



Forever Active – 50+ scheme in Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire

Project Overview

People in Cambridgeshire are living longer and the number of people over 65 is set to grow in the county by 33% in the next nine years. In each of the three 2012 falls related indicators in the Older People's Health and Well-being atlas (1/ hospital admissions for falls, 2/ hospital admission injuries due to a fall, 3/ hip fractures) Cambridge City is significantly worse than the England average.

For several years, it has been widely recognised that exercise is an integral part of falls prevention and that physically active people are less likely to fall. In Cambridgeshire, the proportion of older adults aged 65 years and older who are physically active for at least 30 minutes on three or more days a week is low, at just 12.2%. Of note, 68.2% of those aged 65 plus are sedentary. A dose-response relationship exists between physical activity and all-cause mortality and the greatest benefits to the health of the population are seen with those moving away from a sedentary lifestyle. The right sort of exercises can prolong and increase independence in older people and a programme of balance and strength, in combination with other interventions, can help to reduce falls and increase confidence in older people.

As such, preventative approaches are important to ensure older people remain healthy and independent in the community for longer, and to reduce the unsustainable cost of health and social care services for this growing population. This is recognised in Cambridgeshire's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment for the prevention of ill health in older adults (2012) and Cambridgeshire's Health and Well-being strategy (2012-2017), which prioritise the need to improve the ability of older people to live independently.

The Forever Active scheme provides a programme of exercise and activity for the 50 plus age group within Cambridge City + South Cambridgeshire. The organisation has recently become a Company Limited by Guarantee, but is supported heavily by Cambridge City Council, who currently co-ordinate the programme. Key partners include the public health team at Cambridgeshire County Council, the falls prevention service within NHS Cambridgeshire and local leisure/community providers/facilities. The programme has received funding from key partners including NHS Cambridgeshire (now Cambridgeshire County Council), as well as from a number of charitable organisations, including Age UK.

Project Outcome

In 2012, there were a total of 26 mobility classes and 40 "active 50 plus" sessions. All 26 of the mobility classes provide either evidence based, Otago strength and balance exercises to reduce falls in frailer older people or the 'Sit Tall, Stand Strong' Chair-Based Exercise Programme for Older Adults & Disabled Adults©.



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At the end of February 2013, there were a total of 548 forever active members, over 1300 participants on the Forever Active database and an average of 1000 attendances to the programme a month.

Results from the 2012 Forever Active evaluation (167 respondents), show that members reported:

- A 57% improvement in mobility and a 44% improvement in strength.
- 67% reported an improvement in fitness levels since attending a session.
- 39% of respondents participate in moderate intensity activity on 1-2 days a week, with a further 33% responding achieving this on 3-4 days a week.
- With regards to undertaking strength and/or balance exercises, 100% of respondents practice these on a weekly basis. In addition, 77% responding that they achieve these on 1-2 days a week, and a further 14% responding achieving these on 3-4 days.
- 50% of respondents report a noticeable difference in mental well-being since attending the programme.

Testimony:

“When I first attended the scheme, I could hardly walk after being bed ridden for nearly a year due to a collapsed spine. Thanks to the help of the Forever Active Instructors, I can now live alone with confidence. The bonus is that I have met some lovely people, which has helped improve my social life.”

Contact details for further information

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