

Interim Progress Report to the Warrington Health Partnership on the

Birchwood Falls



Management Programme

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July 2001

AIM OF PROJECT:-

To reduce the incidence of injurious falls amongst the clients aged 75 and over who are registered with the Birchwood Medical Practice.

PROJECT WORKERS:

Rachel Bebb, Community Nurse

Carole Rowlinson, Health Promotion Specialist

Both employed by Warrington Community Healthcare NHS Trust

OBJECTIVES:

- To develop a Falls Risk Assessment Tool to identify those aged 75 and over at risk from falls.
- To complete a Falls Risk assessment on all clients aged 75 and over.
- Create a Falls Referral Pathway for those identified at risk.
- Perform Fitness Testing before commencing the exercise sessions and again on completion of 26 weeks.
- To facilitate a weekly and home exercise programme to improve strength, balance and co-ordination.
- To audit the incidence of falls amongst the participants of the exercise programme.

PROJECT LAUNCH / STEERING GROUP SELECTION

The launch was in February 2001 at the Birchwood Leisure Centre. Over 30 people attended from the many statutory and voluntary agencies invited as well as four older people representing the over 75's in the practice.

Steering Group

David Walker, Principal Officer, Older Peoples Day Care Service, Social Services was elected Chair. The active committee comprises of the four older people representatives and fifteen delegates from a cross sample of the agencies invited. The Steering Group will meet three or four times a year with the formation of a sub-group to undertake the detailed work.

Focus Group

Took place in March with eight older people out of fourteen invited aged 75 and over from the Birchwood Medical Practice (see appendix 1).

Conclusions of Focus Group

All were willing to participate in an exercise programme to increase **confidence** and **mobility** which they saw as maintaining **independence**.

The opportunity of an exercise session to improve **social contacts** was emphasised by the members as being extremely welcomed.

Payment and Transport

Most of the group felt that the free provision of transport was essential for the success of the project because of mobility, safety and cost implications. Payment of £1.00 or under was agreed as a reasonable contribution towards the exercise session.

Exit Strategy

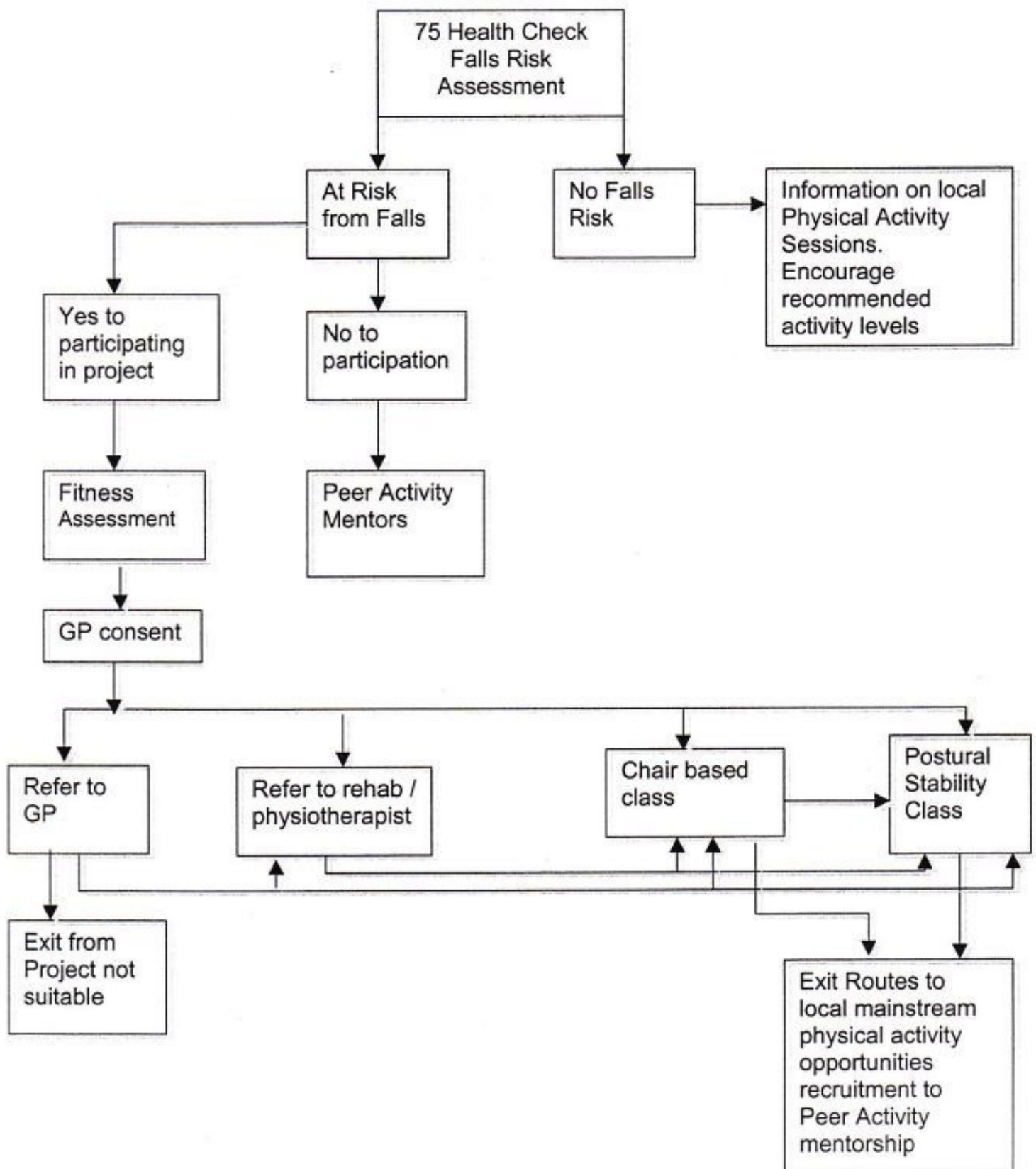
Most did not feel confident enough at this time to access the local leisure centre or the health walks organised by the Birchwood Ranger Service, but felt that the exercise session would give them the confidence to do this.

