

Staying Steady

Impact and Evaluation Report

Completed March 2019 (Course 6)



About Gateshead Older People's Assembly

As a registered charity (Charity Registration Number: 1155832), Gateshead Older People's Assembly exists to support the health and wellbeing of older people (50+) across Gateshead. Staying Steady complements the Assembly's existing offer of community-based exercise and is part of a range of activities aimed at improving confidence and independence.

About Staying Steady

Staying Steady is a 20-week strength and balance programme specifically designed to reduce the number of incidents of falls suffered by people aged over 50 in Gateshead. The course is delivered by a Level 4 qualified Postural Stability Instructor. Staying Steady comprises a series of evidence based exercises to improve strength and balance and is recognised as a falls prevention activity by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE). Each class has a maximum of 15 participants and in order to enrol onto the course, participants are required to meet our inclusion criteria which was set using guidance from Later Life Training. Participants are required to:

- **Be in control of any long-term health conditions they may have.**
- **Be able to either mobilise independently, with a stick or with two sticks.**
- **Be able to carry out standing exercises for a minimum of 5 minutes.**
- **Be able to make their own way to the classes.**

Course 6

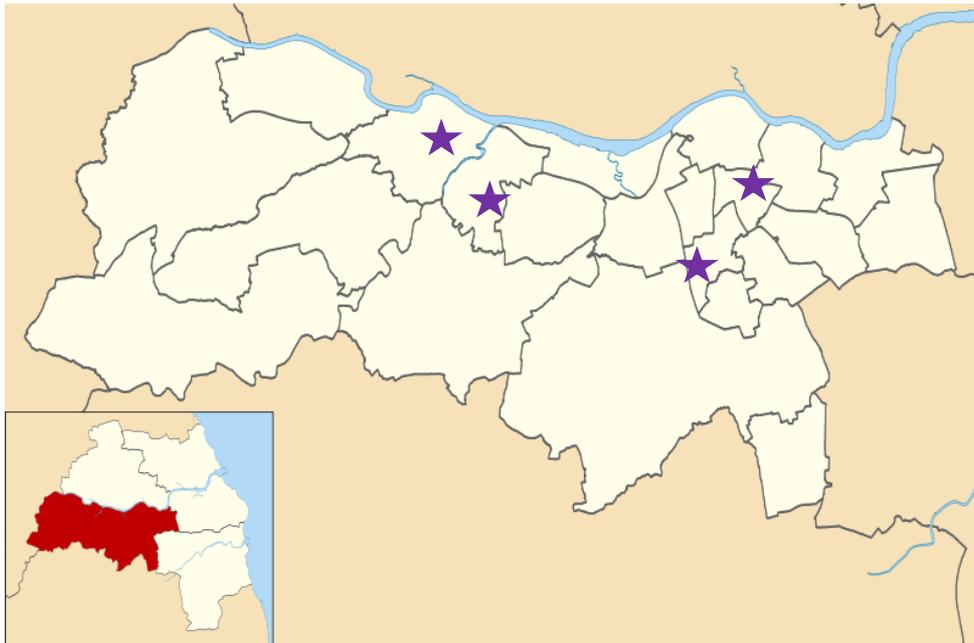
Based on the location of those on the waiting list at the time of Course 6 commencing, it was decided that the following areas of Gateshead would be host.

St Helens Church Hall (South)

Whickham Community Center (Inner West)

St Joseph's Church Hall, Blaydon (Outer West)

Deckham Village Hall (Central)



In Course 6, we continued to formalise the educational element of the course as has become the case within the Staying Steady programme in recent cohorts. The second half of the education element, from week 10 onwards, was deliberately more interactive and gave opportunities for participants to discuss their personal experiences with regards to the weekly theme. This provides an informal support network and also creates recognition among the participants that “it’s not just me who is experiencing this.”

Over the 20-week course, participants completed an hour of exercise which became progressively more dynamic and challenging as the weeks went by, adding tasks such as walking and turning, bending and reaching as well as progressing strength and balance exercises. The exercise class was always followed by an educational talk lasting up to an hour, but usually around 30 minutes. This allowed for the participants to receive some valuable information about topics relating to falls, and about local services. They were also able to ask questions, share their stories and to socialise with other group members.

