

Supporting long term physical activity, connection and respiratory health via cross sector collaboration: the Eastbourne BreatheEasy Pulmonary Rehabilitation Maintenance Programme

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About BreatheEasy Eastbourne

BreatheEasy Eastbourne is an independent registered charity affiliated with Asthma+Lung UK. We support patients with chronic respiratory diseases throughout Sussex.

We are a support group run by volunteers who either live with a lung disease or care for a person with a chronic respiratory illness.

We have our own dedicated premises in Whitley Road, Eastbourne, which includes an equipped gymnasium and free parking for up to 20 vehicles.

PR Maintenance Programme

We run pulmonary rehabilitation maintenance programmes (PRMP) across eight towns in East Sussex. There are 12 sessions per week.

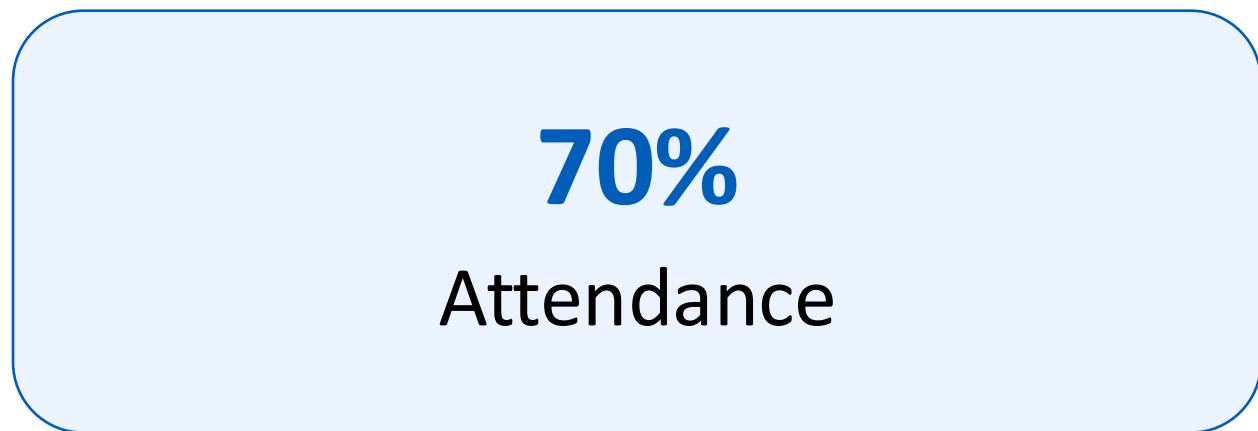
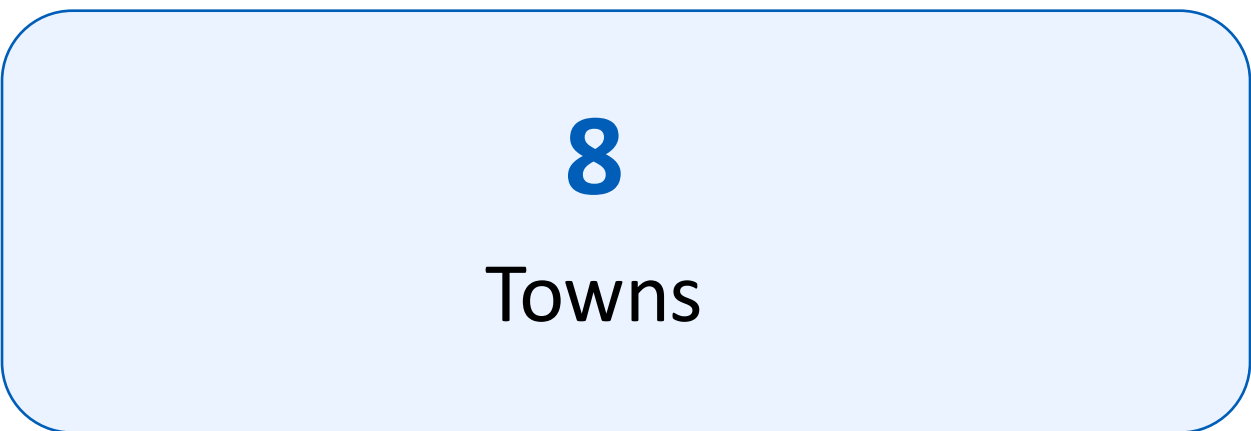
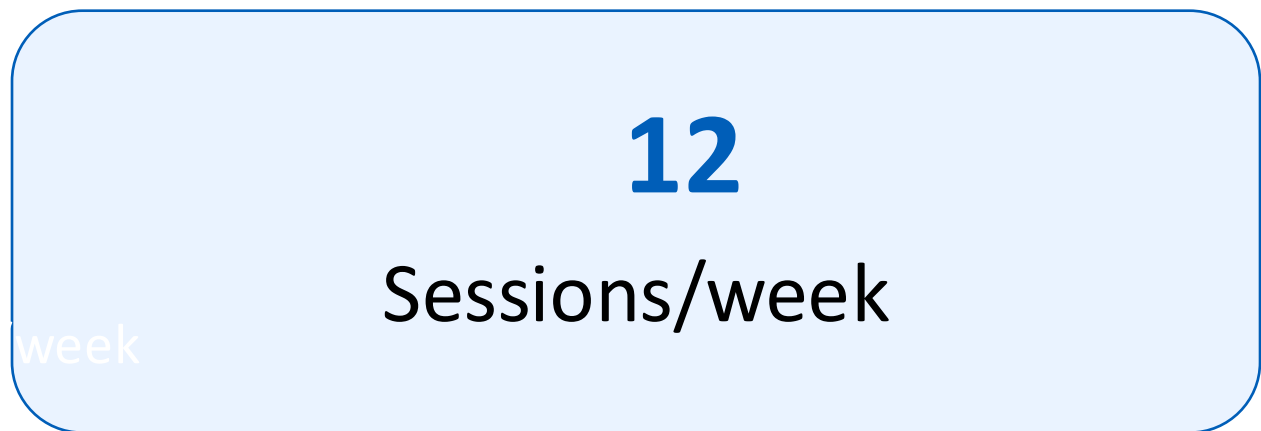
Patients who have completed an NHS pulmonary rehabilitation programme are referred to the BreatheEasy PRMP by their GP or the Community Respiratory Teams.

