

Engaging older people in activity

Encouraging and providing opportunities for older disabled people and people with long-term health conditions to be active has significant benefits. These include better health, improved quality of life, independence and sense of wellbeing as well as wider social benefits.

We have created a number of engagement resources that encourage you to think about the ways you include disabled people. We worked in partnership with Age UK to create this sheet. It provides top tips on who to involve and how to engage older people in your work.





Contacts for advice

There is a range of people to speak to when exploring activity with older people. Each group will have different contacts and areas of expertise. It is worth getting to know these groups and reviewing the most suitable for your project and as a partner.

Local support

Local Age UKs

There are 165 local Age UKs in England and these operate as separate charities to Age UK national. Local Age UKs are responsible for delivering services for older people and vary in size and the services they offer. They can support engagement with older people, help promote activities and also provide considerable knowledge on services that currently exist for older people in your area. Some local Age UKs will have their own activity programmes which can be an excellent place to start.

For more information about your local Age UK, go to the [Age UK website](#).

Local support organisations

Look to engage with **Care Homes, Day Centres and Sheltered Housing** or the Older People Team within your local council. Each of these will have different service users with specific needs and barriers to activity. For example, 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.

Local forums

Also, contact one of the local **Speaking Up for Our Age forums**. There are more than 250 forums across England. They are independent organisations run by older people, for older people. Forums are a hub of information about older people's needs and local services.

You can find forums on the [Age UK website](#).

Local networks

Supporters' (carers) networks, local befriending or 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.



National support

Age UK National

Age UK has delivered a series of activity programmes, including Fit as a Fiddle. These programmes have led to better practice examples and important findings from their evaluations. For more information on this go to the [Age UK website](#).

By contacting Age UK national, they can advise on current national activity projects, provide local Age UK contacts and support engagement with older people and the broader barriers.

National support organisations

If your activity is aimed at a particular audience, you might consider contacting one of the many organisations that support specific groups of older adults. This includes the British Legion (veterans), Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB - sight loss), Action on Hearing Loss, Parkinson's UK or the Alzheimer's Society.

University of the Third Age

If you are looking to involve older people in the activity delivery, then University of the Third Age (U3A) have groups across the country. There are 1035 local U3As across the United Kingdom with over 424,000 members. They offer opportunities for retired and semi-retired people to share their skills and try new activities and classes. For more information go to the [U3A website](#).

Publicising 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, doctor's surgeries, pharmacies, hospital waiting rooms, bus stations and buses, shops, pubs, faith centres and community noticeboards.
- Through social workers, service providers, district nurses or day centres.
- Local voluntary organisations and community groups.
- Local newsletters (e.g. parish newsletters).
- Facebook groups (e.g. local communities, local initiatives).



Considerations

Research and evidence gathered from Age UK's physical activity projects highlights fun and socialising as two key factors for involvement. You also need to consider practical barriers for people to attend an activity. These include:



Transport: This is a key challenge that many older people face. For those taking public transport, you should assess how easy it is to get to the venue. You should also consider if someone is arriving in their own car. Is there adequate parking?



Event time: Consider the time that you put on an event. Not every older person is retired. So if you offer activities during the working day, many will not be able to take part. For those that are retired, there are certain times that do not work well and you should consult older people on their preferred times.



Venue accessibility: Is your venue accessible to people with a range of impairments?



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 so you can reach more people.

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 0800 055 6112. Visit their [exercise and physical activity page](#).

Find all our research on our website, this sheet is part of our engagement resource. Read all the sheets here activityalliance.org.uk/engagement.

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This document is available in Word format. Please contact us if you need support. Activity Alliance is the operating name for the English Federation of Disability Sport. Registered Charity no. 1075180