In addition to the weekly session, participants were also asked to complete enough exercise outside of the class to meet the NICE guidelines of 150 minutes per week. In order to achieve this, participants were provided with a home exercise booklet and a theraband. The group also would discuss practical tips on how to meet these guidelines, such as carrying out ‘kitchen bench exercises’ whilst cooking, or carrying out exercises during advert

breaks when watching TV. Some participants choose to take part in other community exercise sessions run by The LIFE Programme CIC to help them achieve the required amount each week. They found this to be more accountable than the home exercise sessions.

Evaluating Staying Steady

Participants were sent a registration pack which contained an enrolment form, a pre-exercise readiness questionnaire (PAR-Q) and an informed consent form, as well as a set of evaluation forms chosen to measure the impact that the project had on mental well-being, confidence, fear of falling and perception of general health. These surveys included the following:

- Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS)
- Short FES-I Questionnaire (Fear of Falling Scale)
- ConFBal (Confidence in Maintaining Balance Questionnaire)

The Postural Stability Instructor also carried out individual functional tests with each participants using the Functional Grid tool, which included the following tests:

- Seated shoulder external rotation flexibility
- Seated shoulder internal rotation flexibility
- Seated hamstring flexibility
- 180-degree turn
- Functional reach
- 6m timed up and go

Surveys and functional assessments were completed on week 1 of the course and the outcomes were not only used as baseline data for the participants, but also used to help participants to set personalised goals and to determine which exercises to focus on at home as part of their weekly programme. The same surveys and functional assessments were completed on the final week of the course in order to measure changes in mental wellbeing, fear of falling, confidence in balance and functional capacity.

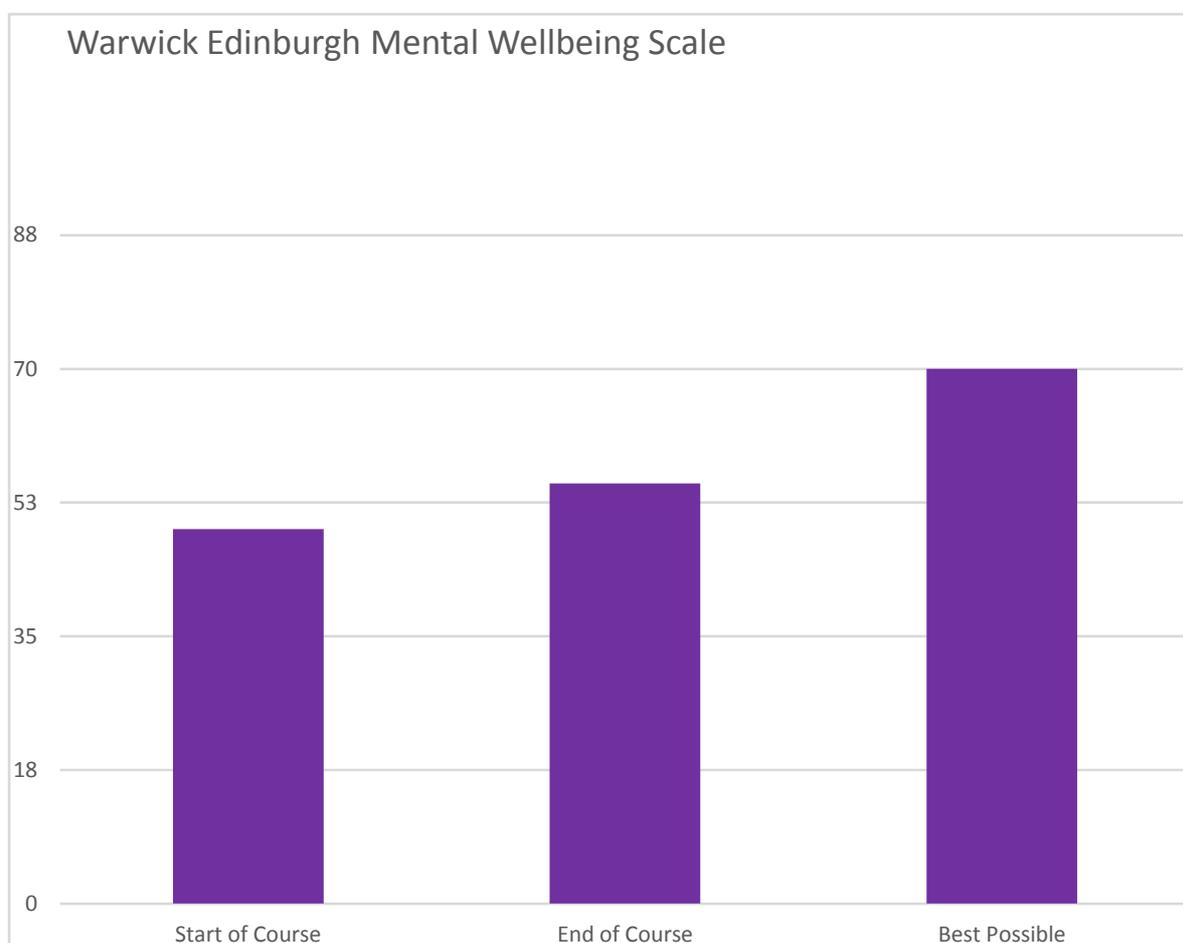
52 participants originally enrolled onto the Staying Steady course and 39 people completed the course (75% completion rate) and all of the appropriate assessments.

