

## Volunteers help enable online Zoom exercise classes for older people in Oxfordshire

Pre-Pandemic, Generation Game - Age UK Oxfordshire's physical activity service - used to run classes in community settings, and we were lucky enough to have some amazing, dedicated volunteers in many of their classes. With the pandemic taking hold, classes were converted to Zoom classes. In these live online sessions, having a volunteer as a second pair of eyes to watch over participants becomes even more crucial, especially for people who live alone. We asked Sheena, who has been volunteering with Generation Games, about her experience:

*"Volunteering has always been important to me as a way of engaging with people from different walks of life. I find it immensely rewarding to see how other people's lives can be enhanced by me simply giving a small regular amount of my time. This is so true of volunteering with Generation Games. I can see the pleasure and health benefits that regular exercise classes bring to participants, even those that initially think it is not for them.*

*I volunteer with Age UK [Oxfordshire] because I have always enjoyed working with people and particularly enjoy the company of the older generation. When I heard about Generation Games it appealed to me because it also combines my interest in health and fitness. I am pleased to be able to help in promoting the importance of exercise throughout our lives.*

*I enjoy my time volunteering with Generation Games enormously. It is rewarding to see the difference that the group exercising brings to participants who say that their strength, balance and mobility is improved due to the classes. I have also had the opportunity to meet so many lovely people who live in Oxfordshire.*

*My volunteering experience with Generation Games has changed during the current pandemic, largely due us no longer being able to meet up in person. So, whereas I would assist in a practical way during the classes in the past, I now assist by attending virtually on Zoom. The premise is the same, assisting the instructor to ensure that the participants are exercising safely and effectively, but the one to one aspect of the experience is not now there. However, it is*

*equally rewarding to be able to contribute to the continuing success of the Generation Games service in Oxfordshire now that the classes have been moved online for those that are able to access them. I also enjoy listening to the attendees' stories at the group opportunity to chat at the end of each class. It has been good to hear their lockdown stories and great to see them being able to socially interact as they would have done at the classes before.*

*From listening to the elderly people's comments, one of the main things they are missing is the company of others. Most are managing to see or at least stay in contact with family, but they are missing meeting up with their friends and peers. They are also missing the opportunity to get out regularly as all their usual activities have been cancelled. This is leading to them being less active, especially as the weather worsens and those who have gardens are unable to use them. Long term this will unfortunately lead to physical and mental deterioration for some. Clearly those who have been participating in the Zoom exercise classes have recognised the need to help themselves overcome these difficulties as best as they are able under the current conditions. So many of them convey their thanks and appreciation to the Generation Games team after their sessions online. They are clearly benefiting from the classes continuing online but of course there are others who are unfortunately unable to access the internet and do the same. I have been impressed with how determined the elderly have been to master Zoom. It has been a new experience to many of them and at times a challenge when combined with their varying physical problems due to aging. But they have persisted and every time they use Zoom have become more proficient. These challenges must also be benefiting their mental capabilities.*

*I feel privileged to be able to assist the fabulous team at Generation Games to continue in their quest to deliver their exercise classes in such difficult times, and to join them in their efforts to ensure that as many people as possible can have the opportunity to attend the classes and benefit from them.*

*I would like to encourage others to consider giving up an hour or two during the working week to do the same. With more volunteers, more classes can be run. We are all spending more time at home for now and this is such a great way to help others without even having to leave the comfort and warmth of our homes. All you need is access to a desktop or laptop computer and basic IT skills. With a cup of tea in hand you can sit down for an hour while watching*

*the clients to ensure they are safe. An added bonus is that you can also learn some new IT skills yourself if you are new to Zoom as I was at the start.”*

If you are interested in volunteering with Generation Games, or would simply like to find out more, please contact: [annamckay@ageukoxfordshire.org.uk](mailto:annamckay@ageukoxfordshire.org.uk)

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## **Notes to Editors**

### **About Age UK Oxfordshire**

*Age UK Oxfordshire is an independent local charity dedicated to giving older people in Oxfordshire comfort, support and opportunities and enabling them to love later life. We provide free local information, advice and support. We work with our national partner, Age UK, and our local Age UK partners in England. You can find further information on all our services and volunteering opportunities by telephoning 0345 450 1276 or by visiting our website: [www.ageuk.org.uk/oxfordshire](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/oxfordshire). Age UK Oxfordshire is a charitable company limited by guarantee (registered charity number 1091529 and company number 4328143)*