



Essex LDP Evaluation Workstream

Physical Activity Hub Colchester – installation of new flooring

October 2023



Project status:
Complete



LDP funding:
£8,000 (100% of total)



Objectives:
The project has created a space for older people's physical activity in Colchester through installing specialist sports flooring in Age Well East's Colchester Hub site, to enable local vulnerable residents, aged over 50, to access holistic physical activity for increased strength and fitness.



Consulted:
Hayley Chapman, Active Essex
Jayne Vernon, Age Well East Senior Activities Coordinator
Sarah McCoughlin, Age Well East Deputy CEO
Site visit to Colchester

The project

The project has created a space for older people's physical activity in Colchester through the installation of specialist sports flooring in Age Well East's Colchester Hub site, to enable local vulnerable residents, aged over fifty, to access holistic physical activity for increased strength and fitness.

Prior to the new floor, the flooring material was carpet tiles which discouraged many users of the centre from moving around. This flooring was also unappealing for seated activities such as Yoga.

“ The new flooring is more than just a floor – it has opened up new physical activities for many of our clients. ”
Jayne Vernon



Key findings

- 1 The new flooring has been in use since March 2023, and the Age Well team has already seen significant benefits.
- 2 The well attended Dementia Group has particularly benefited as prior to the new flooring they were reluctant to move around. However, the centre can now offer new activities such as Table Tennis, Skittles, and Bowls. The Dementia Group also helped select the floor colour – blue is one of the last colours that a dementia patient loses.
- 3 The funding bid for the new flooring mentions opportunities to use the new flooring to attract new activities to the centre. Age Well East has already advertised for these, but to date only one new class – Tai Chi – has started.
- 3 Age Well East's attendance data for its activity-based classes for July 2023 and April 2023 (when the floor had just become operational) shows a 33% increase in the number attending activities at the centre between these dates.

	April 23	July 23	% change
Seated exercise	17	23	+35
Line dancing	8	17	+112
Tai Chi	0	17	-
Dementia Cafe	114	128	+11
Total	139	185	+33

The visit

The NSMC attended a seated exercise class at the centre during July 2023. Five women attended the class and all of them spoke enthusiastically about it.

All the women mentioned how the new flooring had made the whole room more conducive to exercise and made it a brighter and cleaner space to be in. Several of the women have started attending the Line Dancing class now that the floor has been installed.

“ **This class is my only chance to get out of my flat each week. It is extremely important to me, and I love the chance the have a cup of tea and chat at the end of it.** ”

The bidding process

Age Well East spoke positively about the bidding experience for the funding:

“ **It was a straightforward process. We worked closely with Active Essex, and they guided us through the process. It really helped that we were able to discuss the funding bid and have an open communication throughout the process.** ”

Age Well East see value in maintaining a long-term relationship with Active Essex. Currently, they are currently working to identify gaps in their services, and once these is completed, will explore opportunities with Active Essex.

NSMC comments

The funding application for the new flooring sets out ambitious targets for increasing the number of clients participating in activity events at the centre. The application mentions offering new activities such as Table Tennis, Yoga, Zumba, along with other unnamed ones offered by community groups. Together, these new activities are forecast to lead to over 1,500 additional participations in activity sessions over a year.

- 1 We note that, so far, only one new activity – Tai Chi – has been introduced since the flooring was installed and the total number of clients participating in activities increased by 46 between April and July 2023. If this increase of 46 is a good representation of the monthly increase, this equates to around five hundred additional participations in a year, which is only a third of the forecast increase.
- 2 Obviously, it is still early days with the floor, but we recommend that Active Essex follow-up with Age Well East in 2024 to see what new activities have been introduced and the numbers attending.
- 3 Clearly the flooring has been a success. It has rejuvenated a dreary room and has enabled participants to feel more confident about exercising. The investment in the floor was not huge, but it is providing significant benefits. Some of the benefits have not yet been completely realised and it would be beneficial if the LDP could provide further help and support in getting Age Well East to extend the range of classes offered.

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Organisations like Age Well East (established national/local charities) have significant contacts into the community, are well established and have enthusiastic staff who always want to do more. We recommend that Relationship Managers maintain and build strong engagement with these types of organisations. Often, they have a series of smaller projects and investments that they we would like to implement but do not have the funds to invest. As many of these small investments like the new flooring offer significant benefits, the LDP should not lose a chance of investing in these types of small scale but vital projects.