Results

Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS):

This scale is designed to monitor the mental wellbeing of the participants and includes a 14 statement scale with 5 response categories. The scores from each statement are summed up to provide a single score ranging from 14-70 (the higher the score, the better).

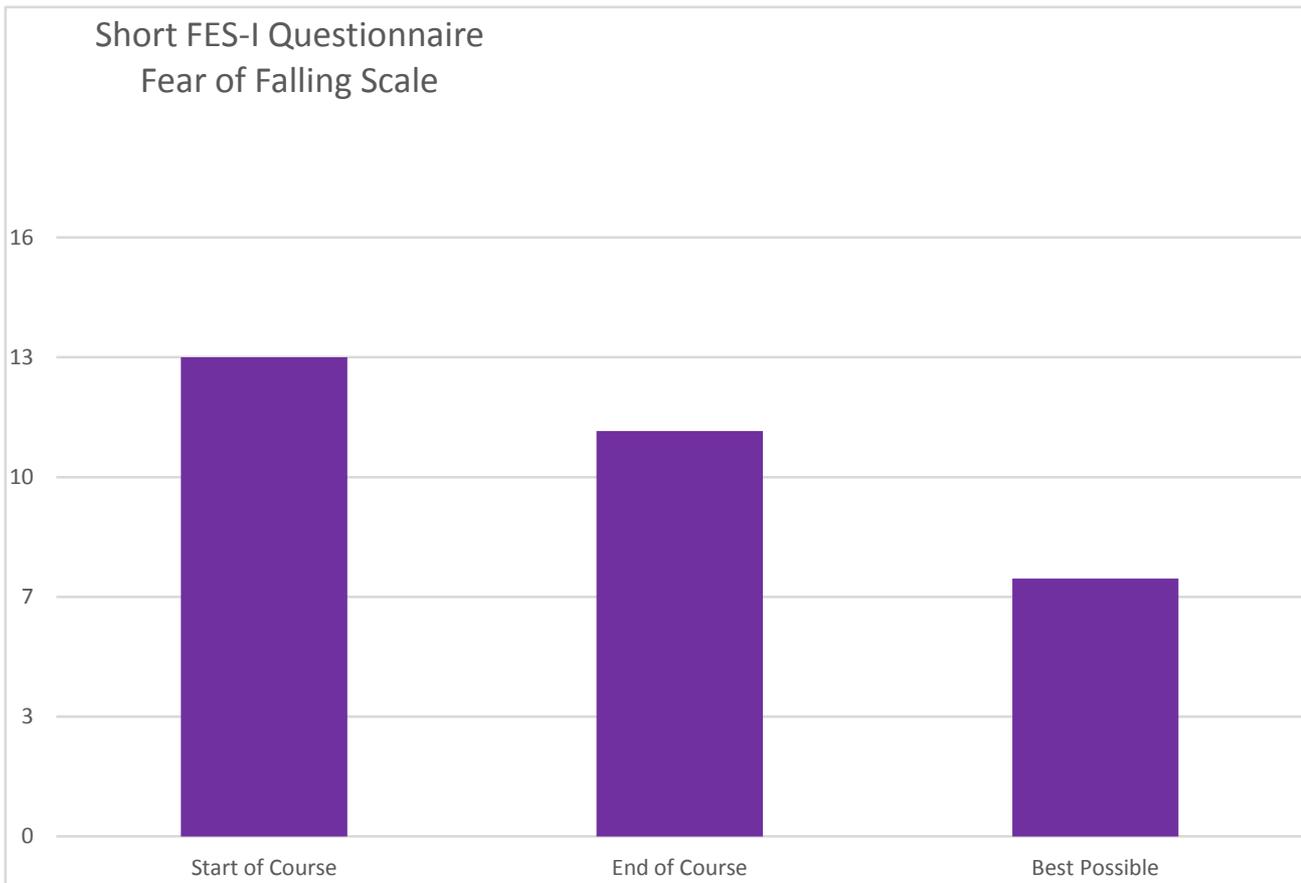
This chart shows the average scores of the 52 participants who started the course and the average of the 39 clients who finished the course. You can see from the graph the average has increased by 6 points. 30 out of 32 people improved on this scale.



