



Engaging older people in physical activity



EFDS and Age UK have worked in partnership to create this resource.



Who to speak to?

There are a variety of organisations you can speak to when looking to deliver activity for older people. Each group will have different contacts and areas of expertise, so you can pick who would be the best partner for your project.

Age UK National

Age UK National can advise on current national physical activity projects, provide contacts to local Age UKs and give advice on engagement with older people and the broader issues they face.

Age UK has delivered a series of physical activity programmes including 'Fit as a Fiddle'. For examples of best practice and important findings go to: www.ageuk.org.uk/health-wellbeing/fit-as-a-fiddle/

Local Age UKs

There are 165 local Age UKs in England and these operate as separate charities to Age UK National. They vary in both size and the services they offer. They can support engagement with older people, help promote activities and provide a great depth of knowledge on current services for older people in your area. Some local Age UKs will have their own physical activity offer which can be an excellent place to start.

To find out more and find your local Age UK to go: www.ageuk.org.uk/about-us/local-partners/

Other support

Other organisations and groups to engage with are **care homes, day centres, sheltered housing** and the **Older People Team** within your local council. Each of these will have different service users with specific needs. E.g. care homes may find it difficult to get residents to sessions off-site. Contacting them will help to understand the potential issues and needs among these groups of people.

There are more than 250 'Speaking Up for Our Age' forums across England. They are independent organisations that are run by older people, for older people. Forums are a hub of information about older people's needs and local services: www.ageuk.org.uk/get-involved/social-groups/older-peoples-forums/

Supporter (carers') networks, local befriending and volunteering services can also be good sources of local expertise and guidance. For example, the Royal Voluntary Service has 35,000 volunteers helping older people stay active and able to contribute to society.

If your activity is aimed at a particular audience, you might consider contacting one of the many organisations which support specific groups of older people such as the **British Legion** (veterans), **RNIB** (sight loss), **Action on Hearing Loss**, **Parkinson's UK** or the **Alzheimer's Society**.

If you are looking to involve older people in the delivery of activities then **University of the Third Age (U3A)** have groups across the country. They offer opportunities for retired and semi-retired people to share their skills and try new activities and classes: www.u3a.org.uk

Where to publicise your activities

There are a range of places and people through which you can engage with older people, including:

- Local community magazines, newspapers, radio stations and websites
- Libraries, post offices, bookmakers, doctors' surgeries, pharmacies, hospital waiting rooms, bus stations and buses, shops, pubs, churches and community noticeboards
- Through social workers, service providers, district nurses and day centres
- Local voluntary organisations and community groups
- Local newsletters e.g. parish newsletters



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Top tips for engagement

There are several things to consider when setting up or offering activities.

Much of the research, and all of the evidence gathered from Age UK's physical activity projects, highlights fun and socialising as two key factors for involvement. You need to consider practical barriers for people attending an engagement event.

- Transport is a key challenge that is faced by many older people. For those taking public transport, how easy is it to get to the venue? If someone is arriving in their own car, is there adequate parking?
- The venue needs to be accessible to people with a range of impairments.
- The time that you put on an event. Not all older people are retired, so if you offer activities during the working day, many will not be able to take part. For those who are retired, there are certain times that do not work well and you should consult people on their preference.
- Modern technology. It is important to remember that only about half of older people regularly use the internet. However if you are seeking to engage with carers, friends or family, then digital might be the right method. It is important to mix your communication methods.

Consult with older people on the types of activities they would like to do. You can use the [Age UK engagement toolkit](#) to support you.

For further information, please contact Age UK at fitasafiddle@ageuk.org.uk or telephone 020 3033 1622