Documentation

Completion of the documentation to use for the Falls risk referral process and assessments was completed in May with the assistance of the data analyst. (See appendices 2).

Falls Referral Pathway

BIRCHWOOD FALLS RISK REFERRAL PATHWAY FOR CLIENTS AGED 75 AND OVER



Fitness Assessments

Assessment establishes a baseline of performance for tailoring exercise and the level of exercise the participants should enter at. A fitness assessment is performed on all clients who agree to being referred to the Fall Exercise Programme.

The documentation used can be found in Appendix 2. These assessments provide a baseline measurement of what people can do and what they can build upon.

Health Assessment: a self completed but supervised questionnaire to identify medical conditions, medications and major disabilities. This information is cross referenced with the practice data-base.

Morale Questionnaire

Which is an assessment of levels of concentration, difficulty in sleeping, confidence, feelings of well being and happiness.

Functional Assessment

Five specific functional tasks are performed by each participant which provides validated objective measurements. These provide a baseline record on which progress or change can be recorded, and re-assessed after six months of regular exercise sessions.

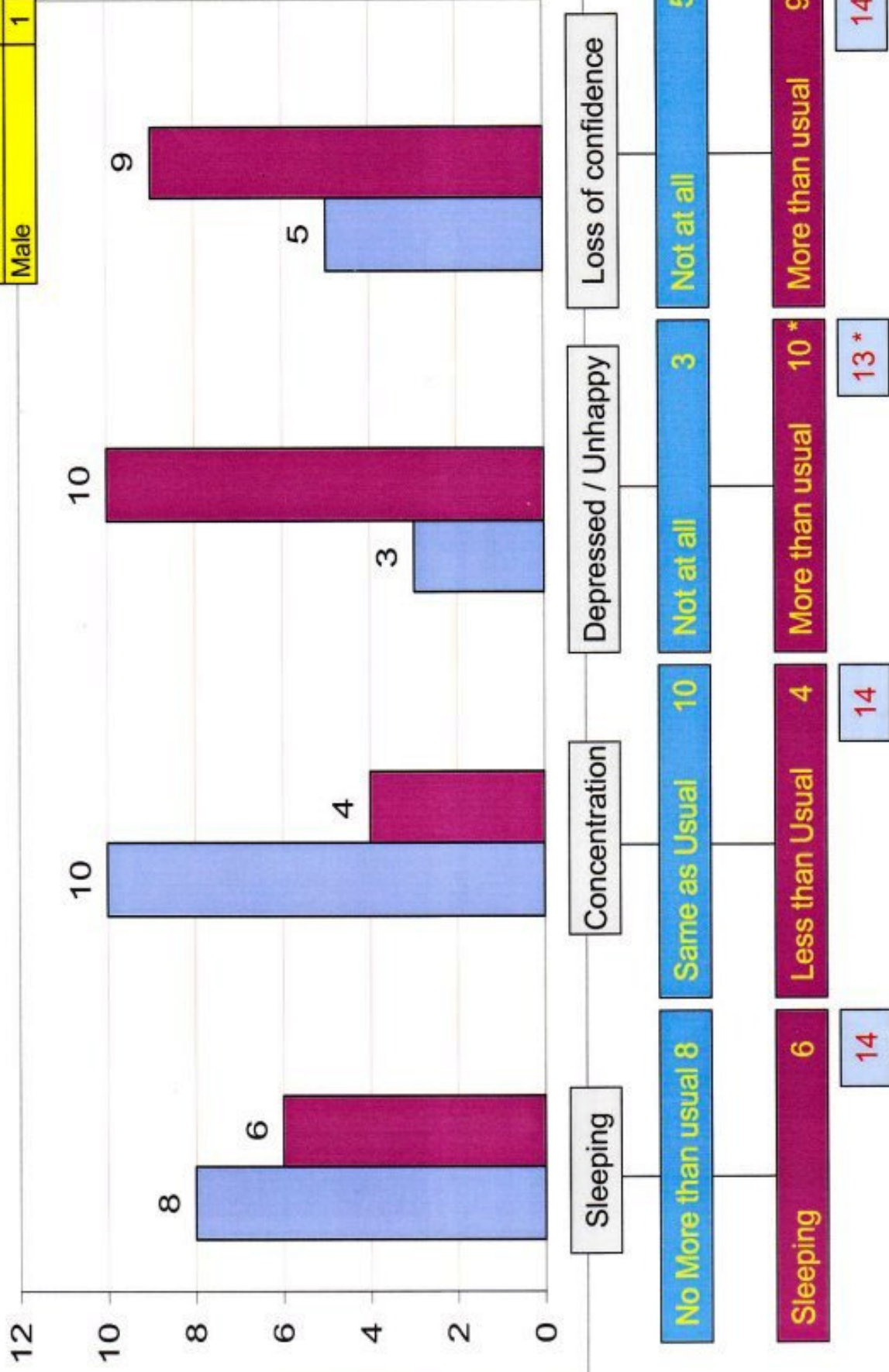
Functional Activities Intervention

The assessment gives an indication of the participants perceived ability to live independently, use transport and mobilise both indoor and outdoor. It can provide a description of the levels of assistance that the individual may need to complete everyday activities. The information is useful when setting short and long term goals with the participant.

The results of the Fitness Assessment are shown in detail in the report.