Short FES-I Questionnaire:

The FES-I survey is designed to measure fear of falling in older people and includes 7 scenarios in which the participant is asked to rate their level of concern when carrying out the task. The levels of concern are scored between 1-4 and the scores from each scenario are totalled to provide a single score ranging from 7-28 (the lower the score, the better).

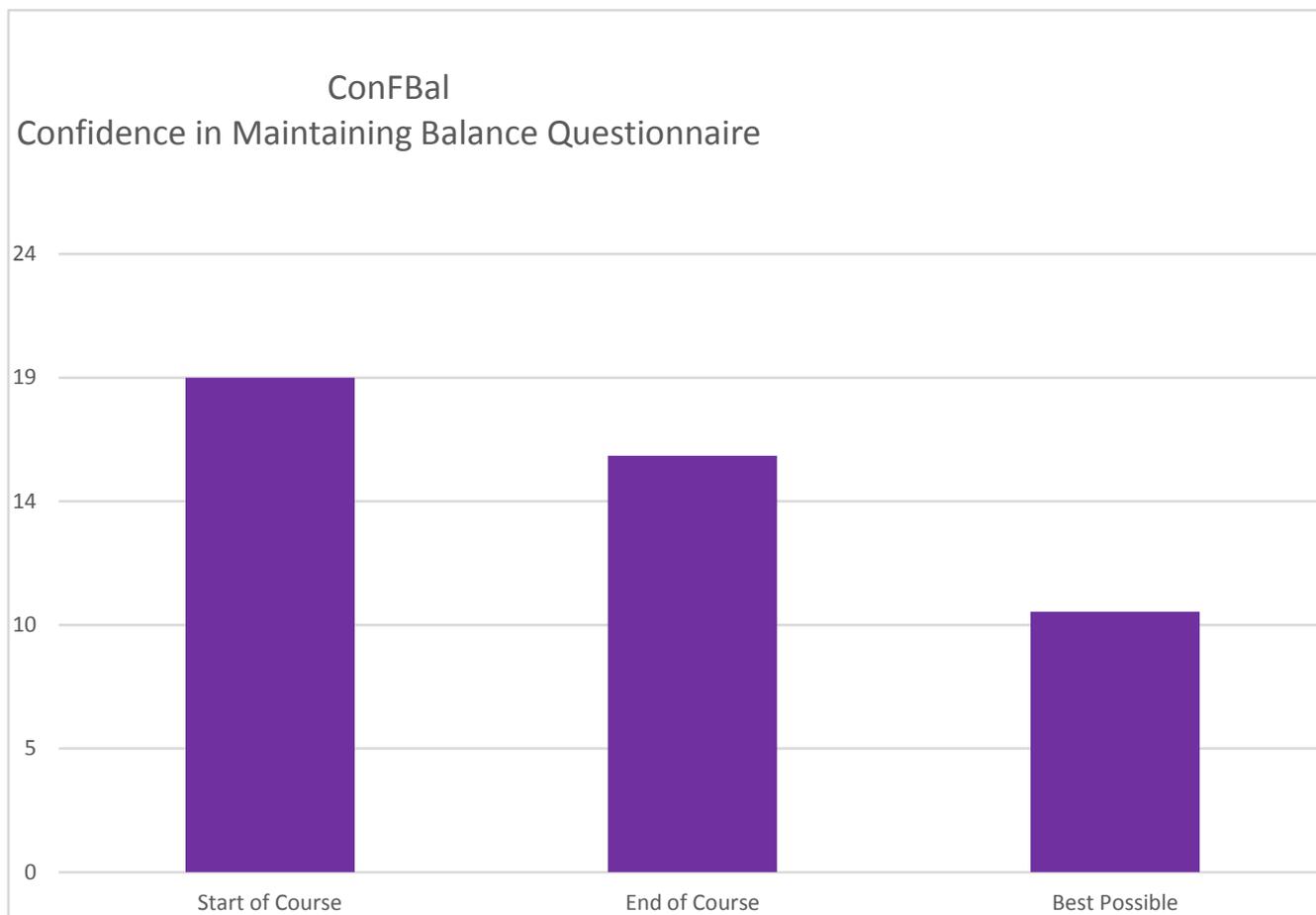
This chart shows the average scores of the participants at the beginning of the course (13) compared to the end (11) alongside the best (7) possible score. 38 out of 39 who completed improved or stayed the same.



