

Active Sussex Stronger for Life Executive Summary

Purpose:

To provide a summary of the Active Sussex Stronger for Life Report in the attached email.

1. Supporting the falls prevention agenda
2. Aims
3. Did Stronger for Life meet its aims?
4. Recommendations

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Supporting the falls prevention agenda

Active Sussex invested £50,000 of funding into community-based strength and balance activity for those at risk of falling but have not yet fallen or been referred to falls prevention interventions. This also included activity suitable for those who have been through commissioned falls prevention and in need of a pathway back into community-based activity.

Amis

The Stronger for Life project aimed to increase provision of community strength and balance sessions for people aged 65 and over and to ensure there is buy-in from the health system in West Sussex allowing the approach to be 'system led'.

Need for a 'system led' approach -

- Recruitment of older people who face barriers to activity requires partnership working.
- Some of the most effective actions do not require new funding. For example, ensuring social prescribers can refer into physical activity.
- The funding is limited, finite and will not fill most gaps in provision.
- Most strength and balance sessions for older people will not be funded by this scheme.

Did Stronger for Life meet its aims?

To provide more community strength and balance -

Overall, this element of the project was successful due to the high demand for activities from older residents, and some excellent community providers who are skilled in engaging these groups.

- High demand for activities including low-income residents.
- Skilled providers able to cater for different needs such as disabilities and health conditions.
- Not all measures completed in each activity, so data is incomplete.

For this work to be 'system-led' -

Overall, this element of the project was not successful. It was challenging to engage stakeholders in co-designing the project. However, the project has gained the attention of some NHS commissioners.

- Not clear if the project has raised understanding of how community strength and balance relates to falls prevention amongst some health and wellbeing professionals.
- Limited engagement from some local Wellbeing teams, PCNs, and social prescribers in co-designing work. No referrals made.
- Individuals without a physical activity focus have added strong value, e.g. Arun District Council Resident Engagement Officer was critical to setting up sessions in sheltered housing project.
- NHS potentially supporting sessions due to engagement of low-income residents but not on the basis of strength and balance.

Recommendations

1. Active Sussex and other physical activity partners continue to increase the focus on community strength and balance and scale up this work where funding allows. Continuing funding is needed for low-income residents.
2. Health and wellbeing professionals concerned with falls prevention consider how they can further support community strength and balance. Providing long-term activity can provide exit pathways for those completing falls prevention courses and aid habit formation. Directing funds upstream could reduce frailty in the older population so that there are fewer falls.
3. NHS decision-makers to engage in genuinely collaborative work to tackle inequalities through preventative healthcare such as physical activity. This passage from the Kings Fund report on tackling health inequalities illustrates our experience to date:

“Spending on inequalities work is too often considered additional or novel, directed at specific groups or one-off projects. In many cases, notably when focused on preventive measures, this funding is expected to meet a higher value-for-money threshold than other spend. For work on inequalities to endure, there must be a shift in the way baseline funding is spent. This means treating inequalities spending as part of the mainstream and not as short-term funding.”

Kings Fund report on tackling health inequalities, 2022