

Age UK is the new force combining

AGE and **HELPTHEAGED** WE WILL **CONCERN**



fit *as a* fiddle

project highlights Spring 2010

INSIDE

Getting in the swim

Increasing the number
of older adults who are
water confident

Gym will fix it

Have the time of your life
and get fit

Wii can do it

Members get interactive
with new technology

And lots more...



fit as a fiddle is a programme run by Age UK and funded by the Big Lottery Fund as part of the Wellbeing programme
www.ageuk.org.uk www.fitasafiddle.org.uk

Making a difference

Hello and welcome to the April edition of the fit as a fiddle newsletter. To date, over 110,000 people in later life have benefited from taking part in fit as a fiddle activities. This newsletter gives you an insight into the wide range of healthy eating and physical activity projects that we have been running throughout England.

As more people take part in the **fit as a fiddle** activities, we want to find out how it's working. Do you want more of the same – or something different? We also want to know how we can improve the quality of our service. If you have taken part in **fit as a fiddle**, we would like to hear your views on the activities and whether taking part has made a difference to you. Please email us at fitasafiddle@ageuk.org.uk

As **fit as a fiddle** continues to develop we will highlight to national, regional and local government the value of the different activities and interventions to help them reassess their approach to improving the quality of later life, and the advantages of offering a range of programmes for health and mental well-being. In an economic recession this will be no easy task. However, if we do not make the case now, we will have lost the major opportunity that the funding from the Big Lottery Fund has given us through its Well-being programme.

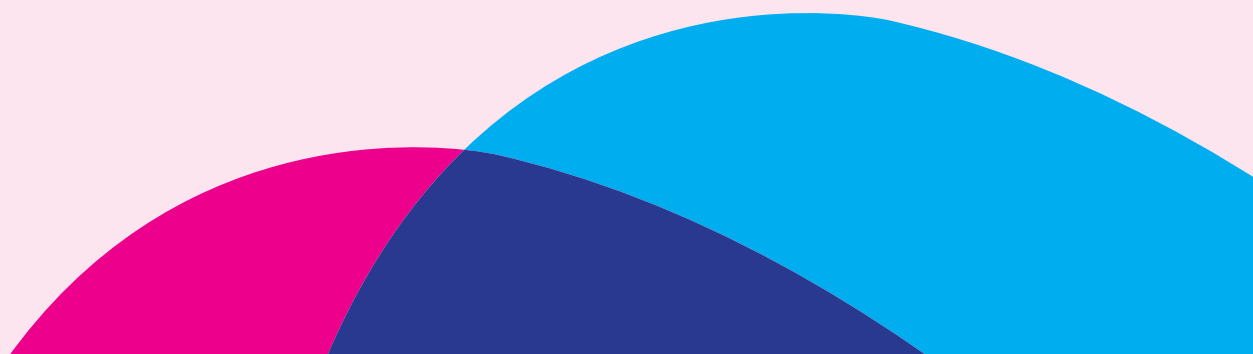
To ensure that we can make a strong case for getting services such as **fit as a fiddle** provided by government, we will be undertaking a detailed evaluation of our activities over the next two years to gather evidence.

This is an exciting time for the **fit as a fiddle** project as it goes from strength to strength delivering new and innovative services to people in later life. Now, as part of Age UK, the new force combining Age Concern and Help the Aged, we look forward to building on the successes already achieved.

To read more about **fit as a fiddle** visit our website www.fitasafiddle.org.uk

Jackie Hayhoe
fit as a fiddle National Portfolio Manager, Age UK.

‘This is an exciting time for the fit as a fiddle project as it goes from strength to strength delivering new and innovative services to people in later life.’



fit as a fiddle people make a racket in North Tyneside

England Squash & Racketball and Age UK have joined forces in North Tyneside to help encourage people to get active. As part of the fit as a fiddle campaign, England Squash and Racketball invited people aged over 50 to learn and play racketball at its local facilities. Racketball has proved a very popular alternative to squash, as even beginners are able to get a great rally going with an opponent.

