

Appendix IV

Exercise Referral Scheme Annual Report 2025-2026

This report provides a comprehensive review of the Exercise Referral Scheme delivered across Active4Today sites during the financial year 2025-2026. It provides a holistic view of the scheme and outlines key performance indicators that reflect continued growth and impact, whilst highlighting areas of success and opportunities for further development.

1. Background

1.1 The Exercise Referral Scheme provides a structured and personalised 12-week physical activity programme, designed to support individuals living with long-term health conditions to engage safely and sustainably in physical activity. Delivery is overseen by Level 3 Exercise Referral qualified instructors, based primarily within fitness suite environments across Active4Today leisure centres.

1.2 During 2025-2026 the scheme operated across the following sites:

- Blidworth Leisure Centre
- Dukeries Leisure Centre
- Newark Sports and Fitness Centre
- Southwell Leisure Centre

1.3 The Active Lifestyles Officer holds overall responsibility for the scheme, including partner engagement, promotion, monitoring performance, and service development.

1.4 Referral forms are received from GP practices and NHS teams via System One, while trusted partners and community organisations complete a digital referral form. All referrals are processed centrally, with initial contact made by the Customer Services team to explain the process and arrange an induction appointment.

1.5 Participants are offered access to a discounted referral membership (from £20 per month), aimed at reducing financial barriers and supporting behaviour change. Following completion of the referral period and building positive activity routines, individuals are encouraged to transition into a standard Active membership to sustain long-term physical activity.

1.6 The continued success of the scheme is based on four key elements, increasing referrals received, sustaining participation beyond week 12, Continued engagement with new and existing partners and subsequent conversion to full membership.

2. Current Situation

2.1 Between 1st April 2025 and 31st March 2026, Active4Today received a total of 481 Exercise Referral applications, representing an 8% increase when compared with 2024/25. Referrals were received from 41 partner organisations, including GP practices,

physiotherapy services, hospital teams, social prescribers, and voluntary sector partners. See below for the full list.

- 2.2 Whilst overall referral numbers increased, engagement varied by site, with growth primarily at Newark Sports and Fitness Centre and Southwell Leisure Centre. This reflects wider variations in referral activity seen within other services across the district.
- 2.3 Sites with limited growth align with areas where referrals into multiple services have declined or stagnated, particularly from GP practices, where referral numbers are slightly down overall. This highlights ongoing inconsistencies in referral levels and partner engagement across locations.
- 2.4 It is assumed that ongoing pressures within primary care services and workforce changes across GP practices have contributed to fluctuations in referral volumes, particularly during quarter 4.

3. Data Analysis and Key Performance Indicators

- 3.1 Referrals received between 1st April 2025, and 31st March 2026 totalled 481, as shown in table 1, representing an overall increase of 8% compared to the previous year. Referral activity fluctuated across quarters and sites, reflecting variations in partner engagement and service demand.
- 3.2 Notably, GP practice referrals have shown a gradual decline over the year, contributing to reduced referral numbers in some areas. In contrast, physiotherapy referrals have significantly increased, more than doubling over the same period, helping to offset this reduction and drive overall growth within the scheme.

Site	No. of Referrals												No. of Referrals		
	Q1			Q2			Q3			Q4			Full Year		
	24-25	25-26	%	24-25	25-26	%	24-25	25-26	%	24-25	25-26	%	24-25	25-26	%
BLC	12	12	0	16	15	-6	16	10	-38	8	12	50	52	49	-6
DLC	24	13	-46	17	27	59	22	20	-9	31	8	-74	94	68	-28
NSFC	56	67	20	66	101	53	54	67	24	69	64	-7	245	299	22
SLC	12	21	75	20	24	20	14	13	-7	9	7	-22	55	65	18
Total:	104	113	9	119	167	40	104	110	6	117	91	-22	444	481	8

Table 1

- 3.3 Whilst referrals received during this period were lower at BLC and DLC than during the previous 12 months, data suggests individual referrals were 'ready to exercise'. Table 2 shows, an overall uptake rate for 2025/26 of 57%, which represents 5% improvement compared with 2024/25, this increase is predominantly seen at BLC.

Site-specific uptake (%)			
Site	2024-2025	2025-2026	Change
Blidworth	48	57	+9
Dukeries (Ollerton)	62	62	0
Newark	53	55	+2
Southwell	55	56	+1

TOTAL	52	57	+5
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Table 2

- 3.4 Following a small decrease in quarter 1, overall uptake for the referral membership increased throughout the remainder of the year, with the most significant increase being during quarter 4 - January to March, as shown in table 3.

