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It's amazing the changes we've witnessed," says Eddie.
"A lot of disabled people are isolated from sports activities, and don't integrate with other people. Here, they can do both."
Shawn Smith, aged 29, attends almost every session, and admits that it has helped build his confidence up. "I do some of the sports, but it is just a good place to come every week. It lets you get to know other people."
This view is echoed by Eddie Gill, who is a carer for 24-year-old Matthew Hibbert.
"It's like a social club for Matthew," he says. "He can do what he wants and it suits him fine."
The weekly meetings include activities such as basketball, football, tennis, snooker and Boccia (a bowls-type sport designed especially for those with disabilities).
For those looking for a quieter life, there are games such as draughts and dominoes.
The organisers also set up trips to places such as Underbank Reservoir (where members can take part in kayaking and archery), Sheffield Dry Ski Slope, and Doncaster Racecourse.

Gym, it fix it



●The Sheffield Association For People With Cerebral Palsy needs help with funding.
This year it has launched a Millennium Appeal and is attempting to raise £250,000 towards upgrading services, employing more staff and improving its resources.
It also needs volunteers for minibus driving, sports stewardship, and to befriend people with disabilities and their families. Contact Catherine Franks on 0114 2755050.
●The Association is affiliated to Scope, the national charity and campaigning organisation with a focus on cerebral palsy. You can contact them on 020 7619 7100, or see their website at www.scope.org.uk.
●Above, Sheffield and District disabilities sports and leisure club enjoying the kayaking at the Underbank outdoor centre. Underbank reservoir, Stocksbridge
●Left, Eddie Edwards (recreation officer) with care team Chris Valente, Wendy Wadsworth and Karen Gooseman

A Sheffield woman with multiple sclerosis who found independence and romance by reaching for the skies is helping to set up a support group for other young people with the condition. Peter Kay reports

SYLVIE Brown went to extreme lengths to publicise her multiple sclerosis - she jumped out of an aeroplane at 13,000 feet.

As well as giving her confidence a huge boost, the tandem skydive helped the 27-year-old from Uppertop in Sheffield to raise £2,000 for the MS charity. But it doesn't stop there.

Now she is helping to set up a Young MS Support Group in Sheffield aimed at the under-35s.

"Discovering you have MS can come as a devastating blow and young people especially do not know where to turn for information and support," she says.

"I have had MS for six years, have learnt a lot about the condition and found my own ways of living with it. At first it was awful though. I just wanted to run away."

"I wasn't ready to contact the local MS groups, but the existence of a Young

MS Group without any pressure would have been really useful.

"I hope that this group will offer young people with MS support and encouragement to make informed decisions about how they can best live with MS because although there is no cure for MS there really is so much you can do to help yourself."

The latest initiative is backed by the Sheffield MS Society and MS Therapy Centre. Adrienne Cox, a specialist nurse at the Royal Hallamshire Hospital, is organising the group alongside Sylvie.

"Looking back my tandem dive was a turning point for me," says Sylvie. "I was overwhelmed by the response I got from the people of Sheffield, which gave me hope and the courage to fight on."

But there were further battles ahead. "Six months after my jump, finding myself wheelchair bound and in free-fall

decline I knew I had to take control of MS myself.

"I logged on to the internet and started keying in with people with MS from all over the world. It was wonderful, suddenly I was no longer alone."

One of the changes she went on to make was to her diet, working with nutrition consultant Brian Hampton of the Caring Clinic.

Since then there have been good and bad times, but the MS has not progressed and Sylvie can now even walk short distances with a stick.

Although there is no cure for MS, Sylvie says she no longer lives in fear of it. And there is a silver lining from her own situation. Through the publicity for her tandem skydive, she met Stephen Singleton, a former member of the Sheffield band ABC. Since then, Stephen and his family have taken her swimming

who have played for England's Cerebral Palsy football team and a champion 800m runner.

The club is not limited to those with cerebral palsy. Anyone who has a disability is welcome and Eddie would like to see more people getting involved.

"A lot of people don't know about us, but it is a very well-established club. If anyone wants to come down and see what we're about, they're very welcome."

at Uppertop Baths every week.

When Sylvie decided to buy a mobility scooter, Stephen introduced her to his uncle, Steve Wright, who runs Fair Price Mobility. Romance blossomed.

"Yes, I bought the scooter and got the scooter man too and we make a good team," says Sylvie.

Last winter the couple and the scooter went to the Florida Keys where Sylvie swam with dolphins. That was the icing on the cake, she says.

"I am so glad that I had the courage to jump out of that plane. It just shows you never know what might happen if you reach for the skies."

Sylvie Brown can be contacted on 0114 2726619. Her website is www.livingwithms.co.uk

●Sylvia Brown with boyfriend Steve Wright and former ABC star Stephen Singleton (left)

