

Let's get **physical!**

If you live in the Manchester area, there's a local initiative to help you get fit



In the swim with Manfit

Physical exercise is essential for everyone, but especially for amputees, who need to keep fit to be able to manage their prostheses, stay strong and prevent lifestyle-related illnesses. This is particularly true of patients recovering from amputation following illness or accident, because when routine hospital physiotherapy is concluded, many people do not feel ready to go straight into public gyms or other exercise facilities.

Manchester Amputee Fitness Initiative (Manfit) provides an ideal solution for this. No matter how long ago they lost a limb or limbs, or for what reason, people can take different types of exercise in a friendly environment with the support and encouragement of other group members. Not only can people improve their strength, flexibility and balance, but through enjoyment and the release of endorphins, and through interaction with other people,

they can improve their feelings of wellbeing.

Every Friday, Manfit provides gym sessions at the Manchester College, followed by a free meal. On Tuesdays, swimming sessions take place at the fabulous Aquatic Centre, where the Commonwealth Games were held and which is providing training facilities for next year's Olympics. Both sessions are exclusive and free. Funding for the gym is provided by Manchester Joint Health Unit and for the swimming by Manchester Leisure, while Greater Manchester Fire Authority provides and subsidises exclusive non-contact boxing sessions at their community gym at Moss Side Fire Station on Wednesdays, when members pay a small fee.

Personal experience

"Hi, to everyone who reads this!" says Tracy Delaroute, who attends all the different sessions. "I am 41 and had my left leg amputated below the knee in August 2010.

"Life has not been that easy since having my leg amputated. I was not able to do a lot of day-to-day activities that I was once able to and I was also very worried that I would not be able to re-build my fitness levels. I was gaining weight and there was not a lot I could do about it.

"That is when Manfit became a part of my life. I had noticed the posters around Withington's Limb Centre and thought 'What have I got to lose?' (only some weight!). So I telephoned and spoke to Dr Margaret Tyson, the scheme founder, who gave me all the information I required and I was delighted to learn that there were a number of activities available to me."

Boxing

"This is a non-contact sport offered by the Moss Side Fire Services and takes place every Wednesday morning at 10am. It is hard work, but also great fun. A small fee is

required and you are trained by a member of the fire service (see below)”.
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You can try boxing

Training in a gym

“This is another great facility offered by Manfit and what a great place to get back into shape! You are able to use all the equipment with fitness instructors at hand to help. It takes place at Manchester College, where use of the gym is available for up to two hours and a free lunch voucher is given. If that doesn't give you some incentive, I don't know what will.”



Staff will help you with the equipment

Make a splash

“Swimming takes place at the Aquatic Centre in Manchester. This is one of the best exercises, as it uses the whole of your body. The facilities are excellent and easily accessible for wheelchairs too (as are all the places mentioned). Assistance is given in and out of the pool, and in the changing room if required.

“I would encourage everyone to give all the activities mentioned a go. By attending them it has made me appreciate what I still can do and I do not focus on the things I can't anymore. I am fitter and healthier too. The other members of Manfit help give encouragement and it is good to talk to others who understand what I have been through. “Go on! Give it a go - I did!”



Manfit makes everyone welcome



To collect people's contact details and assess their wants and needs, questionnaires are distributed to all new members, which include optional questions about their personal details and which exercises they prefer.

Feedback questionnaires have been used to assess satisfaction. Both include personal and health/fitness-related data. Fitness is also assessed periodically by gym trainers (BP, weight, BMI, aerobic capacity, etc).

Manfit has had articles published in *The Guardian*, *Disabled and Supportive Carer* magazine (*D&SC*) and the *BACPAR Journal* (British Association of Chartered Physiotherapists in Amputee Rehabilitation). Gok Wan's *How to Look*



There's plenty of space for wheelchairs

Good Naked (featuring amputees) filmed a short film of the group swimming (not naked!) to be included with statistics about exercise for amputees and Manchester's local Channel M has also done a piece. ■

If you are interested in joining or for more information, please contact: info@manfit.org or visit www.manfit.org or telephone Dr Margaret Tyson on 07776 181180.



Getting fit is fun – and it's good for you!