

GATESHEAD 50+



ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT

1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024



A word from our chief executive

It's been another tough year for older people living in the UK, as inflation and the cost of living have continued to increase at a higher rate than any uplift in state pension income. This imbalance has a far greater impact in areas of higher deprivation, such as Gateshead, which is within the 15% most deprived areas in the country. This reduction in spending power not only affects people's choices around heating and eating, it also has a knock-on effect on their ability to afford to meet friends outside of their homes, resulting in increased loneliness and social isolation.

Naturally, the demand for our classes and activities, the vast majority of which are now free of charge, has increased in the past 12 months at a rate far greater than ever before. The wide-ranging opportunities we offer help Gateshead's over 50s to improve their physical and mental health, increase their independence, and provide opportunities to socialise in a welcoming environment. The statistics within this report speak for themselves in that regard.

The principle that underpins all of our classes and activities is that we will support older people to improve their health, wellbeing, and independence. This approach supports an increase in healthy life expectancy (HLE), which is currently only 62.4 years for men, and 62.7 years for women in the UK. This principle applies to our Staying Steady falls prevention classes, our Never Too Old to Rock group, and everything inbetween.

In the next year, we will be prioritising an increase in the number and capacity of classes and activities on offer, we will be strengthening links with partner organisations to better support older people in Gateshead, and we will continue to listen to people aged 50+ from Gateshead, to ensure we are addressing all barriers to participation in activities designed to improve independence.

Craig Bankhead

Chief Executive

ABOUT US



We want to help make Gateshead a great place to grow older and we believe everyone should have access to fun and affordable ways to socialise, exercise, and learn.

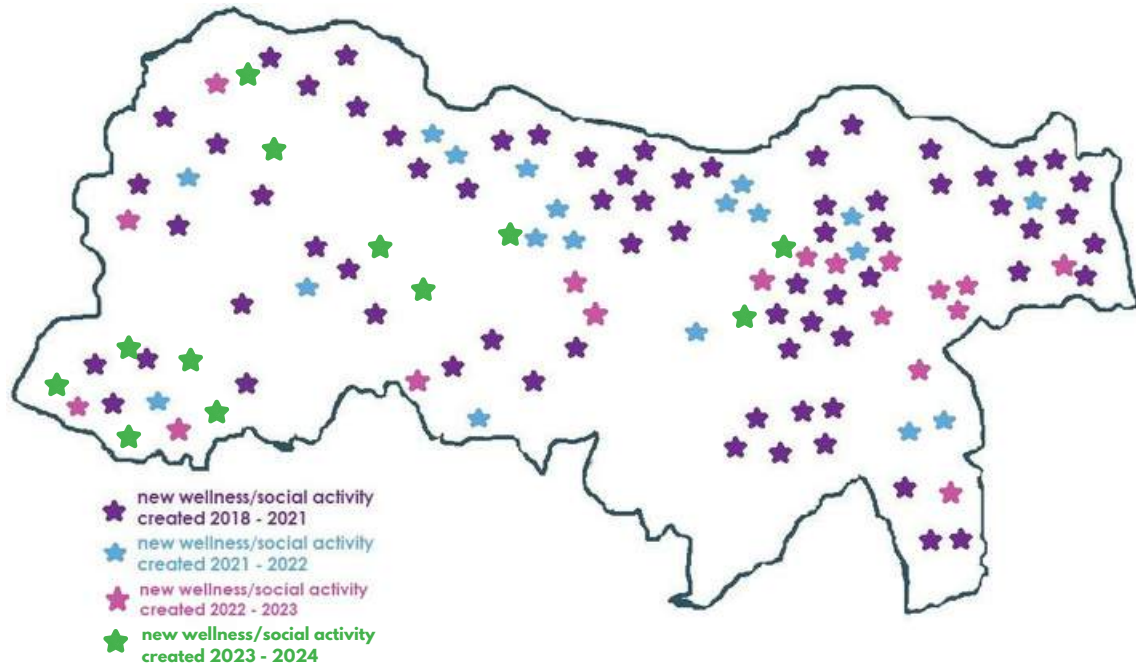
As a charity, we focus on early intervention with a view to helping over 50s maintain their health, mobility, and independence. We avoid reinforcing the negative stereotypes associated with ageing and focus on offering engaging social activities, learning opportunities, and wellness programmes through which our beneficiaries can progress as they build their fitness and confidence.

