The Power of the Badge: Embedding prehabilitation in communities through partnership

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Building a Partnership

- Conversations started March 2025
- Data sharing agreement completed and put in place by Dec 2025
- OPTIMISE with Middlesbrough Football Club Foundation, commenced January 2026 – *Funded by MFCF*
- **Free** for patients to attend

What happens?

Referrals via OPTIMISE Cancer Prehabilitation Programme
Sent via secure NHS portal
MFCF then contacted patients to organise a start date

Each session consists of 1hr exercise (adapted as required to patient's individual needs) followed by 1 hr of refreshments, social and emotional support, and activities based around goal-setting and mindfulness

Sessions run twice weekly:
Riverside Stadium, Mondays 1-3pm
Southlands Community and Sports Hub, Fridays 1-3pm

Minimum Monthly catch ups between MFCF and OPTIMISE to discuss patient progress, attendance and any issues/concerns

Data

South Tees Hospital

- 113 patients referred since Jan 2026
- >50% have engaged/attended at least 1 session
- Age ranges 37-89 (mean 66)
- 40% female, 60% male
- 37% referrals from IMD 1-3. 26% referrals alone from IMD 1 (most deprived)

- **Three most common cancer sites across MFC Foundation participants:**
  - 28% Urology
  - 19% Upper GI
  - 12% Breast

- **South Tees Hospital Data has shown:**
  - 28% reduction in anxiety scores
  - 55% improvement in strength training days
  - 46% improvement in minutes/physical activity per week
  - 39% improvement in breathlessness scores
  - 5% improvement in usual activities
  - 12% improvement in mobility scores
  - 10% improvement in self-care
  - 13% improvement in overall Quality of Life

Data

MFC Foundation

97% of participants felt that the cancer prehab sessions met their expectations

83% of participants are very likely (10/10) to recommend the OPTIMISE Cancer Prehab sessions to others

66.7% of participants felt more confident in their physical strength and energy to handle recovery from treatment

50% of participants reported an increase in feeling relaxed

46% of participants reported an increase in feeling interested in other people

42% of participants reported an increase in feeling optimistic

42% of participants reported an increase in feeling more cheerful

38% of participants reported an increase in having ‘energy to spare’

38% of participants reported an increase in feeling closer to people

33% of participants reported an increase in feeling good about themselves

What did participants like about the programme?

70% - other people/friendly/community

47% - exercise programme

40% - support/awareness of MFCF staff

27% - inspired self-confidence

13% - discussions

What did participants not like about the programme?

80% - nothing

10% - no rehab option

7% - location/venue too cold

7% - only 6 weeks

7% - session times

3% - some of the exercises

Hand grip strength and sit to stand data being captured from Oct 2026

Foundation

Achievements

Middlesbrough FC Foundation Programme of the Year Nominee
Announcement made at MFCF Annual Dinner in November

Middlesbrough FC Foundation Participant of the Year Nominee- Ivy Mitchell
Announcement made at MFCF Annual Dinner in November
combination of chemotherapy and targeted therapy for lymphoma

MFC Foundation Staff and Participants supported Trust comms with World Cup and 'Getting Moving' Video

Featured on BBC Tees/ Look North with an article/new feature about the session and the impact it has had

Participants attended Boro vs West Brom game in hospitality. Box donated by Vision Building Services

On the Cancer Care Map

Patient Feedback

“As a participant I have to say this is for me an amazing programme for anyone who now finds themselves in need of support. Very formal, relaxing and welcoming and the experienced and confident personal trainers are very caring and motivating. Not something I would normally engage with but very pleased I reached out. Thanks to all the team.”

“Amazing to see MFCF Foundation getting involved with OPTIMISE. Speaking as someone with first-hand experience of how OPTIMISE really can make a difference in a person’s cancer journey, not just to the person but also their wider family. I can’t wait to see what’s next.”

“At first didn't want to attend but came and loved it. Glad I came. Didn't think I needed the support with who I have around me, but it was great to have it from people going through the same thing.”

“Wanted to see how it might help with treatment and much benefit would get from it. I did get a lot of benefit from it. Was unsure whether I was able to do it, but I managed really well.”

Foundation

Patient Feedback

“I have already attended 2 sessions of prehabilitation exercise classes at the Riverside Stadium which were really beneficial. I wish I had known about them as soon as I got my diagnosis as I could have accessed them so much earlier. I have now started my chemo which falls on a Friday but as soon as I feel up to it, I will be returning to the Monday session! Lovely staff and very welcoming group who all made me feel at ease and really helped with my anxiety! Exercises are tailored to your needs and after the session a nice cuppa and a chat!”

