

# Report

Report to:	<b>Equal Opportunities Forum</b>
Date of Meeting:	<b>16 June 2021</b>
Report by:	<b>Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources)</b>

Subject:	<b>Seniors Together 'Use it or Lose it' Project</b>
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## 1. Purpose of Report

1.1. The purpose of the report is to: -

- ◆ update the Forum on the development of the Seniors Together 'Use it or Lose it' Project in South Lanarkshire

## 2. Recommendation(s)

2.1. The Forum is asked to approve the following recommendation(s):-

- (1) that the content of the report be noted.

## 3. Background

3.1. Population ageing, and the related increase in chronic diseases, is having a major impact on the healthcare systems of most western countries and will be having an even more significant effect in the future.

Chronic diseases could be prevented through healthy diet, avoidance of tobacco products, and regular physical activity. However, when manifested, chronic diseases result in limitation of mobility and physical activity of the affected persons. Usually, the only observable effects are the reduction of the level of autonomy and the loss of mobility.

As a result, monitoring physical activity is a valuable parameter to define if persons are performing enough physical activity in order to prevent chronic disease, or if they are manifesting early symptoms of those diseases.

COVID-19 has exacerbated these issues and has resulted in a backward step for those older people living in South Lanarkshire trying to maintain some level of independence and management of their own health.

Many who had discovered the benefits that are gained from exercising and being in the gym were suddenly now lost with the resultant impact on physical and mental health being very high.

3.2. Members of Seniors Together who regularly attended activity classes set up in conjunction with partners at South Lanarkshire Leisure and Culture (SLLC) began reporting poor mobility and loss of confidence from being at home for such a long period of time.

As well as facilitating older people to access services and opportunities to enhance their retirement, Seniors Together provides ongoing support and engagement with its members using a range of interventions, including more recently social media and technology such as Microsoft Teams, to have ongoing conversations and consultations with them and talking about issues of importance to them including living with long-term illnesses and the impact of Coronavirus.

During recent conversations members highlighted that after being at home in lockdown for so long it was time to take control and look at innovative ways of increasing mobility at home to prevent falls and improve confidence. This would mean that in re-engaging with life after the pandemic they would experience improved health, improved mobility and be resilient as well as independent rather than dependant.

#### **4. Funding**

- 4.1. A funding proposal was put together for a small falls prevention pilot and presented to the Safer South Lanarkshire Board. This involved a small study group of participants from Seniors Together and SLLC, who were involved in activity programmes prior to the global pandemic, and who have identified as being less active due to their lockdown situation. These will then be selected to take part in the project called **'Use it or Lose it'**.

We will provide this small group of twenty people with a Wearable Activity Device (a Fitbit) that will prompt them when they have been immobile for too long at home and encourage them to move more and to take part in SLLC guided exercise programmes and classes, online and at home. For participants who do not have a smart phone a Samsung tablet will be provided.

Due to the continuous and regular feedback that is provided by tracking technology, changes in behavioural routines are expected, while increased mobility will lead to improved strength and balance therefore preventing trips and falls and increasing confidence to return to normal routines and classes when they resume.

- 4.2. Participants will be provided with a resource pack of information on guided exercise that they can undertake online and at home.

As we begin to move towards new levels of 'unlocking', participants will be signposted to outdoor activities available within SLLC facilities and in their own localities where they can continue with their activity programme.

Ongoing support with their Wearable Activity Device will be provided by Seniors Together. This will also include a weekly 'Social Session' using Microsoft Teams' so that all participants have the opportunity to come together, meet each other and share their experiences of being part of the study.

Seniors Together has been providing weekly support sessions with other groups in the project since lockdown began and know that it is a practice that works well with this type of project and can assist in keeping people connected and encourage participation.

#### **5. Evaluation**

- 5.1. One of the most prominent and frequently cited reasons for mobile physical activity tracking is the expected positive effect on health behaviour and wellbeing. Our aim as part of the project is to record any changes in wellbeing using the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS) to help track any improvements.

In relation to physical changes, we will record baseline information during the first two weeks of the project in relation to the daily step count of each participant and then compare that with data at the end of the project.

## **6. Impact**

- ◆ older residents of South Lanarkshire who have experienced poor mobility due to the impact of COVID-19 will have improved strength and balance and reduced their risk of falls by taking part in the project
- ◆ older people will have increased confidence using wearable technology
- ◆ older people will have engaged in guided online exercise programmes
- ◆ participants will feel more confident about re-engaging with centre based activity programmes when they become available again
- ◆ older people will feel more confident about re-engaging in community activity after lockdown
- ◆ older people will feel confident about managing their own long term health condition

## **7. Employee Implications**

- 7.1. This project can be accommodated within the existing employee resource.

## **8. Financial Implications**

- 8.1. The Funding provided for the Project has been provided by the Safer South Lanarkshire Board.

## **9. Climate Change, Sustainability and Environmental Implications**

- 9.1. There are no Climate Change, Sustainability or Environmental Implications associated with this report.

## **10. Other Implications**

- 10.1. Taking part in this initiative will allow the Council to deliver on its commitment to improve later life.

This initiative helps tackle isolation and loneliness in older people.

**Paul Manning**

**Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources)**

1 June 2021

## **Link(s) to Council Values/Ambitions/Objectives**

- Improve later life
- Support communities to tackle disadvantage and deprivation
- Support aspiration

## **Previous References**

None

## **List of Background Papers**

None

## **Contact for Further Information**

If you would like to inspect the background papers or want further information, please contact:-

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