



fit as a fiddle

Making a difference to our older people's health and well being



Why do we need a programme like **fit as a fiddle**?

The **fit as a fiddle** programme has been built on the success of the Ageing Well programme. In 1993 Age Concern England developed and established the Ageing Well Programme. It was seen as a new and innovative programme, which enabled individuals over 50 to become involved in local initiatives to improve the social and emotional well being of their peers. The Ageing Well programme focused on increasing the expectation of good health in old age and to encourage older people to maintain, sustain and improve their health. Key to the success of the programme was to promote effective models of healthy ageing in line with and to inform national and international strategies.

Ageing Well was successful in achieving the following:

Senior Health Mentors

- Encouraged older people to become volunteers to promote healthy lifestyles to their peers.

Networks

- Developed proactive networks to share good practice regarding the delivery of different types of physical activity, health information and advice for older people



If this is the case, why do we need fit as a fiddle?

- By 2020, over half the adults in the UK will be over 50 years of age.
- “the older you are, the less you participate” (A Vision for 2020, Sport England, 2004).
- Only 17% of men and 13% of women aged 65-74 take sufficient exercise to meet the international guidelines of half an hour’s exercise of ‘moderate intensity’ on at least 5 days a week.
- For those aged 75 and over, this falls to 8% of men and 3% of women.
- The average annual cost to the Health Service of looking after someone aged over 85 is six times that of someone aged between 16 and 44 (The Economist – Oct 2006).
- Inactivity levels in nursing homes are highest, with about 90% of residents not having done a continuous walk of 15 minutes or more in the past month (DH, 2000).
- Crossing a road within the time allowed by controlled traffic lights requires an average walking speed higher than achieved by most 70 year olds.
- Among people older than 65, 12% cannot manage walking outside on their own and 9% cannot manage stairs unaided.
- 25% of women and 7% of men over 70 do not have sufficient leg strength to get out of a chair without using their arms.
- 20% of women and 14% of men over 50 do not have the flexibility to wash their hair comfortably.
- 47% of women aged 70-74 have insufficient leg muscle power to step up onto a bus without using their arms.

(Skelton et al 1998)

So what do older people think about this?

The views of older people are highlighted in the independent UK Inquiry into Mental Health and Well-Being in Later Life (Age Concern and the Mental Health Foundation, 2006) and the ‘As fit as Butchers’ Dogs?’ report on healthy lifestyle choice and older people (National Consumer Council and Age Concern, 2006). Both studies directly sought the views of older people and evaluated sample findings on their knowledge, attitudes and preferences regarding the choice of healthy lifestyles.

The Inquiry’s first report ‘Promoting Mental Health and Well-Being in Later Life’ revealed there are five main factors that impact on older people’s mental health and well-being: discrimination, participation in meaningful activity, relationships, physical health and poverty.

- Older people feel that being able to make contributions to society (and being recognised for them) is good for their mental well-being. Volunteering was identified as a key way of making contributions and participating in society.
- Older people also identify physical activity and maintaining a good diet as the key components of physical health which can have positive impact on their mental well-being.

- The Inquiry report concluded that local-level action will make the most difference and recommended that healthy ageing programmes should be established to encourage older people to take advantage of opportunities for meaningful activity, social interaction and physical activity. Specifically, the Inquiry recommended that such active ageing programmes should promote mental as well as physical health and well-being in their design, delivery and evaluation.

The findings from 'As fit as Butchers' Dogs?' report revealed:

- Older people feel that a positive outlook and zest for life is a key factor of health, both in terms of physical and mental well-being.
- Supportive contact with others is critical for both physical and mental health.
- There is a lot of scope for better publicity of facilities that exist and support to provide 'routes' for older people.
- Information about what is available is not reaching all those who would be interested.
- Some groups need more intervention than others, particularly those who present attitudinal barriers.

fit as a fiddle is designed to address current inequalities in older people's health and well-being. By building on the successful Ageing Well programme, it will empower older people to live more healthy, active and fulfilling lives with the support of their peers and communities.

fit as a fiddle national programme

The **fit as a fiddle** national programme consists of two strands which will work concurrently and in co-operation with one another:

Cascade training programme

In partnership with the following organisations, **fit as a fiddle** will be developing a national training programme to develop the capacity of volunteers to support physical activity with older people. The national partners are:

- British Heart Foundation National Centre for Physical Activity (BHFNC)
- National Association for Providers of Activities for Older People (NAPA)
- Men's Health Forum (MHF)
- Blood Pressure Association (BPA)

The programme will devise and develop five training courses, tailor made to the needs of specific target groups, including:

- Older men
- Older people in sheltered accommodation
- Older people in care and residential homes
- Older people in community and faith settings
- Older people who are isolated or house bound



Each training course will devise a model for engaging and training volunteers, to work with older people within these target groups and encourage and enable opportunities for physical activity and well-being. These models and courses will be piloted and cascaded regionally and nationally, across the lifetime of the programme. By the end of the programme, the courses will be rolled out throughout all nine regions, and volunteers will have been trained and supported in developing work on physical activity and well-being across the country.