ConFBal:

The ConFBal is a tool designed to measure confidence in balance in older people. It includes 10 questions relating to levels of confidence in different scenarios, for example; "How confident are you that you can pick up something from the floor without losing your balance?". The participant chooses from 3 answers; 'not confident' (3), 'slightly confident' (2), or 'confident' (1). The numbers from each response are totalled to provide a single score ranging from 10-30 (the lower the score, the better).

This chart shows the average scores of the participants at the beginning of the course (1) compared to the end (15) alongside the best possible score (10).

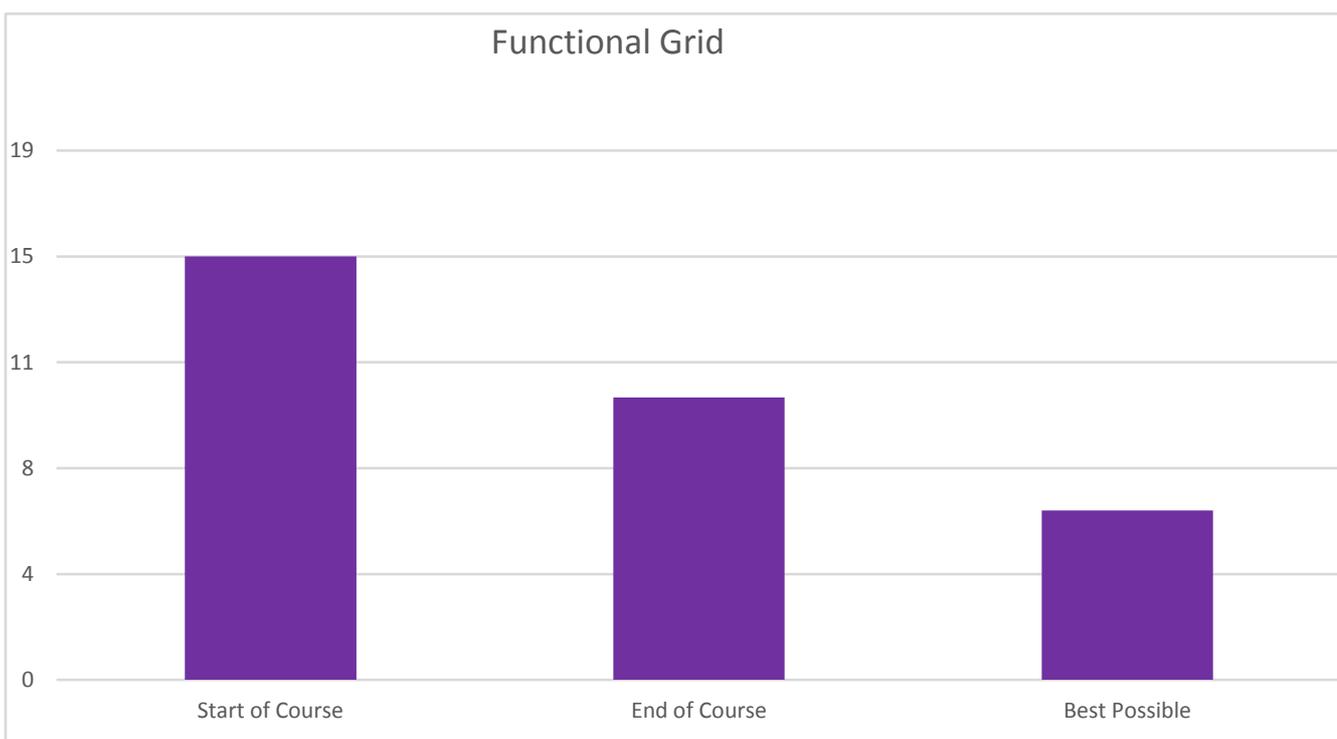


Functional Grid:

