

## Chair Statement, Annual Report - October 2020

I think it is fair to say that this has been a year unlike any other, full of challenges but also full of many successes. Certainly when I took over in late 2019 I knew we needed to find ways to grow our participant base and retain newly trained teachers, but that we would need to do that whilst living through a pandemic was not something any of us predicted! What hasn't surprised me though is the way our teachers have risen to the challenge of keeping in touch with members through a variety of methods as well as offering classes on line or through videos on You Tube to name a couple of methods. This has enabled FLEXercise to stand out in the crowded group exercise market and has even gained us a community fitness award.

We knew that we were in a rapidly changing world but did not realise last year that it would be changing quite as much. We knew that we would need to have a more digitally focussed marketing approach which Ali Bailey and Sarah Price had been actively progressing but when we went into lockdown they were really quick to set up the 10@10 and me@3 sessions which have been a huge success. I have enjoyed the 10@10 sessions hugely as I know many of you have. Sarah and Ali have been supported by Janice Gronow, Julie Channen, Charlotte Bly, Margaret Cutting plus, more recently, Janet Tate and Kim Davies in the on line sessions and the learning from them, will, I am sure stand us in good stead as we go forward in this different world. We are a group exercise organisation and so, of course, we all really want to get back to our classes and see each other again and we had just started to do that in some areas. With further lockdowns everything we have learned from the first lockdown stands us in good stead and I am confident we will be able to see each other face to face again in classes next year, but on-line classes can continue to be another "string to our bow".

The Covid 19 pandemic also meant that our 90<sup>th</sup> celebrations in Bath and our annual Torquay CPD event had to be postponed until 2021. Thank you to the Events team for all the time and effort it has taken to re-arrange the 90<sup>th</sup> celebration, though this may now need changing. Also thank you to the Training Group for all their work they have put in in taking CPD online to our teachers.

Since I took over, the Trustees and management team have been continuing to wrestle with the challenges of growing our participant and teacher base. The reduction in the membership fee and the option of paying a levy instead of a membership fee were both introduced to try to retain newly trained teachers. We now need to go further if we are going to be able to protect the most important elements of WLHB, namely the Bagot Stack exercise system and the FLEXercise teacher community. The Trustees have had to make some key decisions in order to keep the costs of running the organisation down. These include no longer paying EMD UK to manage our administration, finance and training, but managing the work in house. To do this we need to simplify the way we collect income for the organisation and so will be asking teachers to collect a participant levy instead of annual membership. I know that some of you will find these changes difficult and uncomfortable, but we are fighting for survival and must look to new ways of operating.

Ultimately, the success of WLHB and FLEXercise is driven by our teachers and the huge energy and dedication they give both to their class participants and the continuing success of FLEXercise. On behalf of the Trustees I want to thank all the teachers for their efforts during this particularly challenging year. They are the life blood of FLEXercise, and it is through their efforts that we will continue to move forward. As Trustees it is our job to work with the Management team to listen to our teachers and provide them with the support and tools they need. This we will continue to do. I would also like to thank all our members and friends who have supported the organisation over many years and hope we can count on your continued support in this very challenging of times.

Thank you and keep safe!

Innes Milne, Chair WLHB

October 2020