

50plus Nottinghamshire

LinkAge Plus

Activity Friends (Senior Peer Mentoring)

Activity Friends (also known as Senior Peer Mentoring) is modelled on a American programme designed to help people aged 50+ achieve a healthier lifestyle by incorporating more physical activity into their lives. The schemes run in five areas of Nottinghamshire: Rushcliffe, Bassetlaw, Broxtowe, Mansfield and Ashfield. People over 50 are recruited and trained as 'Activity Friends' volunteers who reach out to their peers in the local community to encourage and support them in participating in some form of physical activity.

Activity Friends (Senior Peer Mentoring)

Objective

To train people over 50 as 'Activity Friends' volunteers who are then supported in their local community to encourage and develop service users in participating in some form of physical activity.

- Reducing mortality rates by 2010 from heart disease, stroke and related diseases.
- Tackling obesity, and helping people who want to lose weight.
- Improving mental health and well-being and expanding help for people with mental illness.
- Promoting healthy and active lifestyles amongst older people.
- Improving quality of life.

Activity

Through promotion and publicity active older people have been recruited across the county. Each volunteer is trained using a training pack and they are also responsible for collating information on physical activity in their locality. Local Activity Friend organisations encourage referrals from partner organisations; assess individual's needs and match each referee to their Activity Friend.

Achievements against objectives

In the last six months 35 new Activity Friends have been recruited and trained.

Social activity in the first instance may be a means to engage the older person but then should lead onto participation in more physical activity.

This case study focuses on a mentor and mentee who were matched together in September.

Carol G is a volunteer who joined the scheme in September. She is a person who lives alone in Retford and wanted to share her time through volunteering. Her interests mainly focuss around walking and she became a volunteer both for Activity Friends and the Befriending Scheme.

Shirley moved into the Retford area around four years ago with her husband, who passed away shortly after moving to the area. She subsequently had a gentleman friend with whom she shared time and common interests. He too unfortunately passed away about two years after she moved to Retford and this took away her confidence to meet new people and try new things. Shirley was also a big lover of

walking and took to taking long walks alone around Retford but ideally she wanted someone to walk with.

Having the same love of walking, Carol and Shirley were matched together at the end of September. They first met in town for coffee and a chat and planned what they would like to do together. They discovered a shared love of walking and started this activity on a weekly basis.

Neither of these ladies can drive so they started meeting in town and then walking mainly along the canal on a regular basis. They have also on occasions joined the organised walking club which meets at Retford Leisure Centre on a weekly basis.

These ladies are of a similar age, have similar interests and enjoy each others company.

Wider achievements

- Increased partnership working with PCT's, Adult Social Care, District Councils and the voluntary sector.
- Volunteers have gained transferable skills.
- Increased awareness of health and well-being issues.
- Greater take up of local exercise activities.
- Recognition of wider health benefits.
- Users often become Activity Friends.

Resources

Locally based organisations willing to train and recruit volunteers who have existing knowledge of recruiting and supporting volunteers.

Key lessons learned

- The importance of good quality publicity.
- Partners in the local PCT's believe in the effectiveness of the Activity Friends programme and are willing to part fund schemes.
- Once a physical activity lifestyle is embarked upon by older people they are likely to continue and remain healthier.

Further information

Physical Activity Officer at your local District or Borough Council or

Jane Zdanowska on 0115 977 3727

Ref to website: http://www.notts50plus.co.uk/search?search_terms=activity+friends

Related documents

www.bhfactive.org

British Heart Foundation Tel: 01509 223 259