!! They have fuelled my fighting spirit
		23/08/21	Your group has given my husband a new lease of life and he loves zooming in. We've been together for over 20 years and it's only in the last 2 years that he has struggled. He is such a fighter and really likes to help and support others. If I could hug you, I would. Just to say a huge thank you for all that you do! You're amazing!
What Next? Newly Diagnosed Information session	Wellbeing session	17/11/21	Five words to sum up the session: "informative, invaluable, hopeful, friendly and helpful"

Newly Diagnosed Wellbeing session

Five words to sum up the session: "informative, invaluable, hopeful, friendly and helpful"

What next?

Looking forward to 2022 the Living Well Team has worked closely with our volunteers to provide a full programme of activities to meet the needs of our MS community in 2022.

We have an array of new activities lined up, including:

- **Conversation cafes** – themed and focussed sessions, hosted by a Living Well facilitator joined by volunteers. Everyone will get a chance to share what the topic means to them and discuss what has challenged, touched or inspired them. They will also be given the opportunity to complete a reflection journal.
- **New information webinars for family and friends** of those with MS who would like further information and to ask questions that will help them support their friends or relatives who have MS
- **New style wellbeing sessions.** In the past these have been grouped into four sessions per event but we will be trialling different arrays in 2022, some single sessions, some in blocks of two and so forth. There will also be a range of new themes such as the “five ways to wellbeing” which have been researched and developed by the New Economics Foundation

A current schedule of our upcoming activities is on the MS website at www.mssociety.org.uk/care-and-support/virtual-support-events.

Live well!



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