The weekly classes are led by an exercise physiologist employed full time by BreatheEasy or senior physiotherapy students from Brighton University with supervision by a tutor.

Workforce Development and Education

We host students from Brighton University physiotherapy faculty to support their Master’s Degree studies. Some of them, when qualified are employed by BreatheEasy.

The students appreciate the opportunity to supervise the PRMP with support from a tutor, for eight weeks as part of their degree course. This community placement may be the first time the students are exposed to patients with chronic respiratory diseases. The feedback from the students is that their experience is educational, enjoyable, and extremely valuable. We contribute to students workplace experience and help with their career development. To the University, we are a valuable resource for learning.



Pulmonary rehabilitation maintenance class



BreatheEasy Sports Day



Social connection after exercise session

Programme Impact

The classes include breathing and aerobic exercises, strength and mobility training, as well as education. They provide much needed social connection and peer support. The PRMP enables participants to sustain the benefits achieved during NHS pulmonary rehabilitation, prevents physical decline, encourages lifelong exercise adherence, and celebrates movement at all activity levels. Classes have 8- 12 participants and 70% of those referred attend the programme. Participants report improved strength and mobility, reduced breathlessness and meaningful social connection. The PRMP classes across all venues and sessions are attended by 156 participants per week.

Patient Experience

Feedback from patients is that they prefer small groups that offer peer support and a setting that is not judgmental when coughing and when carrying oxygen. We learned that this cohort prefers not to go to a gym setting. This patient group includes a large cohort of people who are often overlooked and isolated in today's world.

Supporting Patients and Families

We strive to keep our patients motivated, moving , and educated so that they can make informed choices about their health and wellbeing. We listen and take action when a crisis arises and offer support to the patients and their wider family. We signpost to other services. Over the last 14 years we have helped many hundreds of patients and their families have a better quality of life.

BreatheEasy Sports Day

We held an all-afternoon event in August this year for all those attending our PRMP across our county. It was the first of its kind in our area and we hope to make it an annual event. Around 150 people came along to either take part or to watch and support the participants. All activities were designed around participants with a chronic lung disease and activities were based around their exercise sessions. All participants received a participation medal and additional gold, silver, bronze medals for each activity. The Sports Day was an opportunity for patients and families to gather and celebrate their achievements and raise the profile of BreatheEasy.

What's next

We are bidding for adequate funding so that we can offer more pulmonary rehabilitation maintenance programmes to more people at our centers and in their own homes for those who are unable to get to community-based venues. These patients are the ones who suffer the most from isolation. The Charity started in Eastbourne and has already spread to seven other towns in East Sussex. Our ambition is to support patients living with chronic respiratory diseases across the whole of Sussex and become BreatheEasy Sussex.

