



Reducing the number of falls will improve lives and reduce pressure on local services. Active Norfolk has taken the lead in bringing an innovative falls prevention approach to Norfolk - Dance to Health.

The Effects of Falls in Society

Dance to Health is a pioneering nationwide falls prevention dance programme for older people. It combines evidence-based physiotherapy with the creativity, expression and energy of dance.

Prior to its inception, research into the effects of falls indicated that:

- Falls represent the most frequent and serious type of accident in people aged 65 and over.
- 1 in 3 people aged 65+ falls each year in the UK.
- 1 in 2 people aged 80+ falls each year in the UK.
- Ten per cent of ambulance calls are because of older people's falls.
- After a fall, an older person is 50% likely to have seriously impaired mobility and ten per cent will die within a year.
- Falls destroy confidence, increase isolation and reduce independence.
- Falls cost the NHS £2.3 billion per year.
- **Every extra £1 spent on falls and bone health early intervention services would reduce NHS costs by £2.50.**



Identifying the Need in Norfolk

There are 213,000 people aged 65+ of Norfolk's 892,000 residents, meaning that nearly a quarter of Norfolk residents would be eligible to benefit from the programme, and from the research and insight arising from it.

The largest increase in the local population by 2026 is anticipated to be in the older age bands, so there is a long term need to identify now what prevention work can help support older people and reduce pressure on local services in the years to come.

A Falls Prevention Steering Group has been created to identify priority areas for preventive work, which includes physical activity. The importance of physical activity in preventing falls has led to a Physical Activity Falls Prevention Sub Group, which Active Norfolk leads. The group identifies new approaches and opportunities, then identifies and aligns resources to be able to bring fall prevention resources like Dance to Health to the county. Through this, Aesop's Dance to Health project was discovered as a viable option.

110 elderly people booked onto the six separate groups in Norfolk

£2.3m yearly cost of falls to the NHS (NICE 2013)

Active Norfolk's Role

Having identified the need and the opportunity that this national programme presented, Active Norfolk partnered with Norwich Clinical Commissioning Group to source £30,000 of combined funding to bring the programme to Norwich to benefit elderly residents.

In co-operation with Aesop, a social welfare charity, and local dance school Dance East, Active Norfolk supported the Dance to Health Project Officer in setting up six sessions in the Norwich area, identifying suitable local facilities and introducing the Project Officer to relevant local partners.

Active Norfolk continues to be a key health partner for the programme, and is the local point of contact for Aesop and the Norfolk based Dance to Health Project Officer, a post that Active Norfolk hosts for 1 day a week.



Dance
to health



Findings

At the first Dance to Health cascade group, in which participants were encouraged to openly feedback their experiences of the sessions, participant enjoyment of the sessions was overwhelmingly positive.

- Participants from a number of groups identified the social element of the sessions as a key factor in their repeat attendance.
- Certain members of the group reported on their own loneliness and how Dance to Health had given them somewhere to meet new people, perhaps in a similar situation, and develop personal relationships.
- Participants reported on increased confidence in their movements and independence, which they attributed to the effects of the Dance to Health programme.
- While some participants reported they preferred the dance elements of the programme to the physiotherapy elements, the group recognised the importance of the combination of both in improving their physical health and independence.
- When asked about how the programme had helped participants deal with existing pain, some reported an initial increase in pain in some areas of their body due to unfamiliar movements. However the majority of participants identified a reduction in pain as a positive aspect of the Dance to Health Programme.
- Participants expressed a demand for the sustainability of the programme in its current format.



The Dance to Health Model

The Dance to Health model is the UK's only evidence-based falls prevention programme. It uses the physiological principles of other falls prevention models which were prescriptive and repetitive, and proved ineffective in retaining attendees.

These classes combine traditional falls prevention techniques with fun, sociable and creative dance sessions, delivered by local creative Dance Artists, that create a fun and stimulating class that participants enjoy attending.

The project now operates two programmes:

- **The Improvement Programme** requires participants to complete 50 hours of activity over a 6 month period delivered in weekly sessions augmented by a small amount of home-based activity
- **The Maintenance Programme** provides ongoing weekly sessions to maintain strength and balance improvements.

Over the course of a year, the Maintenance Programme will be supported to become an ongoing, self-run and sustainable group which is run by the attendees themselves and other members of the local community.



Now I walk more upright than I used to – I've got more confidence to walk down the road.

A Dance to Health participant