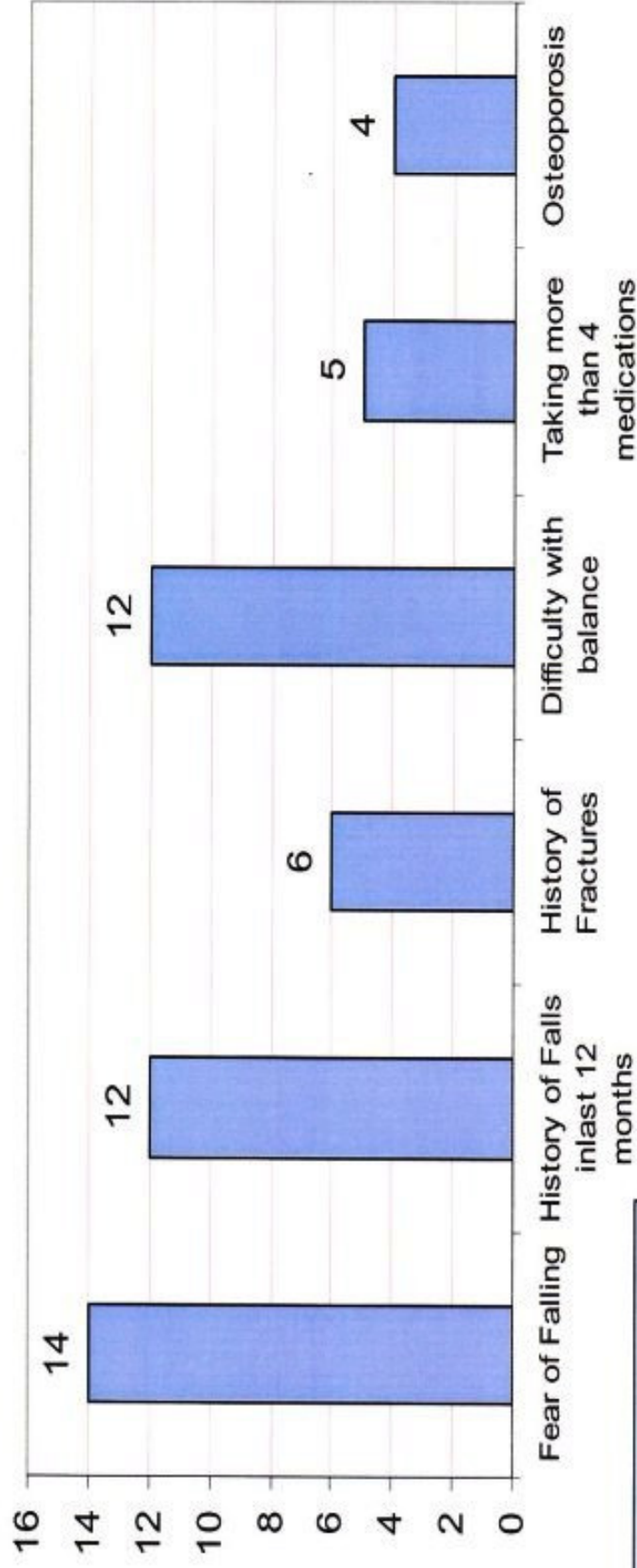
1. Mental Health- Total Participants 14

Gender Breakdown	
Female	13
Male	1

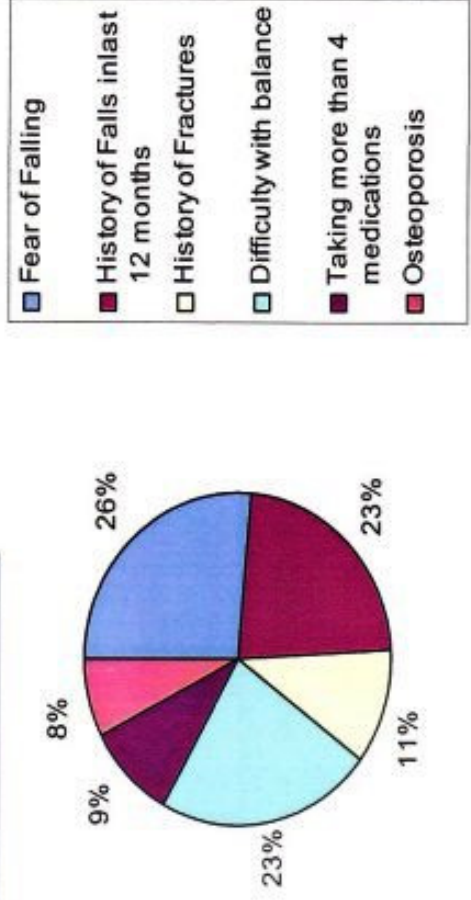


