



Falls Prevention Sessions Case Study

Background:

As part of our work as Community Champions, we were lucky enough to be offered some funding to support the Falls Prevention Campaign. We decided that with the funding, we would offer some targeted exercise and information sessions out in the community. The aim of these sessions would be to encourage people to engage, to bring people together, to open up conversations around falls and how to prevent them and to improve people's wellbeing.

Although there are plenty of paid-for exercise sessions and gyms out there, we felt that people would appreciate and benefit from some free sessions in a local, accessible venue. We chose the Moldgreen United Reformed Church as it has great accessibility, good room sizes and is well known, both locally and further afield. We decided to run our sessions in the evening to make them available to as many people as possible. When deciding on the type of exercise to offer, we looked at what was already going on in the area so as not to duplicate more of the same. We also wanted to make the sessions enjoyable and fun, so that people would look forward to attending and not see the sessions as "work" or "a punishment." So we contacted two Huddersfield practitioners who we have worked with previously, as we felt that they could offer a broad spectrum of exercise for people, whilst also making the sessions accessible, engaging and fun.



What We Did:

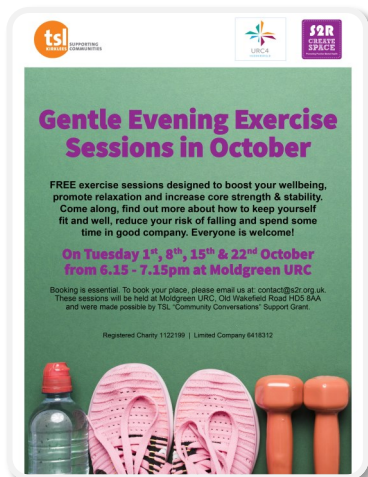
We ran seven Gentle Evening Exercise Sessions in total, the first four of which were led by Ali, a Qi-gong practitioner. The gentle yet effective movements of Qi-gong are designed to improve balance and core strength, as well as having lots of wellbeing benefits.

At first, participants were a little shy, but after our initial chat, which opened up discussions on falling and falls prevention, you could see everyone begin to relax. People were surprised to learn just how common falls were within the group; from a lady in her early 40's, who had fallen and badly damaged her knee whilst in the garden, to S, a man in his 80's who has had several "slips" in his own home. The friendly, relaxed and non-judgemental atmosphere allowed participants to feel at ease and to open up about their experiences and concerns. There was surprise when people realised that they could self-refer to the Falls Team and everyone made sure that they had all the information they needed in order to be able to share this resource with friends and family. We looked at NHS recommended Exercises for Strength and Balance as a group, talked about them and then had a go. We also gave everyone a printed copy of the exercises, which they were all going to keep at home as an aide-memoire so that they could incorporate some of the recommended movements into their daily routines.



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The last three of our exercise sessions were delivered by Debra from ShimmyHipz. Debra is a Belly Dancer amongst her various other skills, but she also teaches World Dance and movement for adults with additional needs. Once again, the change of pace caused a little consternation for participants, as they envisaged themselves hip-thrusting around the church hall in sequins and veils. But that was not to be, and very quickly participants embraced the chance to try out some new exercise techniques, with lots of laughter and sound-effects thrown in for good measure!

What We Achieved:

We have welcomed a diverse clientele for our exercise sessions; everyone from residents at Huddersfield's Bridgewood Trust to locals aged from 38 to 87!

Over the course of 7 sessions, we have welcomed 38 distinct individuals over 14 hours of exercise, with a total of 92 attendances and LOTS of chatting, finding out, sharing, stretching, bending, laughing... and even a little bit of tambourine-shaking!

Participant Feedback:

"It has been interesting having a go at something new. It goes to show that exercise doesn't have to be boring!" - LR

"I haven't laughed so much in ages!" - JM

"Ooooh these stretches are good. I'm going to practice these every day. I can tell I'm getting more flexy." - CB

"Thank you for telling me about all of the help that's out there. If it hadn't been for this I wouldn't have known. That extra copy of the information I took last week, I gave it to my neighbour. He's 92, so I helped him do a referral to the Falls Team. I think it's going to be very helpful." - SH

"Thinking about your health, and trying to keep active, it's not just for us old folk, or just for young folk either, it's for everyone." - SC

"I've liked finding out about the things I can do at home, to make it safer and to help me keep fit."

"I'm going to start going to Debra's classes I think. Who'd have thought it? Me... dancing with a scarf!"



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