

FAMILY HEALTH

I'm in a much better mindset thanks to Flourish and Succeed

JESS MOLYNEUX TALKS TO THE MUM WHO TURNED HER LIFE AROUND AND NOW HELPS OTHERS TO DO THE SAME

I WAS lost, very very lost. I was grieving. It was a really bad place I was in."

Grieving for her late mum, who died of motor neurone disease, and weighing around 16 stone, mum-of-six Gemma Guy, from Huyton, was severely depressed and suffering from anxiety.

But that was two years ago.

Today, mentally and physically, she is a different person - and fitness and exercise have played a crucial role in her recovery.

Wanting to pick herself back up, Gemma joined Flourish and Succeed CIC, with a friend, in 2016. Based in Stockbridge Village, the community interest company incorporates boxing, well-being and guidance for women.

Gemma, now 36, is still in disbelief over how much she has flourished and succeeded.

She explains: "Now I've accepted my mum, I'm a lot happier mentally, I'm 1,000% in a better place. A lot of people have said 'you're a lot stronger in yourself, not just on the outside appearance, but on the inside.'"

Since joining the group, Gemma has lost around six stones, and now has an active role helping other women voluntarily within the classes.

Run by managing directors Michael

"Tosh" Fielding, MBE, and Shelley Traynor, Flourish and Succeed began as a boxercise class, and now has around 130 members, varying in age from 15 to 65. The group works with women from all walks of life - including those suffering from anxiety, depression, alcohol and drug abuse, to bereavement, eating disorders and obesity.

Shelley Traynor says: "It's mainly about giving them the confidence to thrive in whatever they want to do. It's just supporting them along the way."

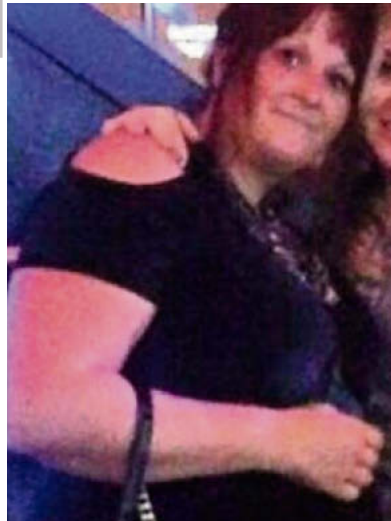
Despite her friend no longer attending, Gemma persevered, attending weekly classes, personal trainer sessions and group park runs.

Adapting to the group's "buffalo mindset" she began facing her fears head-on, with the support and encouragement of the "herd".

As her confidence grew and her self-doubt decreased, Gemma found herself taking on roles within the group, empowering other members and participating in challenging walks and climbs in aid of charity.

She has also participated in multiple fundraising events with the group, including climbing Snowdon and walking the Fairfield Horseshoe, in the Lake District, in aid of the Owen McVeigh Foundation.

Discussing the group and its



Gemma before joining Flourish and Succeed

members, Gemma says: "They'll sometimes message me saying, 'Gemma, this is why we're coming, because we see your before and after pictures, and how much you've progressed and just the way you are now.'"

The support of the team not only encouraged Gemma to improve herself physically, but take her accomplishments one step further.

She adds: "I've done a Diploma 1 and 2 in personal training now, so I'm qualified in that. I was just staying at home with the kids all the time, and now I'm working - he's helped me get into work."

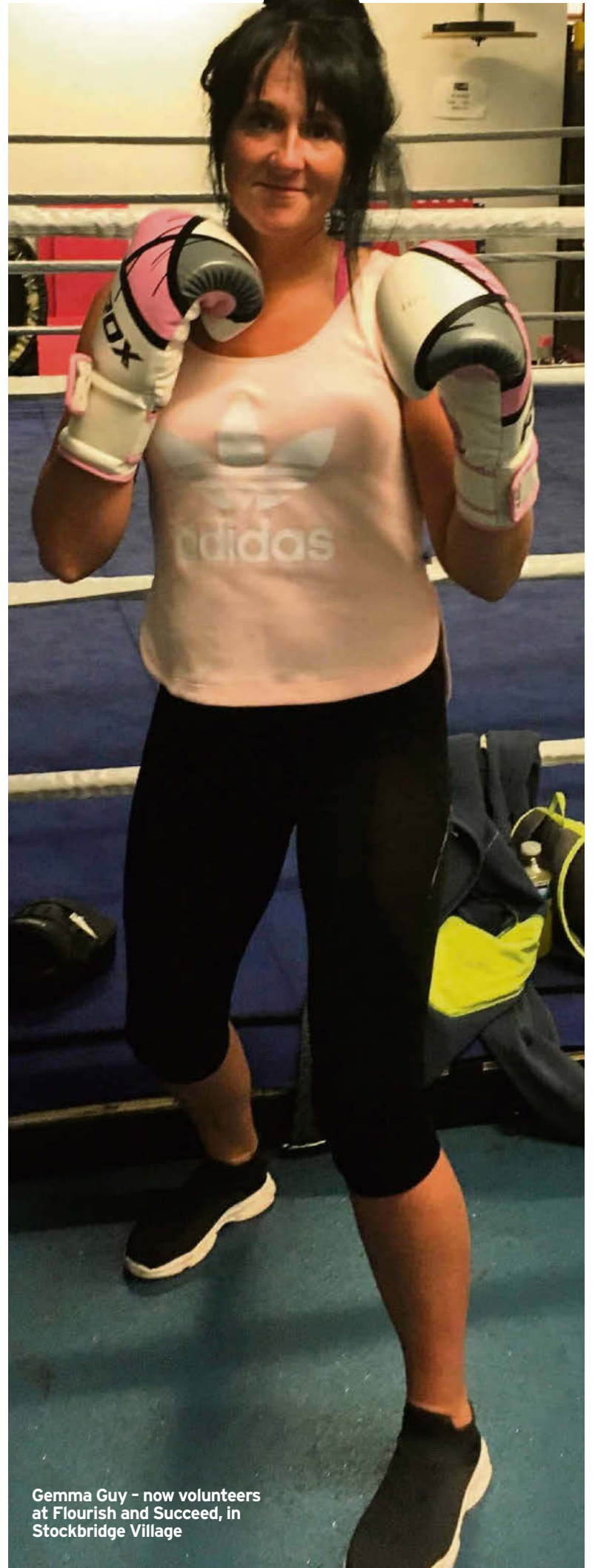
"Tosh" Fielding not only facilitates the classes, but mentors the members throughout their journey.

He says: "I think the mindset is a powerful thing. Too many focus on the physical fitness. Gemma is the catalyst going out there. All of a sudden, I saw a rise in the number of people coming through and it was like bringing a herd in."

The support and sense of community within the Flourish and Succeed group can be seen in Gemma's transformation - and felt as soon as you walk through the door.

Gemma adds: "I'm in a better routine now with my kids and my lifestyle has completely changed. I've made loads of lovely friends in there and I'll keep them forever."

■ **Flourish and Succeed classes take place every Tuesday and Thursday, from 7.15pm-8.15pm, at The Sports Pavilion, Stockbridge Village.**



Gemma Guy - now volunteers at Flourish and Succeed, in Stockbridge Village



Gemma with Michael 'Tosh' Fielding and Shelley Traynor