Balance Matters
Stepping towards Integrated Care

What’s it about?
Interagency group exercise, education and socialisation programmes in community settings.

Target older adults who have fallen, are at risk of falling or have a fear of falling and are at risk of social isolation.

Based on evidence informed practice. Interagency partnerships share skills & resources to develop, implement & evaluate groups.

How it is implemented:
Programmes include graded strength, balance, functional fitness, education & socialisation. Specialist bus provision via lottery funding.

Option 1-Physiotherapist led: Set duration. Includes floor transfers & education. Physiotherapy referral following home visit. HSE fund physiotherapist and other agencies fund venue, bus & refreshments.

Option 2-Physiotherapist & specialist fitness Instructor jointly led.
Programmes initially 12 week duration with multiagency funding. Since 2016 running weekly with annual review. DCC fund fitness instructor, venue & refreshments. HSE fund physiotherapist. €3 ‘pay as you go’ from participants supplements DCC costs. Self referral accepted via a modified PAR-Q screening form.

Option 3-Specialist fitness instructor led: with physiotherapy support as needed. Similar funding and referral streams to option 2. Held on same day and venue as option 2 for greater cost effectiveness and participant choice.

Outcomes 2009-2016:
• 17 groups, once weekly for between 6-26 weeks provided in 4 different venues. 205 participants attended 1 or more groups.
• Participants age range from 64-92 years (mean age 76 years)
• Significant improvements over 6 months shown in tests of gait speed, sit to stand, timed up and go, single leg stand & grip strength.
• 3 interagency fitness testing and educational events (Based on MOT model from UK) held as part of National Positive Ageing Week.
• Ongoing feedback and focus groups inform implementation.

Next steps:
• Strengthen interagency links further.
• Seek translational research opportunities on long-term impact.
• Secure sustainable funding streams.
• Champion case managers and social prescription advocates.
• Inform deployment in other locations.

References:
National Strategy to Prevent Falls & Fractures in Ireland’s Ageing Population June 2008
FaME, Otago and fitness testing (MOT) programmes www.laterlifetraining.co.uk
Lifestyle integrated functional exercise (LiFE) programme: Clemson et al. BMJ 2012

Acknowledgements: Service Users, HSE Primary Care Physiotherapists, HSE Health & Wellbeing services & Primary Care Teams (PCT’s), Dublin City Council (DCC) North West Area Office and DCC Sports and Wellbeing Partnership, Socialisation volunteers from ‘Active Living Ballymun’ & Crosscare, DCC Poppintree Community Centre, Youth Centre & Ballymun Leisure Centre, Cluid Housing Marewood Centre, Community Partnerships from Ballymun, Whitehall, Santry & Tolka area, National Lottery funding via community partnerships.

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