

Progress at Spire Cambridge Lea

Patient Case Study

Age is just a number

To celebrate his forthcoming 55th birthday, Production Director Mike Chitson decided to give himself a truly unique birthday gift; one that would help him achieve a long-term ambition to run the London Marathon. Mike's success story began when he referred himself to Progress, The Cambridge Centre for Health and Performance at Spire Cambridge Lea Hospital...

"In readiness for my 55th year, I decided to create a 'bucket list' and tick-off all those things I wanted to achieve, the London Marathon was right up there. I still remember watching that first ever event and making a promise to myself that one day I would do it! However, life goes on, and all of a sudden you find that you're in your fifties!

While I've always kept myself fit by playing rugby, and coaching one of Bishop's Stortford RFC youth teams for almost a decade, my body had taken a bit of a battering over the years. The wear and tear was making itself known and I was beginning to feel my age, especially after an achilles injury that started to affect my movement, and my golf game.

I decided to refer myself to Progress at Spire Cambridge Lea. My first visit was to see Professor Cathy Speed, an expert in sporting injuries, who was absolutely amazing and treated my achilles with ultrasound and shockwave therapy last year. During this time I finally gained a place for the London Marathon with British Blind Sport, a fantastic charity that enables blind and partially sighted people to enjoy sport. However, due to my achilles I couldn't run, but luckily my place was rolled over to this year, but then I suffered calf-injury! How was I ever going to complete the London Marathon at this rate?

Fast approaching 55, I knew that prevention was better than cure and it was the time for a different kind of thinking – I needed some damage-limitation training. It wasn't just about getting back on my feet, of course I wanted to become fitter so that I didn't incur injuries, but what I really wanted was to be capable of completing the London Marathon.

Having already had a great experience at Progress, I was very confident that they would be able to help me, so I had a consultation with Cris Kellett, Physiotherapy Manager and Head of Rehabilitation at Progress. We hit it off immediately. Cris has a great approach, his sports-related expertise, energy and problem-solving techniques really worked for me.

Cris created a three-month programme to help me achieve the fitness levels I was looking for. He advised and guided, cajoled and encouraged me all the way, and for two hours every week I worked on a series of strength-building exercises and completed eight sessions on the AlterG Anti-Gravity Treadmill. I hadn't experienced anything like this before and it made a huge difference. Together with invaluable support from Cris, this programme helped me to train and regain strength without putting stress on my recovering injury.

In January this year, I wasn't able to run a mile without pain, so the next step was to empower my running, Cris taught me how to change my gait and control my stride, without overextending – quite a task when you think about it. I started back on the road, struggling within a couple of miles, but without pain and getting used to running again. We trained early mornings and late evenings, Cris was always there and even extended his time outside of clinic hours, I'm based in Hertford, so this helped me enormously. He worked around my timeframe, which was an absolute game changer.

As I progressed, Cris continued to build my routine. He discussed ideas with my gym coach and created an online programme so that we could all login at any time to monitor activity and communicate any problems. My running capacity quickly increased from a few miles to being able to comfortably run 11-13 miles, even my Chiropractor was astounded. Then, two months later, I achieved my longest run of 18.5 miles – a landmark moment!

Before I started this programme with Progress, my main concern was the damage that I might do to myself. Cris's regime not only helped make me physically stronger, but it realigned my positive mindset and provided the reassurance that I needed. I trusted his judgement because he absolutely understands preventative maintenance. You just don't realise how important this kind of relationship is until you work closely with someone who is driving you forward to your personal best. It is a great motivational chemistry.

The support from Cris and the entire Progress team has been fantastic. Not only does their extensive knowledge and skill assure you that you are in safe hands, but they are also passionate about what they do, and this ethos carries through from the sports massage therapists to the front of house at Progress. The equipment, facilities and expertise are second-to-none, but this is more than just a sports clinic. It has been a genuinely positive experience and I felt completely comfortable every step of the way, quite literally. They have helped me achieve a massive personal goal.

I now realise that it doesn't matter how old you are, you don't have to be restricted in what you can do!"



Picture caption:

Mike made it over the finish line at St James' Park in London this year, and at the age of 55 this mature marathon runner is feeling fitter than ever. On receiving his medal, Mike said: "I feel fortunate to have benefited from the treatment and level of service at Progress and believe that without the support of the team there I would not be right here today!"

Cris Kellett MSc MCSP, Physiotherapy Manager and Head of Rehabilitation at Progress concludes: "Mike's achievement is an example to all of us about what it means to dedicate yourself to achieving your goal. Despite some difficult moments Mike kept going, and that brings out the best in all of us. It was a pleasure working with him, now we just need to get on the golf course!"

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