

Gateshead Older People's Assembly

Tai Chi Project

Impact and Evaluation Report

April 2016



Background and outline of the project

As a charitable organisation, Gateshead Older People's Assembly exists to support older people (50+) across Gateshead and does this in a number of ways. The projects undertaken by the Assembly and the services it provides are guided by the organisation's Strategic Delivery Plan, which was driven by the charity's trustees, themselves older people from Gateshead.

The Strategic Delivery Plan is underpinned by nine strategic objectives:

- 1. Increase older people's knowledge of issues affecting them**
- 2. Be the voice of older people in Gateshead**
- 3. Reduce loneliness and Isolation for older people in Gateshead**
- 4. Increase opportunities for older people to live fuller lives**
- 5. Improve the health and wellbeing of older people in Gateshead**
- 6. Reduce the number of falls suffered by older people across Gateshead**
- 7. Build stronger networks to support older people across Gateshead**
- 8. Increase opportunities for older people to participate in wider society**
- 9. Increase community safety and awareness of safeguarding issues**

These objectives are not mutually exclusive and the Assembly's management aims to meet at least three of the objectives with every project it undertakes.

Tai Chi is recognised by the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NIHCE) as being an evidence-based activity which is a useful part of any falls prevention programme and is also an opportunity for older people to socialise, helping to reduce loneliness and isolation. Gateshead Older People's Assembly believes that this project meets objectives 1, 3, 4, 5 and 6, and it is therefore a fantastic project for meeting multiple aims and the needs of older people in Gateshead.

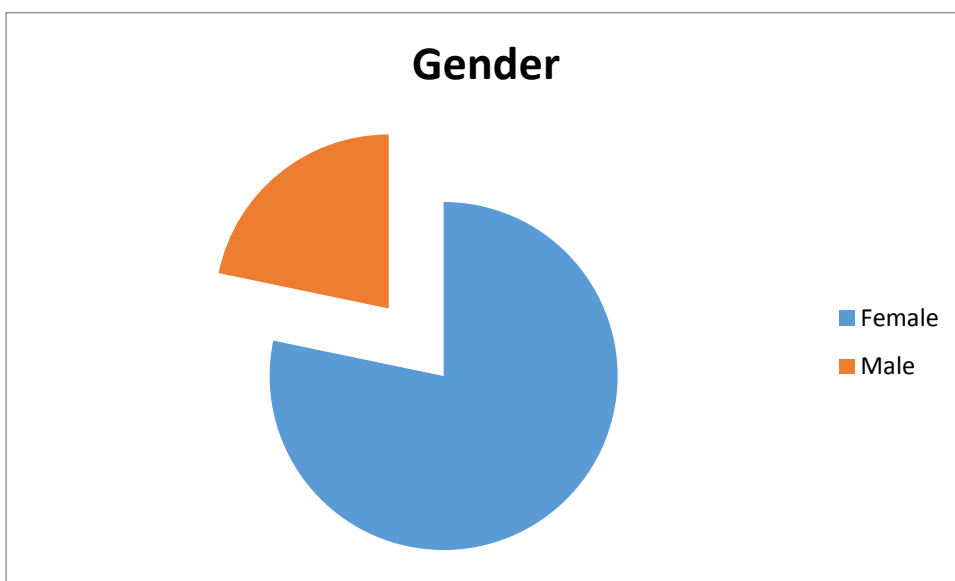
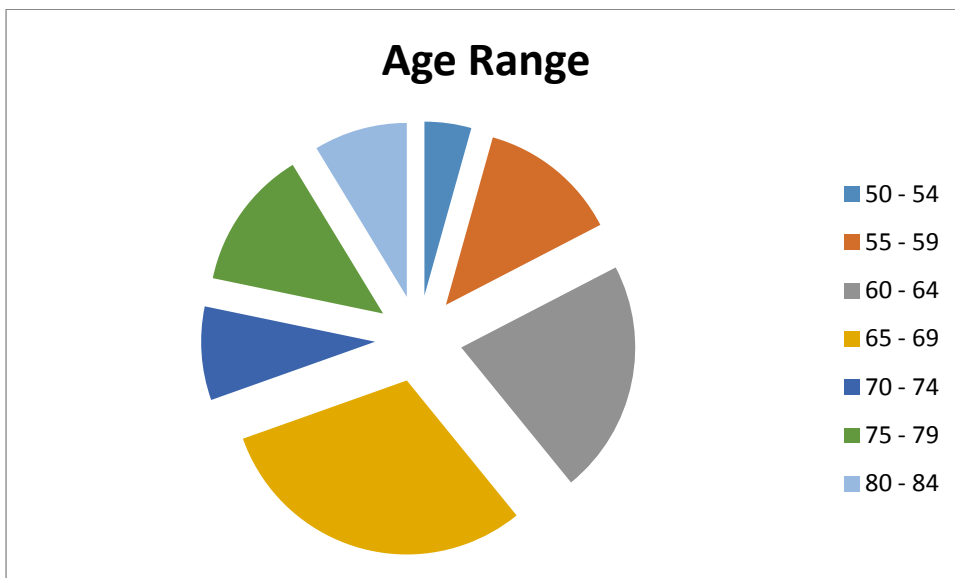
In addition to the Tai Chi project meeting the strategic objectives of the Assembly, there is also significant demand for activities for older people which are proven to reduce falls, because Gateshead is an outlier in terms of the number of falls per resident over 65. There is also demand from GPs across the borough who have approached the Assembly and have asked for activities such

as Tai Chi so that they can signpost some of their older patients and, as such, several GP Practices have supported this initiative, promoting it and ‘prescribing’ Tai Chi to their patients.

