

19-05-16

Setting up of Helensburgh and Lomond Strength and Balance Exercise classes for Older people

Summary

It is well documented that older people are at risk of falls. One third of people over the age of 65 fall each year (Cochrane 2012) As part of ongoing work Reshaping Care For Older People (Change Fund) there has been much work done to look at support in the community for older people falling. In Argyll & Bute 30% of the population are over the age of 60. There is an NHS Highland flow chart detailing what actions should be taken for someone who has had a fall or is afraid of falling. There is a strong evidence base that balance and strength exercise as a single intervention prevents falls (Cochrane Review 2012)

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to inform Area Community Planning Group members about the strength and balance exercise classes for older people which have been developed in the Helensburgh and Lomond area by a local NHS Physiotherapist.

2. Recommendations

Area Community Planning Group members are invited to note the contents of this report.

3. Background

NHS Highland employed a Community Physiotherapist in November 2014 for 4.5 month fixed term contract to work as part of the Extended Community Care Team based at the Jeanie Deans Centre. Part of the role of the Community Physiotherapist was to develop a Strength and Balance Exercise class for Older people modelled on other classes which were already well established in Dunoon, Oban and Campbeltown areas .

4. Detail

Guidance and support was provided by NHS Highland Physiotherapy Lead local Clinical Services Manager and Dr Christine McArthur NHS Highland Coordinator Prevention and Management of Falls, to develop this service. The Physiotherapist spent time shadowing the classes being run in Dunoon both for active elderly and frail elderly. These classes in other areas of Argyll & Bute were run in very close partnership with community support from a few paid staff and mostly volunteers from AVA (later to become Argyll TSI), Cowal Befrienders and Lorn and Oban Healthy Options. These volunteers and paid staff undertook a period of training in Otago Method which developed their skills and experience in taking Strength and balance exercise classes. It was suggested that this same model be used for the Helensburgh and Lomond area. This model has not been successful in Helensburgh and Lomond as despite working closely with other agencies no volunteers have been recruited.

In March 2015, the Community Physiotherapist post became permanent. The Physiotherapist continued to work in the local community reaching out to all groups of older people in supported living, warden controlled residences, senior citizen groups, stroke clubs, bingo groups, informing and sharing information tailored to offer support ie., Falls Box. A close working relationship with Alison Gildea Argyll TSI has been extremely beneficial.

It was decided that NHS Highland would employ a local skilled exercise trainer to deliver the exercise classes accompanied by a NHS support worker who had completed Otago training. One class began in Helensburgh November 2015, followed by another there in January 2016 and a further class in Garelochhead in January 2016. The exercise class lasts for one hour. The class is free for the first 6 weeks. The classes, held in a community setting also include a tea/coffee afterwards which is managed by a volunteer and this brings a social, supportive feel to the group. It is hoped to extend this small half hour to incorporate a suitable speaker in time. Plans are in place to evaluate these classes by having attendees complete a questionnaire. This has not begun yet. There has not been a need to advertise the classes at present (people can be transferred to them after a period of rehabilitation in the community). The Physiotherapist is looking at developing a resource for GP surgeries and public places, working alongside Communications Manager.

5. Conclusions

It is recognised that falls among older people are a major and growing concern Strength and balance exercise classes for older people can

make a significant contribution to supporting people to look after and improve their own health and well being and reduce the risk of falls.

6.0 SOA Outcomes

Which outcomes of the SOA does this report relate to?
SOA 5 People Live Active, Healthier and Independent Lives

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