Joan, a **fit as a fiddle** volunteer with Age Concern North Tyneside, says: 'I went along and watched a demo tournament and even though the players were professionals, I thought I would really enjoy having a go at this.' Joan is over 50 and since joining the project has become an active member of the cycle club, taken part in archery sessions, mastered salsa dancing and more recently abseiled off the Vermont Hotel in Newcastle.

'I absolutely love it,' she told us. 'Brilliant. I didn't realise I was so competitive. And the social side is good too – we all have a coffee and a chat afterwards.'

Roger, who has also been attending the sessions, said: '[Racketball] is better than squash. It is easier to see the ball and a bigger racket to hit it with!'



Back row: Tony, Roger, Mike, Jim. Front row: Irene, Lesley, Maureen, Janet.

The way we were: generations team up in the North West

fit as a fiddle has been encouraging young children and their families to participate with older residents in their rural communities across the South Lakes in a project called 'The Way We Were'. This exciting intergenerational project is running a series of workshops based in pre-school settings, exploring a variety of food themes linked to the locality, participants' interests, reminiscences and healthy eating topics.

One participant, a lady aged 92, had as a little girl lived next door to Beatrix Potter and had been shown how to cook in the author's kitchen. The lady agreed to record her memories for a DVD celebrating this intergenerational activity - a great way to share such wonderful stories.



From pace eggs (decorated eggs for Easter) to pancakes, flocking for fish to mountain-climbing, the older participants' accounts of local traditions have inspired everyone. The children have found out where food comes from, tasting meat and vegetables from their local hillsides and vegetable patches. They have also discovered how butter, bread and cakes are made, baking and tasting together.

Both old and young have enjoyed 'having a go' together, trying oriental textures and flavours in vegetable stir-fries, making fresh fruit boats and assembling colourful salads.

As well as developing awareness of healthy eating as part of a balanced diet, young children and their families are discovering that their older neighbours are knowledgeable people, full of curiosity about the world – and that they know how to really have fun.

Getting in the swim

In the East Midlands, one of our local fit as a fiddle co-ordinators has worked in partnership with Nottingham City Council to launch three pilot sessions offering free swimming lessons across Nottingham City Council's leisure centres. The aim is to increase the number of older adults who are confident in the water and able to swim, by allowing more over-60s access to the free swimming already on offer.

We've seen a big success with this initiative with 130 individuals registering for lessons. Thanks to the patience and understanding from the instructors, barriers such as having a bad experience earlier in life, have been overcome.

There have been some great examples of individuals overcoming their fears and seeing the benefits that swimming can bring.

Rita, aged 62, explained how she came to take part: 'I've had some really bad experiences in water but decided I wanted to lose weight so when I saw the advert in a newspaper I decided to try swimming. I would never have had the confidence to pick my feet up from the bottom of the pool before, with just a float to support me, but now I do! I'm going to continue to go swimming with my granddaughter.'

Kevin, 73, said: 'It's never too late to learn how to swim. I'm 73 and just had my first set of lessons. It's been great.'



Gym will fix it

The fit as a fiddle Time of Your Life project based in Stalham, Norfolk, provides a mobile gym service, taking gym equipment and instructors out across the district to rural areas that have limited access to existing provision.

Following demand from local residents, a regular daytime gym session each Monday was scheduled. Some 45 people registered for the sessions, with an average of 30–35 people aged between 50 and 81 taking part each week.

The sessions have proved so popular that when the time came for the project to move on to other areas, some of the participants showed a real interest in keeping the sessions running. As a result, the Time of Your Life project has been working to help them establish their own constituted group, 'Stalham Community Gym'. The group is now set up, with a committee of six members.

With continued support from the Time of Your Life project, the committee applied to the Big Lottery Fund 'Awards for All' programme and was delighted to be awarded further funding of £8,863 in December 2009 to continue the activities.

'The gym sessions are very near and handy and leave me feeling invigorated after my session.'

The funding will enable the Stalham Community Gym to be properly established, with a part-time qualified instructor and its own gym equipment.

The funding will allow the sessions to be expanded to three mornings and two evenings per week and will open up the sessions to the whole community. The Time of Your Life project will assist the committee over the next couple of months with developing an action plan, recruitment, and putting all necessary procedures in place to ensure safe and successful delivery. The project will then move to a new area to encourage more people in later life to get active.