Quarterly uptake comparison (%)			
Period	2024-2025	2025-2026	Change
Quarter 1	58	47	-11
Quarter 2	44	53	+9
Quarter 3	52	62	+10
Quarter 4	55	68	+13

Table 3

- 3.5 Table 4 highlights a fluctuation in uptake across different sites. Whilst NSFC received the largest number of overall referrals, the uptake rate was 7% lower than uptake at DLC who had the highest uptake to the scheme during this period.
- 3.6 Overall, there was a referral uptake rate of 57% with 271 individuals joining the exercise referral scheme for 2025/2026. This represents a 5% improvement when compared with the previous year.

2025-2026 Referral Uptake per Quarter													Referral Uptake%		
Site	Q1			Q2			Q3			Q4			Full Year		
	Y	N	%	Y	N	%	Y	N	%	Y	N	%	Y	N	%
BLC	5	7	42	7	8	47	7	3	70	9	3	75	28	21	57
DLC	7	6	54	16	9	67	9	11	45	8	0	100	42	26	62
NSFC	33	34	49	51	50	51	44	23	66	38	26	59	165	134	55
SLC	8	13	38	14	10	58	8	5	62	7	0	100	37	28	56
Total	53	60	47	88	77	53	68	42	62	62	29	68	271	209	57

Table 4

- 3.7 Between 1st April 2025 and 31st March 2026, 253 individuals completed the 12-week exercise referral scheme, with 167 (66%) progressing to a full Activo membership.

4. Referral Demographics

4.1 Gender

- 4.1.1 Of the 481 referrals applications received, 290 (60%) were from females and 191 (40%) from males.
- 4.1.2 Table 5 shows 57% of female and 56% of male applicants went on to join the exercise referral membership overall.

Gender	Joined Y	Joined N	Total	% Joined
Female	164	126	290	57%
Male	107	84	191	56%
	271	210	481	56%

Table 5

- 4.1.3 Whilst there was a lower female uptake when compared to number of applications during 2025/2026, there has been a positive 26% uplift in females joining the scheme than in the previous year, as shown in table 6.

Gender Comparisons			
Gender	Joined (24/25)	Joined (25/26)	Change
Female	130	164	+26%
Males	99	107	+8%

Table 6

4.2 Age

- 4.2.1 The most represented age groups participating in the scheme during this period were those aged 41–60 years accounting for 38% of referrals, followed by 61–70-year-olds who account for with 23% of referrals. As shown in table 7, this mirrors trends observed in previous years and reinforces the scheme’s relevance for middle-aged and older adults managing long-term conditions.

Age Breakdown			
Age Group:	Joined (24/25)	Joined (25/26)	Change
<18	0	0	0 (0%)
18-25	4	7	+3 (+75%)
26-40	44	40	-4 (-9%)
41-60	83	101	+18 (+22%)
61-70	52	75	+23 (+44%)
70+	46	48	+2 (+4%)

Table 7

4.3 Referrals by Medical Condition

- 4.3.1 Raw data contained in appendix 1 reveals the scheme received referrals for 21 of the 27 eligible conditions in 2025/26, compared with 21 eligible conditions in 2024/25. The top 3 conditions remain as Musculoskeletal Disorder, Obesity and Cardiovascular Disease.
- 4.3.2 Table 8 shows that whilst referrals for cardiovascular disease have remained relatively stable, there has been a significant increase in the number of MSK referrals indicating growing demand for support related to joint, muscle and movement-based conditions. In contrast there has been a reduction in referrals for obesity.

Top three referral categories (%)			
Medical Condition	2024/25	2025/26	Change:
Musculoskeletal Disorder	26	50	+24
Obesity	24	16	-8

Cardiovascular Disease	9	8	-1
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Table 8

4.4 Referral Organisations

4.4.1 During this period, 14 new referral partners were recruited including 11 Healthcare Professionals and 3 trusted partners. During 2025/2026 referrals were received from 41 partner organisations shown in appendix 2, with key referrers including physiotherapy teams (212 or 44% of referrals) and 16 GP practices, (167 referrals, or 35% of referrals). Whilst a high number of referrals were received from GP practices this is a decrease on the previous year of 23%.

5. Challenges in 2025/26

- 5.1. While overall growth within the Scheme and increased engagement with new referral partners is encouraging, it has also presented operational challenges, as the scheme has grown and staffing levels have not kept pace with demand.
- 5.2. Despite attending the Newark and Sherwood Primary Care Network Protected Learning Time session and engaging with 10 GP practices across the district, overall engagement from existing partners, particularly GP practices, has declined compared to the previous year. This is reflected in reduced referral numbers, with a further drop observed across all partners in quarter 4.

