

Mobilates: The Community ‘Mob’ Transforming Mobility

Individuals living with Ehlers-Danlos Syndromes (EDS), Postural Orthostatic Tachycardia Syndrome (POTS), and other mobility challenges have often been overlooked in traditional fitness and rehabilitation spaces. Mobilates, a venture supported by UnLtd, exists to address this gap. Across the UK, it provides adaptive, accessible exercise combined with a supportive community, enabling participants to engage safely at their own pace. Mobilates empowers individuals not only to improve mobility and strength but also to build confidence, connection, and a sense of agency over their wellbeing.

The insights shared in this thematic case study overview, come from a focus group of regular Mobilates participants. Their experiences, challenges, and aspirations highlight the transformative impact of a programme designed with accessibility, inclusion, and community at its core.

Combatting Negative Institutional Experiences

For many Mobilates community members, the healthcare system had felt akin to a series of doors closing in on them. They described being caught in cycles of short appointments, limited physiotherapy sessions, and clinicians who seemed unable or unwilling to see their reality. **“You get six sessions... take me three weeks to recover from one session, and then that’s it,”** Kimberlee recalled. **“It was an absolute nightmare.”** Michelle agreed, describing her frustration of not qualifying for support: **“Not being well enough for one programme, but too unwell for another... there was nothing on offer.”** This repeated dismissal left several of the participants questioning their own experiences. For some, it felt as though their pain was blamed on them, not the condition itself. Kimberlee reflected, **“I have a rare brain condition... I’m never listened to... we’re treated like it’s our own fault.”**

Mobilates became the first space where they felt heard, believed, and seen. What set Mobilates apart was its insistence that no one be left behind.

Accessible Physical Activity

Central to the success of Mobilates, is its radical commitment to accessibility. Every movement, every class, and every activity can be adapted to suit participants’ varying needs. Veronica described how transformative this flexibility was for her confidence: **“Before Mobilates, I felt very guilty that I couldn’t finish classes. Here I feel empowered.”** The impact went beyond exercise, with tangible improvements in physical health and independence. Kimberlee described measurable changes: **“I’ve had fewer calls, less hospital stays, fewer**

investigations... I'm not in A&E all the time anymore. It works. Why isn't this rolled out?" Suzanne reflected on how the programme had shifted her day-to-day life: **"I was virtually in a wheelchair all the time. Now, I can walk around my house without using my crutches. I can push my own wheelchair, whereas I couldn't before."**

By removing the pressure to "keep up" and instead meeting each participant where they were, Mobilates opened up physical activity to those who had previously been excluded, proving that inclusive design leads to better health outcomes.

Sense of Community and Empowerment

Beyond the physical benefits, participants repeatedly emphasised the community as a lifeline. The online and in-person spaces offered not just exercise, but connection, laughter, and solidarity. Kimberlee described the joy of being able to engage casually with others: **"Yeah. And you can post anything, you know, you can ask questions, you can... post stupid memes to brighten someone's day. It's just, uh... lovely, inclusive."** For Veronica, the sense of belonging was profound: *"I'm not really been part of anything like this. And I feel so privileged."* Karen added that the beauty of the community lay in its acceptance: **"You can just turn up in whatever condition you're in, and you all understand, and that's fine."** Importantly, this sense of belonging translated into a renewed sense of agency. Veronica reflected on how Mobilates helped her advocate for herself: **"This community makes me feel empowered... capable of advocating for my own needs and for the disability community in general."**

Improved Mental Health and Wellbeing

While many joined Mobilates hoping to improve their physical health, participants found the impact on their mental wellbeing to be just as significant. Kimberlee explained: **"I didn't expect the mental side, I was just hoping for the physical. Actually, it's the other service, the mental, especially when you go through menopause."**

The safe, supportive environment became a protective factor against severe mental health challenges. Kimberlee stated plainly: **"This has literally saved my life. And not just once."** Suzanne echoed this sentiment, describing the community as life-saving during a particularly difficult period: **"I was on the verge of not wanting to be here again when I joined. This community has absolutely changed my life."** Beyond individual impact, members spoke of a shared emotional journey that fostered deep empathy and connection. Sophie explained: **"We've all had very similar experiences in our own way. So, you only need to say a couple of words, and that empathy and understanding is... it's immeasurable."**

By creating a space that nurtured both physical and mental wellbeing, Mobilates offered a holistic model of support that helped members rediscover hope, resilience, and joy.

Overall Key Insights

Mobilates' experience highlights important lessons for tackling inequalities in access to physical activity:

- **Holistic Support is Essential:** Healthcare interventions should address both mental and physical wellbeing to deliver sustainable impact.
- **Flexibility Drives Inclusion:** Adaptable exercise models ensure participants of all abilities can take part meaningfully.
- **Community Builds Power:** Belonging, peer support, and collective empowerment are as transformative as the activity itself.
- **Restoring Trust Matters:** By counteracting negative institutional experiences, Mobilates creates a safe space where participants feel believed and supported.