* 1 participant no response

2. General Health Questionnaire & Falls History - 14 Participants

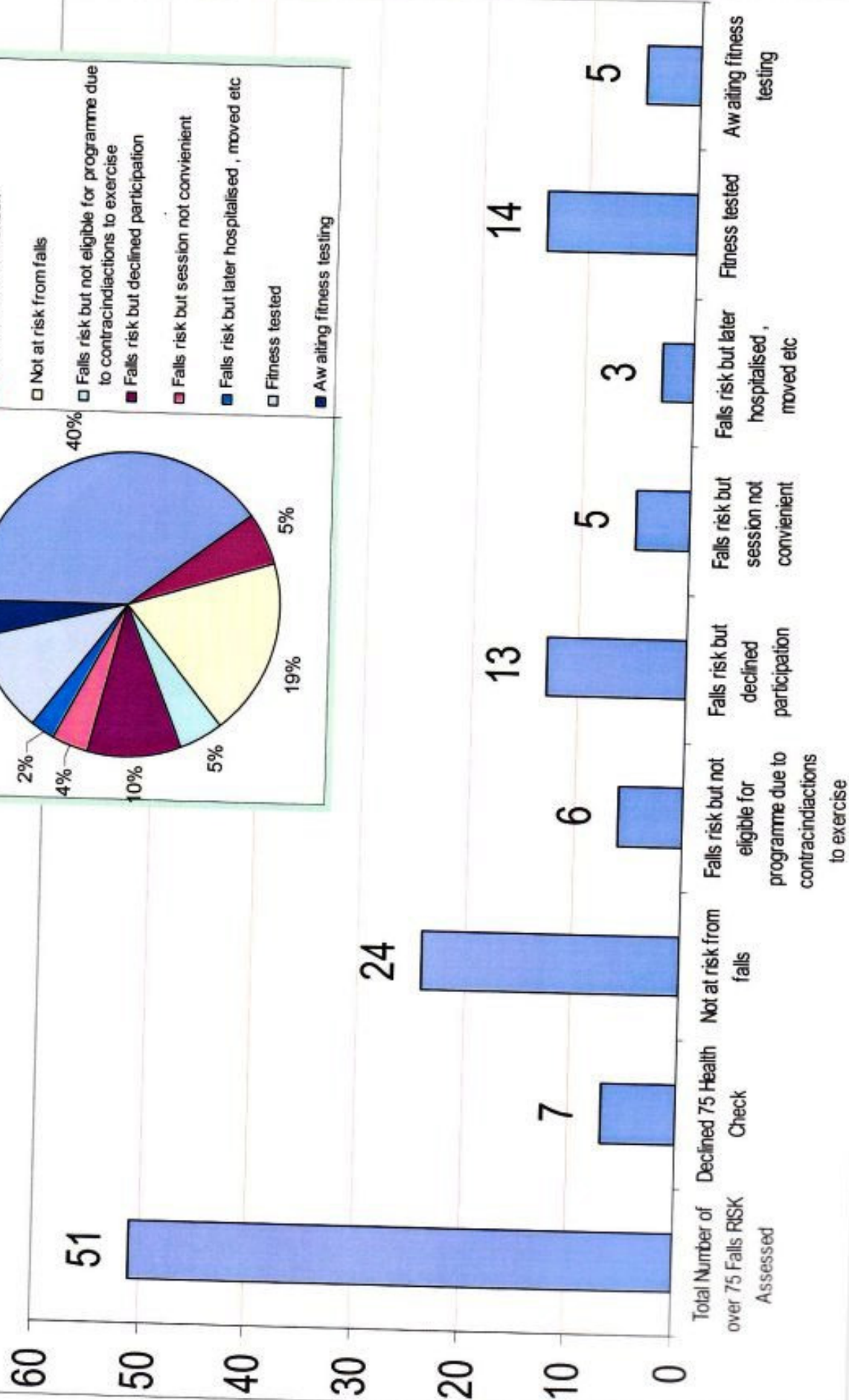
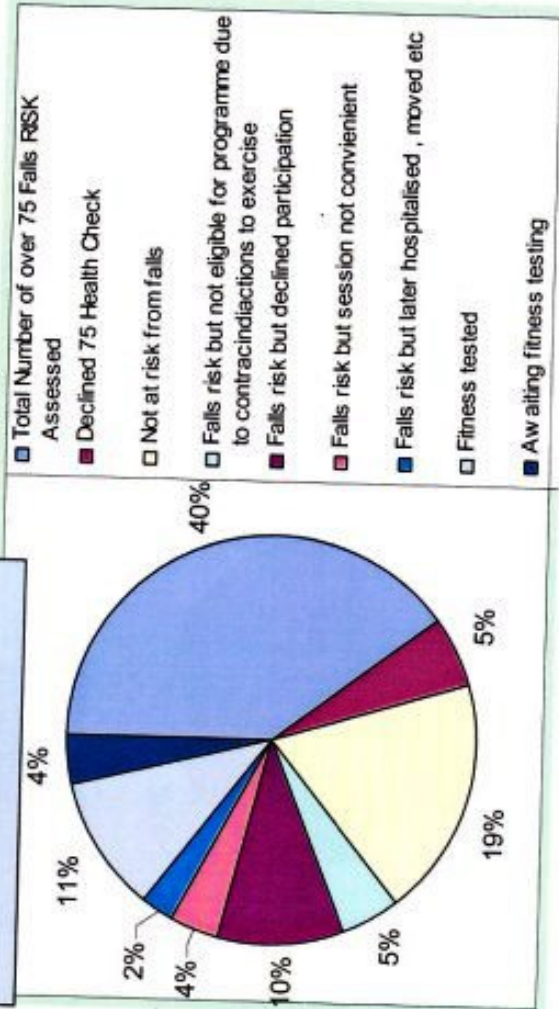