The cascade training programme will work closely and in co-operation with volunteer work taking place within the **fit as a fiddle** regional programmes and Ageing Well programme.

Educational resources

The national programme will also be working with partners and key organisations to develop a series of educational resources for people over 50, volunteers and professionals, on physical activity, well-being and healthy eating.

The resources will be developed in conjunction with older people and will include a range of multi-media resources, to engage individuals and professionals working with them in physical activity, well-being and nutrition work.

The programme will develop the following resources, across the five year programme period:

- **A series of DVDs** for people over 50, to enable and encourage opportunities for physical activity for older people with varying degrees of fitness – this resource will be developed in conjunction with Keep Fit Association.
- **A set of professional guides** aimed at different groups of workers, to encourage and highlight good practice in working on physical activity and well-being – these resources will be developed in conjunction with BHFNC, MHF and BPA.
- **An image bank** of positive, diverse and appropriate photographic images of older people, which can be used regionally and nationally, as part of the **fit as a fiddle** programme – developed in conjunction with national and regional **fit as a fiddle** projects.
- **Web based resources** to increase awareness amongst older people and professionals of physical activity and well-being and to also signpost individuals to local projects and resources – developed by the national team.
- **CD presentations** which organisations can use to highlight good practice on working on physical activity and well-being – developed by the national team.
- **Leaflets** on physical activity, healthy eating and well-being, targeted at specific groups such as older men, people with high blood pressure and people living in sheltered accommodation or residential care – developed in partnership with key organisations.

Once developed, these resources will be distributed nationally and regionally, via the **fit as a fiddle** programme and wider Age Concern and partner networks.

fit as a fiddle at regional level

At regional level individual projects will aim to ensure that all older people are involved in programme work, including BME communities, older people suffering from urban and rural deprivation and those with specific health risks e.g. high blood pressure.

The programme will help older people to be more physically active and overcome the barriers to participation by aiming to:

- encourage older people and their families to eat more healthily
- highlight the link between physical and mental well-being
- encourage the leisure industry/local authorities to promote physical activity with older people

South East

Active Networks South East will be responsible for delivering a range of Active Networks of older people through three geographically based well-being project hubs. The Active Networks will consist of a network of older people coming together in a supported environment to work on improving health and well-being. The hubs will be developing indoor and outdoor activities, as well as developing programmes for healthy eating. There is also a specific 3 year programme concentrating on hard-to-reach groups and individuals in the region.



South-West

The [Get Up, Get out, Get Active](#) project in the South-West will implement six core activities developed and delivered across the region, as follows:

- [The Elder Ambassadors Scheme](#) will recruit and train a team of local residents to make contact with older people who are isolated at home and not accessing all the services they could be. Their role would be to actively support and encourage them to access services and activities, including community activities, learning, exercise, and leisure.
- [Walking for Health](#) will provide and manage a programme of weekly walks for health for older people.
- [Mobility and Activity](#) will develop a programme of chair based and gentle exercises such as yoga or Tai Chi for older people, based in local leisure and community centres.
- [Fit as a Fish](#) will encourage older people to join a group for a supervised swim in a safe setting.
- [Fitness for over 70's](#) will develop an exercise programme to meet the needs of frailer, older people that will be delivered through luncheon and social clubs, day centres and other community facilities.
- [At My Age](#) will use a variety of community venues to create opportunities, especially for older women to participate in learning, to share skills, experiences, life problems, and life solutions.