There are 6 functional assessments scored on a system ranging from 1-6. Participants scoring 1 will have no limitation and participants scoring 6 will have a severe limitation or will be unable to complete the task. This grid is used to assess participants to determine whether or not they are suitable for the programme, as well as prescribing home exercises to address current weaknesses and areas for improvement. For the purpose of this evaluation, the scores from each of the 6 tasks have been totalled to give an overall score ranging from 6-36 (the lower the score, the better). Tasks included; seated shoulder external rotation flexibility, seated shoulder internal rotation flexibility, seated hamstring flexibility, 180 degree turn, functional reach, 6m timed up and go.

This chart shows the initial average score of 15 compared to the average score of 10 at the end of the 20-week programme. The best possible score for the Functional Grid is 6, therefore on average participants have improved in functional capacity by 5 points.

Some clients improved their functional grid score by 10 points.



Added Value

All the exercise session were followed with an education element where we cover a range of topics that link closely with falls prevention. These education sessions provide participants with some valuable information and discussion points, and often lead to a referral to a local support service. For example, during the 'home safety' talk, we provide participants with the telephone number for the Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service who carry out free home safety checks.

It is also an opportunity for participants to not only share concerns, advice and recommendations, but also to form closer friendships with fellow participants. Education topics include:

- About Staying Steady
- Dealing with a fall
- Fitter feet & footwear
- Home safety
- Medication & side effects
- Nutrition, hydration & alcohol
- Bone health
- Eyesight and hearing
- Staying safe when out and about
- Keeping active
- What's next?

We also offer additional support to participants by providing participants with a Later Life Training Postural Stability exercise guide along with their own theraband so that they can complete their home exercises effectively. We recommend that each participant carries out home exercises at least twice a week in addition to the Staying Steady class in order to meet the recommendations set out within the NICE guidelines. During the initial assessment, all participants will also be advised on additional exercises that they should do regularly at home in order to meet their goals and to improve their functional ability in relation to their functional grid scores.

On enrolment, participants are also provided with a Nexus Bridge Card; a card that people can use when using public transport to inform the driver that they need some additional support. Those who used walking aids were also shown how to check that their aids were set at the right height and were encouraged to regularly check their ferrules and where appropriate, the instructor would help to change the ferrule for the participants.

Progression

In order to encourage participants to continue to exercise after completion of the Staying Steady course, we focus the final 5 weeks of the course on progression to community exercise. The final 5 weeks of the course will take the shape of community exercise classes available locally, for example in a circuit format, in a gym environment, or will incorporate longer tai chi sections. This method allows participants to access community classes with more confidence and with a more accurate idea of what to expect within the classes.

Summary

Overall, the Staying Steady course has demonstrated that it has been beneficial to the health and wellbeing of its participants. On average, class members have improved in all areas (mental wellbeing, fear of falling, confidence in balance and functional capacity). The greatest improvements were in the functional grid.

At the beginning of the course, 52 people enrolled across the four sites, with 39 of these individuals completing the course (75%). Reasons for dropout were mainly due to illness or having to care for a family member who had become ill during the course. From the 39 participants who completed the course, at least 37 (95%) have progressed onto community exercise, which they now undertake regularly. These sessions include circuits, tai chi, yoga and Dancercise.

We will continue to educate clients around maintaining their exercise as evidence suggests that continued physical activity is imperative in order to maintain the physical benefits gained during the course.

Client comments at the end of the programme

Enjoyable, well run, Emma is a friendly helpful teacher.

I have enjoyed the class very much.

Enjoyed exercise, I now walk better, I am more confident on stairs, I have arthritis. I find I can bend my knees a lot easier.

I have gained confidence in my balance. The exercises were as easy or difficult as anyone wanted them to be.

Really enjoyed this last seventeen weeks, thanks to Richie

This class has proved a useful guide to help me devise continuous exercises to keep healthy. The instructions were delivered in a clear manner, and the whole feeling was of sympathetic support to improve my well being.

This programme has been educational and the keep fit exercises catered for all abilities. The hall was spacious and warm. Richie is a very good instructor and I would recommend this programme to anyone with balance issues.

I thoroughly enjoyed the course. Richie was an excellent instructor. Caring and encouraging all the time.

It has been interesting and helpful. I enjoyed being amongst other people and the exercise.