

## West of England Rural Network: Fran's Story

From a young age, Fran had to wear surgical boots and have a lot of treatment for various conditions. Doctors told her that she would struggle to exercise and would be in a wheelchair by the time she is 40 years old but alas, Fran has been able to defy those comments.

As part of her physical activity journey, Fran decided to take up running. Starting out with little distances, building up consistency and ending up in a regular routine, being able to run 10km and even participate in the Bath Half Marathon. Fran mentioned that “nothing really got me into it, I began to get fit and realised how wonderful it was... I got the fitness bug and loved it”. Following that, Fran then joined a mountaineering club and started rock climbing and caving.



Unfortunately, Fran's physical health got worse where she had to stop these activities as some health conditions were affecting her body, causing fatigue and eventually some pain. Fran could have sat on her laurels but instead continued using her physical activity knowledge and experience by joining the gym to build up her strength.

Then the pandemic happened which hindered Fran's progression although she made the effort at home to use resistance bands, hand weights and an exercise ball which she “found difficult to be disciplined and could easily find a reason not to do something”. As soon as the gyms reopened and the public was able to book into timeslots, Fran did it straight away and was back to going three times a week.

Fast forward to 2022 and Fran's health unfortunately declined where her heart was getting worse and her breathing was becoming heavier. Then in March 2023, she got a virus where her health dropped further, to the point where her gym couldn't let her attend for insurance reasons. She wouldn't be able to attend until her cardiologist gave her the all-clear to return.

Then, through Fran's local social prescriber and village agent, Ketyn from WERN visited and worked on some 1-1 sessions to support with Fran's health and her continuing fitness journey. Ketyn is trained to deliver Otago, through Wesport, and introduced a variety of exercises including: seated movement, resistance bands, balance and cardio.

Ketyn will see her clients once a week for the period of support so it's crucial for them to continue the exercises in their own time. Ketyn explained that “having Fran, who is so motivated and will do the exercises between sessions, really helps her develop even further and quicker”. Fran's motivation for being active isn't just to get away from daytime TV but because she knows she must work on her health in order for her cardiologist to allow her to get back in the gym. The other key motivation is to be able to utilise her mobility scooter. As a piece that comes in multiple heavy parts, she needs to build up the strength to disassemble, put in her car, and reassemble elsewhere - meaning she will be able to see so many more places and see so many more people.

Fran has recently been cleared to have a shoulder operation which also resulted in her being given the green light to return to the gym, pre and post operation. From Wesport, we would like to say a big thank you to WERN and Ketyn for supporting clients and a massive, good luck to Fran in her physical activity journey!