

# Physical Activity to Improve Health

## Physical activity supporting older adults

PR was referred to Kathy by one of the social prescribers. He is 75, and she visited him at home due to his mobility issues, as he has Parkinson's Disease. His balance was very poor, and Kathy was concerned that he was going to fall as he moved around his home. He was unable to walk very far, even with a stick, and so attending any sort of exercise session was difficult for him.

They discussed the gentle exercise group at Knowle West Healthy Living Centre, which concentrates on strength and balance. The exercises are mainly seated, with some standing behind the chair for support. Individuals can do as much as they feel able to do, with an emphasis on keeping safe and not causing pain or discomfort, but still strengthening muscles.

This sounded ideal for PR, but he doesn't drive, and even if there was a bus that got to the Health Park, would be unable to walk as far as the bus stop. However, Kathy was able to contact a local bus service, the Sprint, and got PR signed up to be collected from his home each week, taken to the Healthy Living Centre, and then taken home again after the session – being taken safely door to door. Kathy met with him before the first session, to introduce him to the trainer and settle him in.

PR has been enjoying his sessions, and told Kathy that they taught him more about what he could and couldn't do, in a safe environment, which he has found very useful. Kathy have noticed a difference in his walking over the course of the three months that he has been attending the sessions. He looks much more steady on his feet, and watching him walk swiftly down the corridor this week, as the bus had been a little late collecting him, she was impressed by how much more in control of his movements he is. He was barely using his walking stick, and looked much stronger, steadier, and confident.

In addition to the benefits to PRs physical fitness, he has also benefitted from the social interaction in a friendly, supportive and relaxed environment, and whenever I see him heading in to the class, as I often try to greet him on his way in and check how he's doing, he always has a big smile on his face.

There is no doubt that finding a suitable class, and transport to get PR there, has made a very positive difference to his physical and mental wellbeing.

