



Promoting Physical Activity in Older Adults:

A guide for local decision makers.

This Report represents one of the outcomes of a 12 month collaborative network in AVON (AVONet). The Report attempts to identify **best bet** physical activity promotion strategies for older adults through a synthesis of evidence and experience from diverse sources.

Who is it intended for? Physical activity co-ordinators and practitioners, community programme developers, health promoters, Directors of Public Health, members of local Health and Well – Being Boards and relevant policy makers.

How might it be used? To help decision makers and service providers:

- Understand key issues around physical activity promotion for older adults
- Understand the different approaches to physical activity promotion in older adults
- Develop activity promotion programmes in the light of new UK physical activity guidelines
- Convince authority of the need for action

The Argument – There is plenty of scope for increasing the activity levels of older adults. While they have the most to gain, older adults in the UK have the lowest levels of physical activity compared to other age groups and also spend the largest amount of time of time being sedentary. Older adults are a neglected population when it comes to physical activity promotion and yet they are the fastest growing sector of our population. The challenge of finding and delivering the best community based solutions still remains.

Report Content: –

- **Section A:** Presents the case for physical activity.
- **Section B:** Summarises the key recommendations for physical activity (CMO 2011).
- **Section C:** Outlines the main population factors that currently influence how active and older person might be.
- **Section D:** Presents current evidence, theory and thinking on how we might motivate people to become more active.
- **Section E:** Presents descriptions of promising approaches to active promotion ,
- **Section F:** Offers insight into delivery of programmes covering recruitment, marketing, evaluation and partnership working.

Key Findings -

- Transition into old age is a golden opportunity to create long-lasting health benefits. Given the current low levels of activity in older adults, there is high potential for change and impact.
- The key recommendations for physical activity for older adults as presented in the CMO's report need to be better communicated so people understand that the proposed physical activity levels provide a long term goal. The challenge for professionals is to devise strategies that facilitate progress towards it.
- The greatest challenge facing activity promoters lies with finding strategies that can help attract older adults to activity initiatives and keep them attending and wanting more.
- All local initiatives will benefit from adopting an evidence-based approach incorporating recognised behaviour change theories in combination with consideration of local environmental conditions. This is best achieved through partnership working.
- Relatively inexpensive evaluation strategies can help fine tune recruitment strategies, programme improvement, and provide preliminary evidence of effectiveness.

Key Recommendations –

- Physical activity priority 1: Promote getting out and about offering opportunities in the local communities.
- Physical activity priority 2: Target functional ability and independence for people in transition by providing structured and focussed exercise programmes in a range of centres and facilities.
- Physical activity priority 3: **Make the active choice, the easy choice** with age friendly modifications and adaptations of neighbourhoods.

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The Report is endorsed by:



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