% Breakdowns n= 14

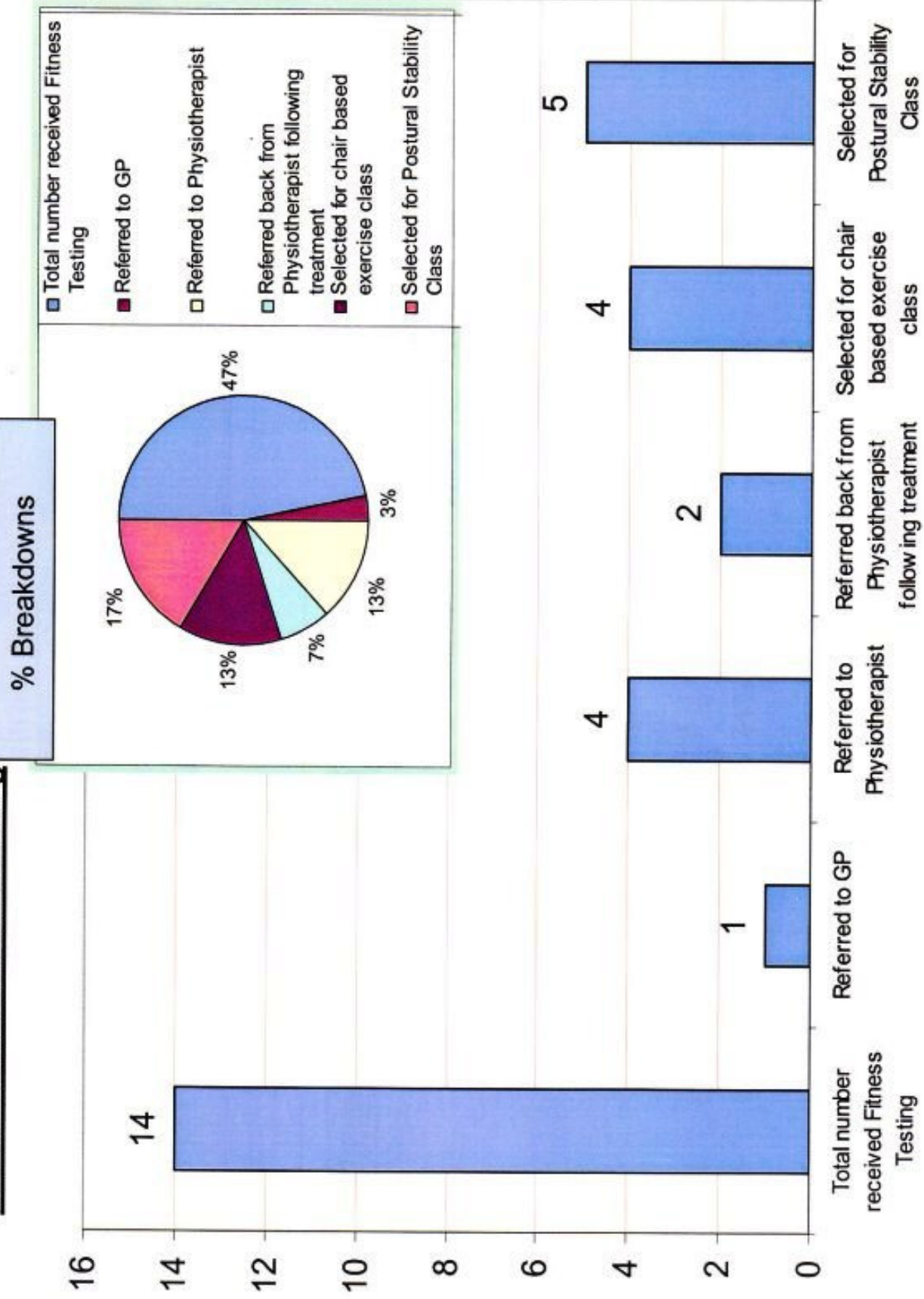


3. Falls Risk Assessment Tool

% Breakdowns



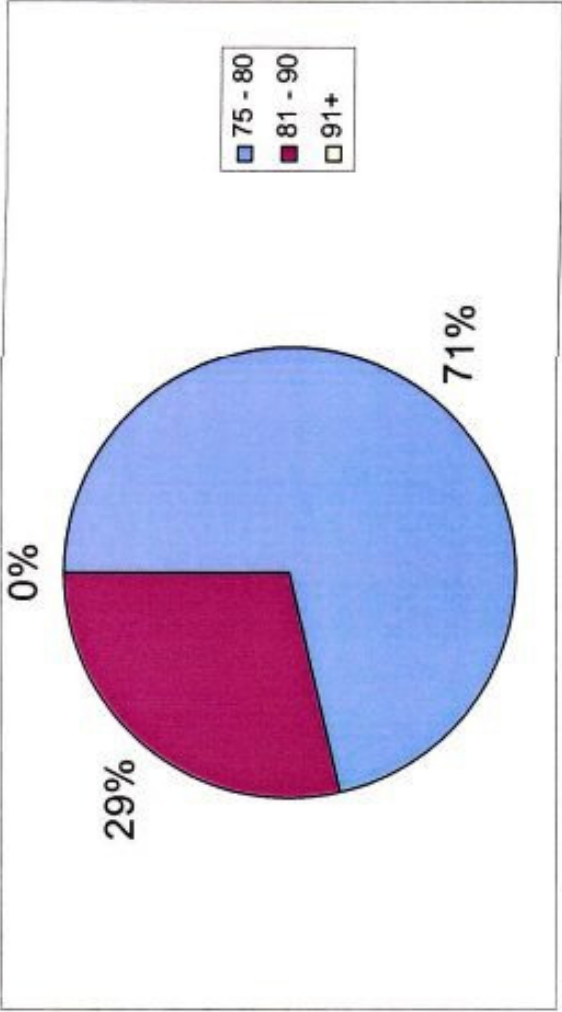
4. Pre Exercise Fitness Testing



5. Fitness testing & Age Groups

Results of Fitness Testing Confirmed						
Functional Reach	Timed Up and Go		Heel to Toe		6 Minute Walk	
Flexibility Test	Strength / stamina					
No Limitation	0	No Limitation	0	No Limitation	0	No Limitation
Moderate Limitation	9	Moderate Limitation	11	Moderate Limitation	0	Moderate Limitation
Severe Limitation	4	Severe Limitation	2	Severe Limitation	0	Severe Limitation
				Unable	14	Unable
						13

General Age Groups n = 14



Age Groups - General	
75 - 80	10
81 - 90	4
91 +	0

EXERCISE SESSIONS

To date we have facilitated four weekly chair-based exercise sessions within the Birchwood Medical Practice as an introduction to exercise before dividing the group into the chair-based and postural stability classes.

