



Introduction

The project began in October 2016 with the purpose of engaging people aged 50+ who are currently not participating in health and wellbeing activities. The project set out to provide residents of Gateshead with a range of wellbeing activities to try, working with local activity providers to deliver sessions across Gateshead, as well as delivering some activities at Deckham Village Hall.

Consultation and delivery was carried out across Gateshead, in order to engage with as many residents as possible to identify types of activities they would like to try, as well as identifying barriers that they may face when trying to access them.

The main objectives of the Discover Health 50+ Project were:

- 30 people will participate in at least 5 wellbeing activities each.
- 30 people will learn how to plan, prepare and cook healthy meals in our community café
- At least 50% of participants will undertake the activities they have sampled in their own time, with other members of the group.

Consultation

Before starting project delivery, the Postural Stability and Wellbeing Coordinator visited a range of social groups and sheltered schemes across Gateshead to carry out a consultation activity. Individuals were also given a survey to identify what activities people have previously taken part in, what they would like to try, days and times that would be most suitable, how they usually found out about what was available locally, and what barriers they were likely to face. Respondents were encouraged to provide us with their contact details so that we could contact them if an activity they wished to try was being delivered. We received more than 150 survey responses and used the information to shape the project delivery.

The main findings from the consultation were as follows:

- Popular activities included; Dance, Tai Chi, Nordic Walking, Gym and Yoga.
- The most common barriers expressed by residents included; lack of knowledge about what is going on, transport, cost and physical capabilities.
- 90% of the residents found used the council news as a method to find out what activities were available locally.

Further consultation was carried out once delivery was up and running. We delivered talks and organised taster sessions to a range of groups in Gateshead as the project went on.

Delivery

Every month, a 'What's On' list was circulated and promoted via the Gateshead News, The Gateshead Housing Company Magazine or distribution lists and the Gateshead Council Community Engagement Teams distribution list. We also actively promoted the sessions on our website, social media platforms and displayed posters and leaflets around community venues in Gateshead.

The activities were usually delivered once a week and were often delivered by the Postural Stability and Wellbeing Coordinator. Activities delivered throughout the project included circuit classes, health walk, healthy cooking demonstrations, dance taster sessions, gym, tai chi, computer taster session, seated exercise, Nordic walking, yoga and a pamper day. Many of these tasters were carried out at the base of Gateshead Older People's Assembly at Deckham Village Hall, however, at least once a month we would deliver a taster session at an external venue. These included FACT (Swalwell), Watergate Park (Lobley Hill), Lobley Hill Community Centre (Lobley Hill), Gibside National Trust (Rowlands Gill), Sight Service (Bill Quay), and a range of sheltered accommodation schemes across Gateshead.

Some of the taster sessions were led by partner organisations, with the support of the Postural Stability and Wellbeing Coordinator. For example, one of the Health Walk tasters was in partnership with local charity FACT (Fighting All Cancers Together). A number of residents in the local area had expressed an interest in joining the walk, but felt nervous about turning up by themselves. By organising a taster session, participants could arrive at the walk with the confidence that they would be met with familiar faces. This approach worked well and four of the new walkers attended the walk the following week and registered with the group.

We helped participants to overcome barriers in many ways. All sessions delivered within the project were offered at no cost to the participants, but we displayed a donation tin so that participants could pay a small fee if they wished. We also offered transport to those who needed a taxi to and from sessions, or provided people with a bridge card so that they could access public transport with more confidence.

As the project went on, we found a number of potential participants who would like to try activities such as yoga, tai chi or gentle exercise, but were worried that they could not stand up for the full length of the session. We organised a series of taster sessions where participants used chairs as support during the sessions, e.g. gentle Tai Chi where participants could hold on to a chair for confidence and sit down when they needed to. These sessions were very popular and were a great starting point for residents who were lacking confidence, and who had not been active for a long time.

The most popular activity was the Gentle Tai Chi taster session at Gibside, where 28 people took part in the taster session. Here we offered a minibus pick up from different areas of Gateshead (Deckham, Lobley Hill and Blaydon) and offered separate taxis for those who could not get to the pick-up points. The session was also tailored to the abilities of the group, where some participants carried out the taster with the support of a chair, and those who were anxious about taking part at all watched the first half of the activity and joined in later.

A selection of photographs from the project can be found at the end of this report.

Outcomes

Objective 1: 30 people will participate in at least 5 wellbeing activities each.

This objective was achieved either by participants who solely attended the DH50+ taster sessions, or by people who attended a single taster session and then joined the regular activity group (such as those mentioned previously who joined the FACT walk). There were more than 100 participants taking part in taster sessions throughout the year, and 32 of those participants attended DH50+ activities on five or more occasions. Being part of the DH50+ project allowed for people to take part in activities that they wouldn't usually try, for example, a group of ladies came along to try the circuit taster class and after the class they were encouraged to come back the following week to try some more activities. They then went on to try dancercise, Nordic walking, a cookery taster session and qi gong, and are now regular attendees of numerous sessions at Deckham Village Hall.

Objective 2: 30 people will learn how to plan, prepare and cook healthy meals in our community café

We purchased a table top electric hob so that we could carry out food demonstrations at our community café. Findings from a previous healthy eating project had taught us that many residents rarely sat down to a hot meal, particularly if they were cooking for one. The focus of these sessions was to teach people how to make a meal that would be cheap, healthy and easy to make. Our volunteer Italian chef Massimo helped to deliver some cookery taster sessions, teaching people how to make his famous omelettes, a simple minestrone soup and a risotto. The project coordinator, who is also a qualified nutritionist also complemented the sessions with a talk on healthy eating to discuss how residents could achieve a more balanced diet. Across the project 35 participants attended a healthy eating workshop.



Objective 3: At least 50% of participants will undertake the activities they have sampled in their own time, with other members of the group.

Due to the high number of overall project participants (100+), we may not have achieved the goal of 50% of participants sampling activities in their own time. This is due to the difficulties in following up on this number of people, as originally, we anticipated that we would engage with approximately 30 residents across the project. We are aware however, of at least 40 participants who have as a result of the DH50+ project, continued to participate in similar activities in their own time. Examples include joining in with regular walking groups, tai chi groups, tea dances, circuits and dancercise.

Furthermore, as a result of the project there are now some additional regular activities in the community:

There is a new tai chi class at Lobley Hill. This was started after the Gibside Tai Chi taster session where a number of Lobley Hill residents tried Tai Chi for the first time and enjoyed the class so much, they asked that the project coordinator arranged a regular session at their local community centre.

At Deckham Village Hall, we have introduced a regular Seated Yoga class as a result of a popular taster session. This session is led by a freelance tutor who delivered a short course of free taster sessions to gauge popularity and has now introduced small cost in order to keep the class running longer term.

At Sight Service in Bill Quay, we delivered some Easyline Gym taster days where participants received a free gym induction. All of the participants signed up as regular gym users who either use the gym in their own time, or go along to an informal group on a Monday afternoon. The Monday afternoon group was established at the first taster session, where participants were discussing how much they enjoyed the gym, but didn't want to attend alone. We encouraged the group to try to meet at the same time every week and have since referred more people to join the group.

Photographs



Circle Dance Taster



Sequence Dance Practice



Pamper Day





Watergate Park Health Walk



Seated Yoga



Gardening



Nordic Walk at Gibside



Tai Chi at Gibside