“Building up my strength is the best thing that I have done for myself. I think everybody who has a problem like this should get out and meet people and try to do something to help themselves”

“Mr X is really, really pleased with the MFCF sessions. He goes on a Monday and has found them really helpful. He said after this Monday he felt great post the session despite having treatment last Friday when he would usually expect to feel lousy.”

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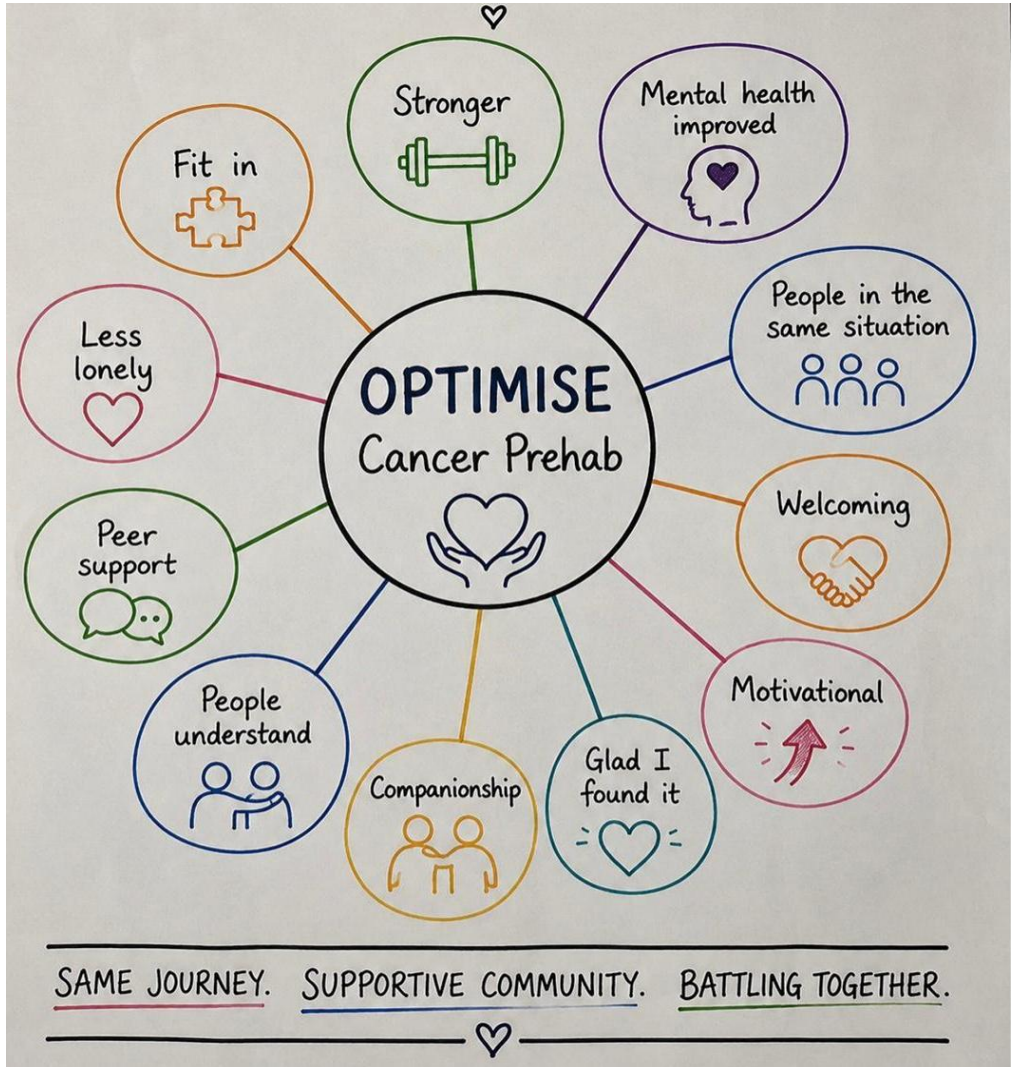
Patient Feedback



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EFL in the Community

OPTIMISE Cancer Prehab > Versus Cancer (EFLitC)

Conversations with EFL in the Community commenced Feb 2026

Aimed at supporting 4 Football Club Charities (FCC's) across the North East to offer both prehab **AND** rehab sessions

Sunderland (Foundation of Light), Carlisle (CU Community Sports Trust) and Newcastle (NU Foundation) have a self referral process for patients

Middlesbrough remains the same with direct referrals. Only a name change to Versus Cancer to align with regional /national programme funding.

Has allowed patients to return post treatment for rehab sessions and been very successful

EFL IN THE COMMUNITY

MIDDLESBROUGH FOOTBALL CLUB 18 76 Foundation

NHS University Hospitals Tees

CHAIR BASED EXERCISES

Foundation

Foundation