With all of this evidence about the potential impact and the demand for the service, Gateshead Older People’s Assembly approached the Community Foundation Tyne and Wear and Northumberland to apply for funding from their Medics in the Community Fund. The application was for four 10-week courses with up to 12 participants per course.

The application was successful and commenced in November 2015 in Deckham Village Hall in the Central Neighbourhood Area of Gateshead. Demand was such that the four 10-week courses were run concurrently and not consecutively as planned, and they finished in April 2016. On the date of the final session, the number of people on the waiting list for Tai Chi was more than 40 people, such is demand.

The age range and gender split of participants can be seen below.



Impact Measurement

As there are multiple benefits of participating in Tai Chi, the Assembly chose to assess the following:

- Impact on strength, balance, mobility and flexibility
- Impact on mental wellbeing
- Social impact

The impact of Tai Chi on strength, balance, mobility and stability was assessed before and after the 10 week course for each participant. A sample of the results (8 participants) can be seen below.

The four functional assessments that were used were:

One-legged stance – this test is performed in a standing position with the participants’ arms by their sides (or with one hand on a chair back for support) and is scored on the number of seconds the participant is able to stand on one leg.

Timed 8ft up and go – participants start from a seated position and stand up, then walk round a cone or marker 8 feet away from the chair. This is timed and recorded to the nearest half second.

30 second sit to stand – this test assesses the number of times participants can stand from a seated position in a 30 second period.

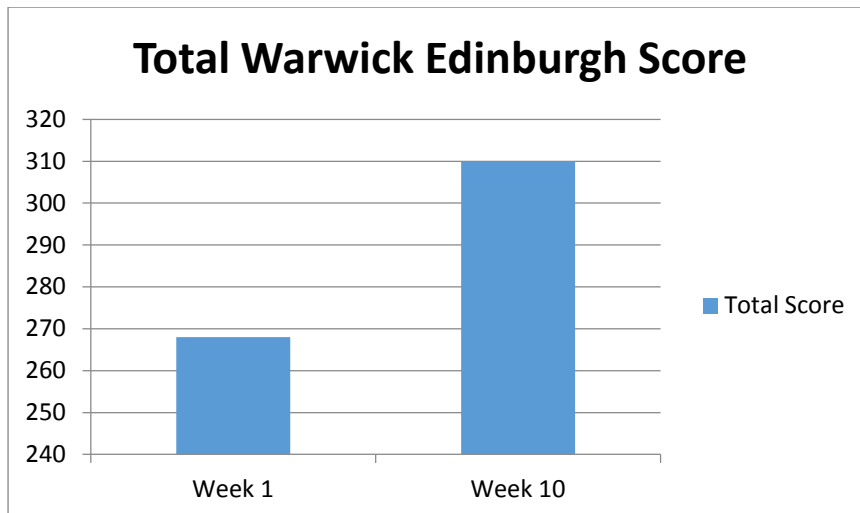
Back Scratch – in the standing position, participants reach one hand over the shoulder and down the back and reaches for the other hand behind the back in an attempt to touch or overlap the fingers.

	1 Leg Stand		Timed Up andGo		Sit to Stand		Back Scratch	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Average	27.38	33.8	7.82	6.55	11.37	14.62	-6.44	-5
Participant 1	45	45	8.13	6.07	13	15	4	5
Participant 2	45	45	5.3	4.5	14	16	-2	-4
Participant 3	45	45	7.48	6.5	12	15	1	5
Participant 4	7.9	32	6.35	5.9	13	18	-2.5	-2
Participant 5	45	45	7	6.5	12	16	-5	-6
Participant 6	7.97	9.62	10	7.5	11	15	-6	-5
Participant 7	12.5	34.7	7.85	6	11	14	-11	-8
Participant 8	10.63	14.2	10.5	9.5	5	8	-30	-25

The results show significant improvement in all areas, with almost all participants improving in every assessment.

The impact on mental wellbeing was assessed using the Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale. This is a series of positively worded statements which are scored 1 to 5 on a scale ranging from ‘none of the time’ to ‘all of the time’. Again, participants were assessed before and after the 10 week Tai Chi course to discover if the course had a positive impact.

Below are the cumulative results from this assessment. The cumulative before score was 268 and the total score afterwards was 310. This is a 16% increase over a period of 10 weeks.



The social impact on participants and an assessment of how much those who took part enjoyed the 10 week course was assessed using the following questions.

1. I enjoyed the class
2. Taking part in this class has improved my fitness
3. Taking part has improved my stability
4. I enjoyed the social element of the classes
5. I enjoyed meeting new people
6. I would like to attend more Tai Chi classes

All of the participants answered yes to all of the questions apart from 1 participant who ticked 'no' for question 5. This is overwhelmingly positive feedback and demonstrates the wider impact that taking part in Tai Chi has had on the participants' lives. Comments on the feedback forms included:

"Very useful course, instructor very enthusiastic and able to pass this on"

"Maybe a little longer sessions. The coach is a valuable asset."

"Enjoyed the tea room facilities before and after class"

Legacy

After undertaking the 10-week course, participants were given the option of continuing their Tai Chi programme with the same instructor in the same venue at a cost of £2.50 per week. More than 80% of the participants took this opportunity and are continuing their Tai Chi classes every week. It is strongly felt that if were the only option initially (i.e. paying £2.50 per week without the free 10-week 'taster') then take-up would be considerably lower.

Conclusion

Assessing a wide range of potential benefits of Tai Chi has demonstrated that the impact of participating in these classes does not only improve physical health but also mental wellbeing and gives participants the opportunity to live a fuller and more enjoyable life.

Thanks to The Community Foundation Tyne and Wear and Northumberland and their Medics in the Community fund for enabling this project.

For further information, please contact Craig Bankhead – craig@gatesheadopa.org.uk