Our programme is open to all Gateshead residents aged 50+. We set up and support activities all across our borough and also maintain a thriving wellness hub for older people at our base in Deckham.

New wellness activities

This year, we've continued to set up new wellness activities for over 50s in community venues across Gateshead. All of the new classes we support are delivered free of charge for the first six weeks to allow our beneficiaries a chance to try something new without making a financial commitment.

This year, we set up 12 new classes, including Tai Chi, pickleball, gentle yoga, low impact exercise, Pilates, Rhythm for Wellbeing, Singing for the Brain, Love to Move, Stretch & Tone, and mat-based yoga.



In addition to setting up new classes across Gateshead, we maintain a wellness hub for older people in Deckham. Here, we offer 100 opportunities for over 50s to socialise, exercise, and learn each month.

March Activities in Deckham

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
				1 9:30 - 10:15 ZOOM Active at Home 10 - 11 Improver Line Dance (E4) 10 - 12 Walking Football (D) 11:15 - 12 Beginner Line Dance (E4) 11:30 start Health Walk 12 - 1:15 Backyard Cricket
4 11 - 11:45 Dancercise 12 - 12:45 Strength & Balance 1 - 2:30 Staying Steady (referral) 2:30 - 4:30 Walking Football 5:30 - 7:30 Never Too Old to Rock	5 10:30 - 11:30 Tai Chi (E4) 11:45 - 12:45 Tai Chi (E4) 1 - 2:30 Gateshead 50+ Singers 2:45 - 3:45 Ukulele Group (E5)	6 11:30 - 12:15 GetLow (dance fitness) 12:30 - 1:15 Gentle Circuits 1:30 - 2:15 Mat-based Yoga	7 10:30 - 12:30 Craft Group (E1) 10:45 - 12:15 Pickleball 1:30 - 2:30 Seated Yoga	8 9:30 - 10:15 ZOOM Active at Home 10 - 11 Improver Line Dance (E4) 10 - 12 Walking Football (GS) 11:15 - 12 Beginner Line Dance (E4) 11:30 start Health Walk 12 - 1:15 Backyard Cricket
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Opportunities to socialise and learn

Our mental health is as important as our physical health, so we work to ensure over 50s in Gateshead have ample opportunities to stay socially connected and engage in life-long learning.

This year, we continued our **Lunch & Learn series**, at which attendees enjoyed hearing from an expert guest speaker whilst enjoying lunch. Topics this year included:

- Scams Awareness
- Walk Leader training
- Community Cancer Champion training
- Dementia Friends training

Our **Never Too Old to Rock** project has continued to grow, with dozens of over 50s learning to play drums, guitar, and bass. Learners are now forming their own bands and we're looking forward to hosting our own NTOTR mini-festival in 2025.



Our **singing group** continues to grow and is always adding new songs to its repertoire. Our **craft group** has worked incredibly hard to produce hundreds of items for donation to other local charities this year. Our **art group** continues to explore new techniques and has spent lots of time focusing on the use of watercolours and landscape drawing this year.





We've enjoyed the benefits of fresh air and sunshine this year. Our weekly **walking group** has clocked in hundreds of miles and has explored dozens of our region's parks, seafronts, and nature trails. After most walks, the group enjoys a meal or pops into a cafe for a chance to socialise.

This year saw the return of our **annual beach day**, which is another fantastic opportunity to get some fresh air (and fish and chips!). We spent the day at Sandhaven Beach and enjoyed walking football, backyard cricket, and a sandcastle-building competition.

Two of the most frequently-requested activities this year were **British Sign Language classes and cookery classes**. In the spring, we offered a 10-week introductory BSL course, which received rave reviews. We were absolutely delighted to partner with Blackfriars Restaurant to offer a series of international cookery classes over the summer.