Cooking up a storm in the capital



The fit as a fiddle project in East London covers the boroughs of Newham, Tower Hamlets and Hackney. In Newham, we have been looking at different ways to engage older men, who were under-represented as participants. We have looked at creating events where participants could meet while taking part in an activity to see how they get on. One of the ideas was to start a men's cooking club.

The classes have different themes. Sometimes a group member leads on cooking a dish, sharing some of the recipe's history. At other sessions the project officer helps to demystify cooking terms, shares important advice about reducing our intake of foods that aren't so good for us, and explores adaptations to some popular recipes from different cultures. At Christmas a delicious three-course meal was cooked by the club participants for 20 other mentors and mentees involved in the **fit as a fiddle** project.

The club attracts participants who cook and want to share what they know, as well as complete novices, and all tell us they have benefited from the classes. Many of those who have taken part were completely isolated before and have found it a new and uplifting experience. Some admitted feeling a bit scared when they were first asked to take part but, having been persuaded, say they have never regretted taking the plunge.

For further information please contact Age Concern Newham on 020 8503 4800.

Carers' stress-buster project in the South West

The fit as a fiddle project in Dorchester runs a carers' group at Bridport Hospital. The carers, all in later life themselves, are all looking after relatives with varying degrees of dementia, but while the carers are involved in group activities they can rest assured that their loved ones are being looked after in the on-site day centre.

An hour-long session is held each Monday afternoon with ten carers and nursing staff. It usually starts with some chair-based exercises which, as the weeks have gone by, have become a little more demanding. We stress the need to warm up and then to stretch before the main exercises, and also to finish with stretches and cooling down. The session also includes a well earned cup of tea.

Music, fun, laughter and exercise make for a great start to the week. This respite time is crucial for the carers and they tell us how much it means to them.

John Yonwin
fit as a fiddle Co-ordinator
Age Concern Dorchester



Wii can do it!

Age Concern West Sussex and Age Concern Berkshire are setting up Nintendo Wii networks in the South East as part of the fit as a fiddle project.

The games system, which features a wireless motion-sensing controller that looks like a TV remote control, enables a diverse community of people in later life to stay active and healthy and to enjoy trying something new.

The Wii is not only fun and physical, but it is a fully inclusive, intergenerational tool older people can use with their grandchildren.

The response to the new technology has been very positive. Tracy Whittle from Age Concern East Sussex said: 'It has been a huge success in the region. This activity helps improve physical and mental well-being.'

Local co-ordinators have developed the Wii networks by loaning out the equipment to various care homes, sheltered housing and community groups. Volunteers and care workers are being trained to involve older people in using the equipment.



A great example of a sustaining Wii network is the highly competitive Nintendo Wii league that operates in the Brighton region. Members from 24 different sheltered housing schemes play each other – all determined to win. This is a great social and fun way of gathering people together.

Age Concern Berkshire currently runs a series of Nintendo Wii networks in sheltered accommodation, residential and nursing homes. Residents have thoroughly enjoyed using the equipment, with Wii Golf and Wii Tennis proving firm favourites.

The project at Beacher Hall nursing home in Reading has been a particular success. The large group contains ten men, one of whom is blind.

Holly Baker, Healthy Lifestyles Co-ordinator for Age Concern Berkshire, has been particularly pleased with the impact of the Wii Systems at Beacher Hall: 'The residents have really enjoyed using the Nintendo Wiis. The great thing is that it is a really sociable activity. Everyone seems to have a smile on their face when they are playing.'

Extend and keep active together



fit as a fiddle in partnership with Age Concern Coventry runs an hour-long Extend session every week at the West Indian Centre in Spon Street. The gentle exercises people take part in at these sessions help them to stay fit, active and happy through later life.

Patricia Carroll from Henley Green, who has been a member of the group since it started, said: 'Before we started these sessions we weren't too active. We got out and about but we needed a bit more stimulation to get going even more. You can definitely feel the difference – it makes you feel fitter and gives you more energy.'