North-East

[Fifty Ways to Health](#) in the North-East will recruit a local Well-being Co-ordinator for each of the nine local Age Concerns to deliver services to older people currently receiving little or no services in their community. The programme will target BME communities, older people with learning difficulties; physical disabilities and depression

North-West

The North-West will deliver five region-wide projects in close collaboration with local partners. These include:

- [Eastern Lives](#): this project will target older people living in the most disadvantaged areas of East Lancashire. Programmes will include projects aimed at BME groups, and will be working with Age Concern Hyndburn, and Age Concern Blackburn with Darwen
- [Active in Rural Cheshire](#): a joint project between two local Age Concerns to implement a region-wide programme to reach isolated older people in rural areas in Cheshire
- [Home Not Away](#): activity sessions will be delivered to people in care homes in and around Oldham, and will be supported with training for staff
- [Onwards and Upwards](#): two themed activities will be designed to target and engage older people throughout South Lakeland. [Best Foot Forward](#) will be delivered through preventative physical fitness activity for older vulnerable people led by volunteers known as [Fall Heroes](#). [The Way We Were](#) will use intergenerational work to deliver healthy eating activities. Older people will share with families and children, exploring local traditions, lifestyles and reminiscences.

- **Men to Mentor:** two activities will be delivered to target health improvements and increased participation in physical activity. A series of activities called **Naughty but Sporty** and **Slimmin Wi No Women** will target older men in areas of high unemployment in St Helens

London

London will develop three projects to target older people from harder to reach groups:

- **Community Health Engagement:** the project will develop innovative community approaches to engage with harder to reach older people. Three Age Concerns across London will lead on delivering this outreach activity with local volunteers.
- **Healthy Eating:** each year 2 ACs will pilot a new way of working with local community groups using volunteers to help deliver the activities
- **Tackling Obesity through health promotion:** each year two Age Concerns will partner with another two Age Concerns and each will recruit 5 volunteers to deliver person centred health packages to older people.

Yorkshire and Humber

Good for your Health! will be launched across the region to build the capacity of volunteer Senior Health Mentors to engage with their peers in their own community supported by 24 local Age Concerns and their partners

East Midlands

The East Midlands programme will include:

- **The Urban Good Life:** sessions to encourage participation in physical activity and healthy eating will be delivered to older people who are currently not accessing such activities in Leicester, Northampton and Nottingham and Nottinghamshire
- **The Rural Good Life:** delivering physical activity and healthy eating sessions to excluded older people in the rural areas of Leicestershire and Rutland, Lincolnshire, Derbyshire, Nottingham and Nottinghamshire.

West Midlands

The West Midlands will develop two projects supported by volunteers and delivered in partnership with a range of organisations across the region.

- **Prescription for Health:** this project will focus on developing strong links with local health providers and voluntary and community organisations, to develop a referral mechanism to target the most hard to reach groups.
- **Greenagers:** will focus on gardening and growing produce to improve older people's physical fitness. Activities will develop on three local authority allotments, as well as three Garden Circles (where older people will support each other's gardens).

Eastern

The Eastern programme will include:

- **Dancing for Fun and Better Health:** a variety of dance and movement to music classes, targeted at older people with sedentary lifestyles facing social isolation and living within sheltered and residential accommodation.
- **Active Health:** targeted physical activity opportunities for older people unable to access mainstream services via volunteer Community Health Coaches.
- **Active Bedfordshire:** a county-wide community model where active members of the community are recruited and trained to design, develop and deliver a range of physical activity programmes.
- **Healthwise:** early intervention support will be given to older people who experience depression and dementia in Hertfordshire.
- **Carry on Cooking:** shared cooking sessions at 26 community venues in deprived areas across the region to help older people eat better.
- **Staying Nifty Over Fifty:** will extend and enhance the work of a mobile gym in North Norfolk to reach specific groups of older people.
- **Town and Bridge ActivAge Centres:** two new ActivAge centres in the centre of Ipswich and Bridge Ward to work with disadvantaged older people.
- **Well-being: Mind and Body:** Age Concern Peterborough will develop a project to target people to join full of beans exercise and eating well, feeling well initiatives.

How **fit as a fiddle** can help you achieve your Local Area Agreement targets

The Government recently announced that volunteering would be included in the new Local Area Agreements (LAAs), as one of the 198 indicators. In the Cabinet Office briefing to Local Strategic Partnerships (NI 6: participating in regular volunteering), it highlights why they should include volunteering in their LAAs. Currently Age Concern uses 55,000 volunteers valued at £139 million to support older people in a variety of activities. One of the key cornerstones of the **fit as a fiddle** programme is to increase and train more volunteers, so that they can support older people to change their lifestyles and improve their health and well-being.

The national programme is developing a core framework for volunteers which will give them the support they need to become a volunteer. The framework will cover:

- Becoming a volunteer
- Communication skills
- Personal safety
- Well-being and health
- Understanding change
- Inclusion and diversity
- Understanding participant's requirements
- Planning and record keeping.