Falls prevention

We continue to be commissioned by Gateshead Council to deliver **Staying Steady**, our falls prevention programme. This year, we delivered 12 cohorts of classes in six venues across the borough.

Staying Steady is a free 20-week course designed for people aged 50+ who wish to improve their balance and increase their confidence and independence. The programme is comprised of a series of evidence-based exercises designed to improve strength and balance and, along with Tai Chi, is a recognised falls prevention activity by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE).

“
I have regained the confidence to go out walking by myself after a very bad fall. I had stopped doing most things due to a lack of confidence and now I am back taking part in the groups and activities that I enjoy.
”

“
I feel so much more confident in my day-to-day activities including sitting down and getting up from chairs. Also, knowing that if I fall, I have a system in place to get up off the floor. I am looking forward to starting Tai Chi on a Tuesday.
”

“
I can now walk around the house without my walking sticks and feel a lot more confident when I am out and about. My mobility in my shoulders is a lot better, making reaching and doing my hair a lot easier and without pain.
”

“
I am so much more confident and I am now walking better and no longer have to use my stick. Getting up from a chair is so much easier and I feel confident when exercising. I am going to return to the dancercise class now I have my confidence back.
”

“
This has given me motivation to become more active, to continue to improve my mobility. I am regularly taking part in the Zoom class and will be continuing chair yoga and Keep Fit, Strong, and Steady, too.
”

“
My strength, balance, and confidence have dramatically improved and I now have a regular routine of exercising at home, as well as going to some classes. I was falling over a lot and that has become less frequent. I have learnt some good tips on how to get up from the floor with more ease.
”

Cultural Connections

Over the past year, our Cultural Connections project has taken us all around the region to experience the very best of what the northeast has to offer. In total 213 over 50s took part!

We visited the Bowes Museum, Holy Island, Whitby, York, the Durham Dales, and Northumberland. We worked with local artists and saw the Royal Northern Sinfonia perform at The Glasshouse Centre for International Music. We also attended plays at Little Theatre Gateshead and Northern Stage.

We attended the England v. Scotland women's match at the Stadium of Light and created fabulous masterpieces at The Kiln Pottery Studio. Ten beneficiaries completed a qualification in British Sign Language and we enjoyed dozens of the latest blockbusters at Trinity Square's Vue cinema.

The Cultural Connections project was designed to give our beneficiaries opportunities to engage in local cultural events, learn new skills, and make new social connections.



OUR IMPACT

As a charity, we work hard to ensure that the activities we offer our beneficiaries are making a difference to their lives. We evaluate our work by compiling case studies and asking beneficiaries to complete functional assessments and/or surveys. Case studies are available on our website and functional assessment results can be found in our project reports.

Every year, we survey the beneficiaries who visit our Deckham hub to ensure the opportunities we offer are meeting their needs. We are pleased to share the highlights from this year's survey. Firstly, **about our beneficiaries:**



Our beneficiaries range in age from 49 to 91. Our average beneficiary age is 72.2.



74% of our beneficiaries are female
26% of our beneficiaries are male



67% of our beneficiaries have a long term health condition



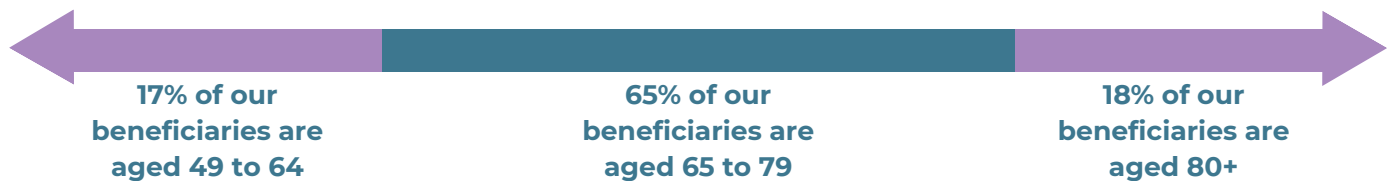
18% of our beneficiaries have caring responsibilities



45% of our beneficiaries live alone



60% of our beneficiaries use our no-questions-asked community pantry



Our average beneficiary visits us 2.25 times per week.

