

Report to : Councillor Dickinson, NYCC Older People's Champion
Report from : David Watson, Chief Executive, North Yorkshire Sport
Subject : Promoting physical activity in older people
Date : 19th October 2022

1. Introduction

The following report highlights the case for physical activity in older age and some of the opportunities that exist within North Yorkshire and elsewhere to be active.

2. Chief Medical Officer guidelines

In 2019 the CMO published his updated guidelines on physical activity levels for the whole population. Within this was included specific guidance for older people which for the first time included strength-based exercise, highlighting the importance of maintaining muscle mass in later life.

Physical Activity for adults and older adults has several benefits, these include:

- General Health benefits
- Improved sleep
- Healthy weight maintenance
- Stress management
- General quality of life improvement

It can also reduce the prevalence of:

- Type 2 diabetes (-40%)
- Cardiovascular disease (-35%)
- Falls, depression, etc (-30%)
- Joint and back pain (-25%)
- Cancers (colon and breast) (-20%)

Adults and older adults should aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate intensity activity per week (this is when your breathing increases, but you are still able to talk easily) or at least 75 minutes vigorous intensity activity per week (when your breathing becomes fast and talking becomes more difficult!)

Importantly, on at least 2 days per week strength-based exercise should be included to help keep muscles, bones, and joints strong. This can include going to the gym or doing yoga or simply carrying out everyday tasks like lifting heavy bags or body weight exercises.

It is important to note that some activity is better than none, so even if the 150- or 75-minute targets are unachievable, reducing sedentary time and simply moving more will have health benefits.

3. How can we all help older people to be more active?

- Keep messaging simple – whilst the CMO guidelines talk about 150 or 75 minutes this can be off putting to someone who isn't even contemplating being active or who might worry that they are not meeting those times. Focussing on reducing sedentary time is perhaps more important, some physical activity is better than none: even light activity brings some health benefits compared to being sedentary, while more daily physical activity provides greater health and social benefits.

Depending on the stage in life, the activity will look different and can be broken down into manageable chunks, the main focus should be on reducing sedentary behaviour and maintaining strength to carry out everyday tasks.

- Help people relate physical activity to what is important to them – what is it that people want to be able to do? Live independently, hold their grandchildren, walk the dog? Whatever it is these are the things that being physically active, and in particular the strength-based elements, can help with and that is what will motivate people.
- Make it easy – whilst exercise classes will be right for some people, for others being active within the home is the way forward. Sit to stands, stair climbing, balancing on one leg whilst brushing your teeth/hair are all effective.

4. Formal support – below is just an example of some of the things on offer

- North Yorkshire Sport run **Get Moving**, a 3-year Lottery funded programme supporting older people to be active in their own homes.

Following a referral from a GP or the NYCC Living Well Team or even a family member, we can send a therapeutic exercise instructor into the home of someone aged 65+ who has become deconditioned, either as a result of shielding or an accident or any other trauma that means they are no longer as independent as they were recently.

The instructor will work with them twice a week for 4 weeks supporting their core strength and balance and also their confidence and aspiration to engage in life outside of the home.

The funding (£100,000 per year) enables us to work with 230 people per annum across North Yorkshire in this way and we have seen significant results, some of which can be heard about in our Impact report

<https://www.northyorkshiresport.co.uk/impact> .

We are hoping to secure further funding to enable us to support more people per year.

- Ramblers Walks, NYCC have recently funded North Yorkshire Sport to support the establishment of more Ramblers Well Being Walks across the county. These provide guided, supported walks for people of all ages to access the countryside.

- Condition specific exercise classes - A number of these exist across the county including several for people with Parkinson's, exercise after stroke and dementia.
- Prime Time – Hambleton District Council continue to run a programme that was originally developed with North Yorkshire Sport following seed funding from NYCC. This programme supports older people at risk of loneliness and isolation through age and ability appropriate exercise in local village halls and community settings.
- Strong and Steady – several the districts still run this programme which was originally a falls prevention programme from North Yorkshire Sport funded by NYCC. This is class-based activity for 12 weeks aimed at people who have had or are at risk of having a fall.

5. Other support

- Age UK – offer support on healthy ageing.
- Condition specific local groups such as Parkinson's local branches can help sign post people in to activity suitable for their condition and age.
- North Yorkshire Sport - our staff team are always on hand to help sign post people into activity or give advice on how to be active at home.
- Publications – Later Life produce an excellent booklet supporting exercise at home which we can get copies of if people would like them and Sir Muir Gray an NHS professional, consultant in Public Health at Oxford University and respected expert on healthy ageing has written two books – “Sod 70” and “Sod Sitting, Get Moving” that I would highly recommend!