The national training will also focus on the different roles a volunteer may opt for, such as mentor, buddy, befriender, activity organiser, volunteer assistant and volunteer ambassador, working with a variety of client groups such as older people living in residential care, those housebound, in sheltered accommodation, older men, community and faith groups.

Across all nine regions there will be a variety of programmes working with and training volunteers. They are as follows:

Eastern

[Mind and Well-Being programme](#) – volunteers trained to support physical activity classes.

[Town and Bridge](#) – volunteers acting as buddies to encourage individuals to use the Active Age centres.

[Staying Nifty over Fifty](#) – buddy system to encourage individuals to use a mobile gym.

[Healthwise](#) – Senior Health Mentors recruited to help with the healthy eating and exercise programmes targeted at older people suffering from depression and dementia.

East Midlands

[Urban Good Life and Rural Good Life](#) – volunteers trained to support the delivery of physical activity and healthy eating sessions.

London

[Community Engagement](#) – mentors trained to support individuals who do not currently take part in the opportunities available to them regarding physical activity and healthy eating.

[Tacking Obesity](#) – volunteers trained to support individuals by signposting them to different activities and accompanying them to activity sessions where appropriate.

North-East

[50 Ways to Health](#) – Senior Health Mentors trained to support the delivery of physical activity programmes.

North-West

[ARCH/rural Cheshire](#) – Senior Health Mentors trained to support the delivery of physical activity programmes.

[Men2Mentors](#) – volunteers trained to support and encourage other men to take part in physical activity.

[Onwards Not Upwards](#) – volunteers acting as champions for taking up physical activity and joining healthy eating sessions.

South-West

Elder Ambassadors – volunteers trained as ambassadors to promote physical activity and healthy eating

West Midlands

Prescription for Health – volunteers trained to support individuals who do not currently take part in the opportunities available to them regarding physical activity and healthy eating.

Yorkshire and Humber

Good for Your Health – Senior Health Mentors trained to support the delivery of physical activity programmes.

By 2012, the **fit as a fiddle** programme will train and support over 10,000 new volunteers. This will form a volunteer workforce that will proactively support older people to improve their health and well-being, which will reduce their costs to the NHS. By investing in volunteers who have been a part of the programme and the training that will be available you will be able to achieve your LLA targets, as well as empowering individuals to contribute to the community they live in.



fit as a fiddle – measuring impact

The **fit as a fiddle** programme is responsible for the delivery of national and regional projects to promote and improve the health and well-being of older people. Each region will be delivering a range of projects with this in mind. We will also be developing 5 training-the-trainer courses, and developing a range of educational resources with our 5 national partners, the British Heart Foundation National Centres, the Blood Pressure Association, Men's Health Forum, National Providers of Activities for Older People and the Keep Fit Association.

The sheer size of the programme will provide us with enough intelligence to influence future PSA ambitions and Local Area Agreements. However, we need to have a robust systematic approach to collecting this intelligence if we are to ensure that health promotion for older people is integral to the planning of local authorities, PCTs, SHA's and national government.

We are currently developing a monitoring and evaluation toolkit, which will be available in June to assist regions and local ACs to collect this intelligence. The toolkit will include different explanations and methodologies on how to collect quantitative and qualitative data, so that we can demonstrate the impact of the programme on older people's lives.

Throughout the programme, we will be collecting data in the following ways:

- Monitoring forms, which all participants will be required to complete, identifying their gender, age, ethnicity and whether they have a disability.
- Evaluation forms which will be completed by a sample of participants, which will measure whether the programme has had an impact on and improved their lives.
- Completion of activity diaries and healthy eating diaries, so each individual can monitor their own progress.
- Customer feedback, through round-table discussions.
- Project feedback, highlighting good practice and the challenges faced when delivering each of the individual projects.
- Work based assessment of all volunteer training developed.

All local Age Concerns will have the opportunity to use the tools we have developed, as they will help us all make a stronger case that health promotion for older people is essential to the quality of their lives and needs to be supported by local, regional and national governments.



fit as a fiddle contact list

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Age Concern is the UK's largest organisation working for and with older people to enable them to make more of life. In England, we are a federation of over 400 independent charities which share the same name, values and standards.

We believe that ageing is a normal part of life, and that later life should be fulfilling, enjoyable and productive. We enable older people by providing services and grants, researching their needs and opinions, influencing government and media, and through other innovative and dynamic projects.

Every day we provide vital services, information and support to thousands of older people – of all ages and backgrounds.

Age Concern also works with many older people from disadvantaged or marginalised groups, such as those living in rural areas or black and minority ethnic elders.

www.fitasafiddle.org.uk