Our most active beneficiaries take part in 9 of our activities per week.

- 52% take part in at least two activities per week
- 36% take part in at least three activities per week
- 19% take part in at least four activities per week
- 10% take part in at least five activities per week

Here's what our beneficiaries had to say about **the impact taking part in our activities has on their lives:**



89% have made friends with whom they now socialise



68% have learned new skills



77% feel happier



50% visit their GP less frequently since joining us



89% feel their physical health has improved



91% feel their mental health has improved



100% say we offer newcomers a warm welcome



100% say they would recommend our activities to family and friends



WHY WE'RE HERE

To understand why it is so vital that older people in Gateshead have opportunities to improve their health and maintain their independence, we must consider the current context of growing older in our borough. Deprivation, falls, and loneliness all have a tremendous impact on the lives of older people in Gateshead.

Deprivation

- Gateshead is ranked as the 47th most deprived of England's 317 local authorities.
- Gateshead's rate of older people experiencing income deprivation is 36.4% higher than the national average.
- Our wellness hub is based in Deckham, which is among the 4% most deprived areas in England.
- Deprivation can have a dramatic effect on life expectancy. On average, someone born in one of Gateshead's most deprived areas can expect to live over a decade less than if they had been born in one of England's most affluent areas (15.1 years less for men and 13.9 years less for women).

In real terms, experiencing deprivation at such rates means that 'luxuries' like fitness classes, cultural events, and short courses are out of reach for many older people in our borough. To combat this, we offer free or low-cost options for older people to exercise, socialise, and learn.

Falls

- The rate of emergency admissions for injuries due to falls in people aged 65+ is 15% higher in Gateshead than the English average.
- It is predicted that by 2040 there will be a 25% increase in the number of people aged 65+ experiencing falls and a 34% increase in the number of older people admitted to hospital as a result of a fall.
- In some Gateshead wards, the rate of emergency hospital admissions due to hip fracture are dramatically higher than the English average -- 64% higher in the Bridges ward, 59% higher in High Fell, and 47% higher in Lobley Hill and Bensham.
- After a hip fracture, more than 30% of older people die within a year, 20% enter a care home, and only 46% return to their usual residence or previous level of independence.
- Research from 2020 by the University of Bristol indicated that if healthcare inequalities in the most deprived areas of England were reduced, up to £28.8 million each year in hip fracture treatment costs could be saved.

It is therefore essential that evidence-based falls-prevention activities are embedded in the work of organisations working with older people. We are commissioned by Gateshead Council to deliver our Staying Steady programme and we also support the delivery of evidence-based Tai Chi practice across the borough.

Loneliness

- According to a 2020 Brunel University London report, those aged 50+ living in the poorest areas of the country are more likely to suffer from loneliness.
- In Gateshead, 33.9% of people aged 65+ live alone. In our most recent survey, 45% of our beneficiaries told us they live alone.
- Loneliness can lead to feeling vulnerable, which can lead to depression and a serious decline in physical health and wellbeing.
- According to the English Longitudinal Study of Ageing, people aged 50+ are 3.7 times more likely to be often lonely if they are in poor health and 2.3 times more likely to be often lonely if they have money issues that prevent them from doing the things they want to do.

Our programme of setting up a sustainable network of classes and activities for over 50s all across Gateshead gives them the opportunity to establish friendships with others who live near them, ensuring real social connections which exist beyond the boundaries of the group. Setting up activities in community venues also encourages over 50s to attend independently, eliminating the need for long (and increasingly expensive) journeys.

The Big Picture

By design, our programme of activities seeks to address problems caused by deprivation, reduce falls, and help our beneficiaries feel part of their local community. By taking full advantage of what we offer, over 50s could improve their physical health, increase their confidence, reduce levels of depression and anxiety, and ultimately increase their lifespan.



OUR INVESTORS

We are delighted to have the support of many of the UK's most forward-thinking investors. Thanks to these funders, we are in a position to be able to respond to our beneficiaries' needs quickly, making an immediate and measurable difference to their quality of life.





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Gateshead 50+ is the working name of Gateshead Older People's Assembly.