Number of attendees over 4 weeks: 33

Number requiring transport to class: 15

over 4/52

The class contains all the components of fitness:

- **Warm up** which includes pulse raising and mobility exercises followed by stretches.
- **Re-warmer**
- **Workout** which includes:
 - 1) Strength exercises to improve upper body strength and condition the large leg muscles working with weight and resistance bands.
 - 2) Balance and co-ordination circuit stations.
- **Cool down**
Pulse lowering exercises
Flexibility stretches
3 dimensional Tai chi as relaxation and to promote balance

THE PARTICIPANTS GOALS

- Walk Better
- More confidence
- Walk a bit straighter
- Feel younger (10 years at least!)
- More mobility
- To dance again
- To get balance back
- The flexibility to reach up
- Improve strength in my hands
- Improve knee strength
- Have fun and laughter
- Make new friends

DEVELOPMENTS

- Partnership working with the local Leisure Centre to use the Fitness Studio for the Postural Stability Class starting in September.
- An application to the Modernisation Fund, Department of Trade and Industry for the sum of £4,000 to fund the purchase of two pairs of hip protectors for participant to wear during the Exercise Class.
- An awareness raising exercise at the Disability Awareness Day with a Falls Prevention Stall. Promoting exercise and the wearing of Hip Protectors as a preventative measure. A free draw to win a pair of hip protectors.

- **Professional Training**

Both Project Workers have completed the six day training course facilitated by Leicester College this year and are now qualified as Postural Stability Exercise Instructors.

- Secured the services of a volunteer to audit the present physical activity opportunities in the Birchwood locality for the over 75's. To compile a Directory for the participants.
- Distributed the Falls Risk Assessment Form as the second phase referral to the Warden of the Sheltered Housing in Birchwood and the optician working in Birchwood Shopping Complex to refer fallers.
- Produced a Home Exercise Booklet for the participants in the Exercise Group.
- Two members of the Exercise Group have agreed to volunteer **1)** to become a Peer Activity motivator and **2)** to attend the N.S.F. Local Implementation Team Falls Sub Group as an older persons representative.

FUTURE PLANS FOR THE PROJECT

- Devise a programme of speakers to present a multi-factorial approach to falls i.e. chiropodist, pharmacist, optician, dietician.
- Roll out the risk assessment referral form to other agencies and professionals practising within Birchwood.
- Develop links with the Accident and Emergency Department, Rapid Response Team and the Physiotherapy Older People Services to refer clients from the Birchwood Practice who are at risk from falling.
- Produce promotional material to advertise the service within the Practice and locality.
- Purchase equipment to use in the exercise sessions to improve balance and strength.
- One participant to train a chair based exercise leader in Oct 01.
- Begin walks with the Ranger Service by way of introducing variety of experience in increasing physical activity.

Summary of the Project

The strengths of the project

The two project workers are trained nurses and Fitness Instructors with additional postured stability training. Knowledge of the ageing process, medical conditions and medication affecting mobility and balance is certainly an advantage when deciding on the appropriate exercise programme for the selected participants at risk from falls. Previous experience with the client group, provides the observational skills necessary during the exercise sessions. The Birchwood Medical Centre is ideal for the project as the community nurse is specifically employed to perform health checks on all patients aged 75 and over registered with the practice. Her knowledge base of the clients and their health status is vital to the success of the project.

The model being used¹ for the identification of clients at risk of falls, the fitness assessment and selection of the appropriate activity is proving to be accurate and effective. The exercise sessions have had an excellent attendance rate any non-attenders are contacted the same week and to date we have had only one drop out.

Unfortunately this was the only male participant who was required to care for this sick wife.

(1) FaME - The Falls Management Exercise Programme - Dawn Skelton, Exercise Psychologist Imperial College School of Medicine, Susie Dinah, Senior Clinical Exercise Practitioner Royal Free Hospital
Exercise for Falls Management: Rationale for an exercise programme aimed at reducing postural instability (Feb 99)

The underachievements of the Project

Fractures

We have been unable to conduct an accurate audit of the incidence of Fractured Hips in the over 75 age group registered at the Birchwood Medical practice as the present database records all fractures without a detailed breakdown.

Male Participants

It has been disappointing that more men have not been recruited to the project.

More women are being identified at risk from falls than men. The percentage men to women of the total over 75's in the practice population are:

Women 309

Men 155

Women make up two thirds of the target group

Hospital Falls Prevention Strategy

There are two active members of the Steering Group from the Warrington Hospital Trust. At present there are no structures in place for the hospital to notify the project of all Fallers seen at the hospital who are registered with the Birchwood Practice. The Hospital Trust are at the negotiation stage of developing a Falls Pathway and have organised a conference on the 21st August to which we are invited to begin the process.

