



Healthworks' client Norma Richardson taking part in Staying Steady group (Image: Lisa Bretherick Photography)

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Published research confirms benefits of community health programme

Research by academics at Northumbria University, Newcastle, has confirmed the health benefits of a strength and balancing programme prescribed for older adults who are at risk of falling and injury.

Working in collaboration with Newcastle-based community health charity [Healthworks](#), the research team at Northumbria have just had their findings on the Staying Steady programme published in the influential journal [BMC Public Health](#). Led by Dr Alasdair O'Doherty, an Assistant

Professor in Exercise, Physiology and Health at Northumbria, and supported by PhD student Emily James, the study analysed patient outcomes over a six-year period. They were able to show clear benefits for those who stayed in the programme by improving their strength and balance, boosting confidence, and reducing their fear of falling.

Staying Steady is a 27-week tailored strength and balance programme for older adults who have been referred by healthcare professionals, or have applied directly, due to a history or risk of falling.

Dr O'Doherty said: "Falls prevention exercise programmes like Staying Steady can make a real difference; simply having the ability and confidence to get out of a chair and walk around is so important for physical wellbeing, quality of life and independence. However, promoting the success of these community-delivered interventions and understanding more about participants who stick with the full programme, or dropout early, has been hampered by a lack of studies using real-world data. Our research sought to address this to provide the evidence base for Healthworks and other community providers to expand their programmes and help more people.

"By conducting a six-year retrospective study we have shown empirically that Staying Steady is beneficial and improves the strength and balance of participants who stay in the programme. We also noted some important characteristics of people who dropped out of the programme such as having lung disease, or being from a low-income background. Having our research published in BMC Public Health is great news and should help raise awareness of how valuable the programmes are."

Collaboration with community groups and charities to help people live well for longer and improve quality of life is a rapidly emerging field of research for Northumbria. For more information on working with the University please visit: www.northumbria.ac.uk/business

Healthworks is one of the leading North East charities working with disadvantaged local communities to tackle health inequalities and improve their health and wellbeing. Based in Newcastle, but working across the region. Healthworks Patron is Professor Michael Marmot.

Paul Court, CEO of Healthworks said: "The risk of falling can have a huge impact on quality of life. Through our collaboration with Northumbria

University, we have been able to evidence Staying Steady is a cost-effective intervention that keeps people out of hospital, and ensures they can live safely at home as long as possible, reducing pressure on NHS and Social Care services.

“Healthworks is collaborating on other studies with the University and I’m hoping this is just the start of a long relationship.”

For more information on Healthworks please visit:

www.healthworksnewcastle.org.uk

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