6. Conclusion

- 6.1. The 2025/26 reporting year demonstrates continued progress within the Exercise Referral Scheme, with overall growth in referrals, improved uptake rates, and sustained engagement across a broad range of referral organisations. However, the year also highlighted key challenges, particularly reduced engagement from GP practices and increasing pressure on workforce capacity as demand grows.
- 6.2. Notable strengths include increased conversion to referral memberships, improved participation across genders, and a significant rise in referrals for musculoskeletal conditions, reflecting changing health needs within the local population.
- 6.3. Recommendations for 2026/2027 have been included in this report to ensure the offer continues to evolve with the needs of Newark and Sherwood's residents and communities.
- 6.4. Active4Today's Exercise Referral scheme continues to play an important role in supporting preventative health and long-term wellbeing across Newark and Sherwood supported by strong partnerships, data-led decision-making, and a continued focus on service sustainability, the scheme remains well-positioned to build on the progress achieved in 2025/2026.

7. Recommendations

- 7.1. The management of Southwell Leisure Centre changed from 1st April 2026, so future reports will not contain data from Southwell. The exercise referral offer remains in place for residents from Southwell and surrounding villages who will be directed to utilise facilities at Blidworth Leisure Centre and Newark Sports and Fitness Centre.
- 7.2. It is assumed that the proportional reduction in obesity referrals may reflect increased availability of alternative weight management interventions within primary care, including pharmacological pathways. Further benchmarking against Nottinghamshire-wide scheme data would be valuable to confirm whether these trends are consistent across other providers.
- 7.3. In response, a targeted GP re-engagement plan has been initiated in Q1 2026/27, focusing on system refreshers, relationship rebuilding, and clearer communication around eligibility and outcomes.
- 7.4. To address this, re-engagement plans are being developed in collaboration with the Nottinghamshire Alliance, with the aim of reconnecting with GP practices, social prescribing teams, and physiotherapists across the district.
- 7.5. Continued engagement is underway with existing fitness instructors to identify those interested in completing the Level 3 Exercise Referral qualification, alongside participation in other relevant training and development opportunities.
- 7.6. Targeted re-engagement activity with referral partners, alongside continued investment in workforce training and development, will be essential to sustaining service quality and meeting future demand.

Appendices

Appendix 1

Health Condition	25/26
AST - Asthma	1
CA – Cancer	5
CFS – Chronic Fatigue	
CHD – Coronary Heart Disease	2
COPD – Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease	13
CVD – Cardiovascular Disease	37
DEM - Dementia	
DI– Diabetes	8
EP - Epilepsy	2
F - Fall	
FB - Fibromyalgia	3
GEN - General Health	26
HBP – High Blood Pressure	3
HLD - High cholesterol	1
ILD - Interstitial Lung Disease	4
LBP – Low Blood Pressure	1
MH – Mental Health	25
MND - Motor Neurone Disease	
MS – Multiple Sclerosis	3
MSD – Musculoskeletal Disorder	242
NEU - Neurological Disorder	2
O – Obesity	78
OA – Osteo arthritis	7
OTH - Other	
PD – Parkinsons disease	3
RA – Rheumatoid Arthritis	
Str - Stroke/ TIA – Transient Ischemic attack	15

Appendix 2

Organisations	25/26 Referrals
Abbey Medical Group Blidworth	8
Abbey Medical Group Ravenshead	
ABL Health - Heath Your Way	1
Age UK	3
Amputee Rehab Team KMH	1
Back to Life - Osteopath	1
Balderton Medical Surgery	13
Barnby Gate Surgery	18
Bilthorpe Surgery	3
Cardiac Rehab Nurse	19
Cardiac Rehab Team	12
Caythorpe and Ancaster Medical Practice	1
Collingham Medical Centre	8
Farnsfield Surgery	1
Fountain Medical Centre	28
Hill View Surgery	6
Hounsfield Surgery	4
Lombard Medical Centre	29
Long Bennington Medical Centre	2
Major Oak Medical Practice	3
Mid Notts Respiratory Service	1
Middleton Lodge , New Ollerton	21
MSK - Physio KMH	27
MSK - Physio -NK	41
Newark and Sherwood Local Mental Health Team	8
Pain Management - KMH	1
Physio - Byron House	144
Physio - KMH	2
PICS - Health & Wellbeing Team NWK	4
PICS - Health & Wellbeing Team SWD	2
Rainworth Surgery, Rainworth Primary Care Centre	2
Respiratory KMH	4
Respiratory NWK	7
Registers Osteopath	3
Rheumatology Teams	4
Social Prescriber SWD	1
Social Prescriber NWK	5
Southwell Medical Centre	23
Stroke Teams	9
Tuxford Medical Centre	1
Village Health Group	1
Other	9