‘Dancing with Dementia’

‘Fit as a fiddle’ is a national programme supported by the National Lottery through the Big Lottery Fund and delivered by Age Concern. It aims to improve the health and wellbeing of older people, promoting physical activity, healthy eating and developing ‘active networks’ for the over-50s.

In partnership with Guildcare’s Linfield Care Home and Worthing Borough Council, who have both embraced the project. Leonie Haines the community dance artist, led the sessions which took part at the home’s Richmond Suite, where members could be become fully involved in the project.

Who is it for?

The active network is aimed at over-50s who are currently not undertaking much exercise and have an interest in dancing. One resident enthused:

‘This is great fun, I have not laughed so much for ages and it helps me build up my appetite’

Why we set up the project

Many residents in the scheme would like to do some form of physical activity, but did not have the confidence or opportunity to do so.

- The activity gets the residents of the Lindfield Care Home interacting together, which will help to develop a stronger community within the home
- There are varying abilities within the group and all can be involved in the activity at their own ability level
- Reducing the barriers to participation, as the activity takes place in the home and with residents who are your friends.

The changes we wanted to happen

- Encourage residents to become involved in other types of physical activity
- Improve the quality of life of the participants through improving strength, cardiovascular fitness, flexibility and energy levels.
- To develop a social group that can help reduce social isolation and provide support to each other.
- To provide a wider range of activities, rather than just your traditional activities for older people.
To provide sensory stimulation through the various types of equipment used and music they use to listen to in their younger years.

**Why we chose this method**

This method provides a fun and social way of re-introducing physical activity into the resident’s lives.

**What we did**

Fit as a fiddle in partnership with Guildcare and Worthing Borough Council are supporting 8 free sessions at Lindfield Care Home. Leonie Haines leads the sessions with support from the care staff at the home. Each week, Leonie would lead the movement sessions, incorporating various pieces equipment to work the different areas of the body. Leonie, would explain each technique and benefit of the movements to the residents, which enhanced their confidence and made them all feel part of the group.

As the weeks progressed, the numbers of resident involved increased, especially as laughter could be heard all around the home during the sessions. The support workers played an important part in the sessions, providing support to Leonie and residents. A day workshop was arranged for 10 staff/support workers from Lindfield Care Home by Leonie Haines supported by the fit as a fiddle project. The workshop will enable the support workers to continue the movement to music sessions once the 8 sessions have concluded.

**Outcomes and impacts**

All participants complete a monitoring form at the start of the project and an evaluation form at the final session. A ‘Fit as a fiddle’ staff member visits the group to evaluate the progress of the group, speaking with the participants and instructors.

The project is a supported and sociable way of introducing a different type of physical activity to an older population.

**Next steps**

The movement to music sessions will continue to regularly occur at Lindfield House, being led by the staff and support workers further to them completing a workshop training day as part of the Fit as a Fiddle project. Due to the success and interest from the residents, Guildcare, Worthing Borough Council and fit as a fiddle would like to replicate this project in other homes and areas.

**Contacts**

Tory Lawrence – Healthy Lifestyle Co-ordinator  
Tel: 07901 635 033  
Email: tory.lawrence@acwestsussex.org