Hip Protectors

Hip Protectors can successfully prevent a hip fracture (Lauritzen et al, 1993)² The use of Hip Protectors to protect the hip is recommended especially during an exercise session. These are currently priced at £35 a pair. We are currently awaiting a bid to the Dept of Trade and Industry for £4,000 to supply each participant with two pairs for the period of the project.

(2) Lauritzen JB, Peterson MM and Lund B (1993), Effect of external hip protection on hip fractures, Lancet 341: 11-13

Threats to the Project

Transport expenses

Payment for the transportation of clients to and from the fitness assessments and exercise sessions has proved to be more expensive than predicted. Fortunately, out of a total of the present twelve attending only three are requiring help with transport the remainder choosing to walk, use local transport or using their own or managing lifts. We feel we have under budgeted for this resource and may need to review costings.

At risk from falls but declining to participate

The FaME model recommends the use of peer mentors to encourage clients at risk from falls who decline to participate in the exercise programme. These mentors would ideally be clients who have completed the exercise intervention programme. We have already had a volunteer from the group. It is hoped to work in partnership with Age Concern for Peer Mentorship training.

Leisure Centre

The manager of the Birchwood Leisure Centre has agreed to the use of their facilities for the Postural Stability Session. The plan is to commence dividing the present chair based group after selecting the more able participants who can join the Postural Stability Session. this is planned for September.

The two exercise groups, the chair-based and the postural stability groups will run concurrently at the two venues:-

- * Birchwood Medical Centre
- * Birchwood Leisure Centre

The exercise groups will re-group at the end of the sessions at the Medical Centre for group interaction and exchange as this is an important component of the programme. Invited speakers from the multidisciplinary team will address the group during this stage.

Achievements of Project

Exercise Sessions

The participants in the exercise groups are extremely committed to attending the weekly programme. On request we have produced a Home Exercise booklet to enable the clients to exercise safely at home. All the participants have purchased resistance bands to continue the strength work at home.

All members of the group interact well and present as a cohesive team whilst welcoming new members.

Payment

It was a unanimous decision for the group to contribute a weekly payment of 50p which will be used for refreshments. The remainder will be placed into an account to be used for social functions as requested by the group.

Awareness Raising

To promote the awareness of Falls Prevention and the use of hip protectors we managed a stall at the Disability Awareness Day on the 22nd July in Warrington.

An article is being submitted to the Birchwood Newsletter, which is distributed to every house in the locality. Our plan is to produce fliers and posters to position in areas used by the target group.

Chair-based Exercise Leaders

A member of the exercise group has volunteered to train as an exercise leader in October 01 and will be funded out of the training funds from the Project Budget.

**REPORT FROM
FOCUS
GROUP**

APPENDIX 1

REPORT FROM FOCUS GROUP

The focus group met at Birchwood Leisure Centre on 13th March 2001. Originally the group consisted of 14 interested parties. Of that four were unable to attend due to illness and one because of prior commitments.

On the day of the meeting one person was unable to attend due to illness. The group consisted of one male and seven females, ranging from 79 – 92 years. Two have not experienced falls, two are mobile but lack confidence since falling; three have limited mobility.

AIMS

The aim of the focus group was to:

- Explain more fully about the project and the rationale behind it.
- Find out expectations for the project and gain ideas from the participants.
- Promote the project through "word of mouth" to others.
- Taster session in chair based exercises.

ISSUES DISCUSSED

- History of the project and importance of falls prevention to older people.
- Importance of physical activity.
- How course would be organised. Role of speakers.
- Commitment levels i.e. regular attendance, home exercise.
- Transport.
- Payment and costs.
- Exit strategies.
- Taster session to demonstrate that exercise is for everyone.
- Social Aspect

OUTCOMES

There was general agreement among the participants of their expectations. All wanted more CONFIDENCE to become more MOBILE and INDEPENDENTS in daily living activities. The increased SOCIAL contact would be welcomed.

Willingness to partake on a regular basis.

Payment was debated. 20p – 50p was agreed for refreshments but general consensus was that £1.00 would be the maximum payment acceptable for classes.

Transport

Most unwilling to contribute towards transport costs, but there was some debate on this.
All agreed transport an issue and most would not attend if transport was not provided.

Exit Strategies

The meeting was held at Birchwood Leisure Centre to ascertain opinions on using the venue. One participant had made use of the facilities. The general opinion was that no one felt confident enough to use classes now but would access appropriate classes in that venue. Also lack of confidence was stated as a reason for not walking with the Ranger Service.

Taster Session

Most enjoyed the exercises, but time constraints limited the class.

CONCLUSION

Transport issues need more exploration as this has cost implications.
Payment considerations may impact exit strategies.
Exit Strategies need to be promoted at onset of course.
All enjoyed the social aspect of the group and would participate in the project.