After each class the ladies stay on to socialise, enjoy a cup of tea and chat about healthy eating and nutrition. The sessions are growing and new faces are a regular sight.

Group organiser Lorna Gayle said: 'We want local ladies out there of all nationalities to know that we are here and that they can come down and join us. As long as they are over the age of 50 they're welcome.'

The classes are held at the West Indian Centre every Tuesday from midday until 1pm.

Looking good, feeling good

In partnership with fit as a fiddle Unity in the Community, a community development trust, has been helping older people in Hull to look good, and feel good about themselves, by eating well.

At a recent cook-and-taste session attended by 15 people, food and diet instructors took attendees through the 'eatwell plate', discussing the benefits of a balanced diet and what the body needs in the way of carbohydrates, fats, dairy and protein.

Instructors demonstrated how to prepare a good winter soup of tomatoes and lentils with vegetable stock, followed by hot griddled fresh pineapple with a chocolate sauce. Everyone enjoyed sampling the results and the evening was a huge success. One attendee said:

'You feel like you had eaten a very large meal, it was so filling.'

The final comments were 'When is the next course, as we will definitely be coming along?'

Keeping active, eating healthy and nutritious food and looking after their mental health are three important ways for people to stay healthy in later life.

To find out more about **fit as a fiddle** activities in the Yorkshire and Humber area contact Joanne Volpe on 0113 2441860 or email joannefaaf@googlemail.com



Age UK is here to help

At Age UK we are extremely proud of our fit as a fiddle programme. Set up in October 2007, we have made huge strides in improving the health and wellbeing of thousands of people in later life through our exercise and healthy eating programmes. We continue to be fully committed to this project and look forward to involving many more people over the coming years.

Our ambition

At Age UK we believe that age needs respect. It needs kindness. Sometimes it needs help.

Too many people experience difficulties as they age. We cannot promise everyone good health, but we will fight for good care for all of us. Where we find loneliness, we will reach out. When age becomes a burden, we will try to lighten the load.

And because age is also a wondrous thing, we will celebrate the wisdom, the calm and the confidence it can bring.

Age UK will campaign. We will fundraise. We will research. We will make the powers that be listen.

We will do all this to make life better for older people here and abroad.

Age UK is for all of us, because age is a part of life.

**To find out more visit www.ageuk.org.uk
Age UK Advice 0800 169 65 65**

For more information contact your relevant Regional Coordinator or visit www.fitasafiddle.org.uk
Eastern: Becky Pheasey, 01223 372834, fitasafiddle.eastern@googlemail.com; **East Midlands:** Chantelle Hornsby, 0115 852 4305, chantelle.hornsby@ageuk.org.uk; **London:** Wai Ha Lam, 020 7820 6784, walam@aclondon.org.uk; **North East:** Carole Gourdie, 0191 287 7013, carole.gourdie@ageconcernnorthtyne.org; **North West:** Roger Jones, 01772 552856, rogerjonesfaaf@yahoo.co.uk; **South East:** Martine Ellis, 01483 446656, ellismartine@yahoo.co.uk; **South West:** Linda Bennett, 07717 899074, lindajbennett@btinternet.com; **West Midlands:** Sue Abbott, 01905 726652, sabbott@achw.org.uk; **Yorkshire & Humber:** Joanne Volpe, 0113 244 1860, joannefaaf@googlemail.com



Astral House, 1268 London Road, London SW16 4ER
York House, 207-221 Pentonville Road, London N1 9UZ

T 0800 169 87 87
www.ageuk.org.uk

Age UK is a registered charity (number 1128267) and company limited by guarantee (number 6825798). The registered address is 207-221 Pentonville Road, London N1 9UZ. VAT number: 564559800. Age Concern England (charity number 261794) and Help the Aged (charity number 272786) and their trading and other associated companies merged on 1 April 2009. Together they have formed Age UK, a single charity dedicated to improving the lives of people in later life. Age Concern and Help the Aged are brands of Age UK. The three national Age Concerns in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales have also merged with Help the Aged in these nations to form three registered charities: Age Scotland, Age NI, Age Cymru. ID8976 04/10