

## Hanover helps to reduce the risk of falls

***Most of us at Hanover will know an older person who's had a fall. That's because it happens to around a third of people aged 65 and over. In Hanover terms, that's around 6,500 residents falling every year.***

It's not just the numbers that make it such an important issue, it's the consequences. A fall might cause a loss in confidence and leave a resident feeling reluctant to go out in case it happens again. In addition to this potential isolation, the physical effects are often more than bumps and bruises – in around 5% of cases a fall leads to fracture and hospitalisation. That's over 300 of our residents every year.

### Why do we fall?

Many older people assume that there's nothing you can do to prevent a fall, however, when you look at the reasons why they happen, you soon realise this isn't true. Medical conditions, poorly fitting footwear and a natural deterioration in eyesight and muscle strength are just some of the causes. Each of which, with the right detective work and treatment, can be treated in some way.

One of the biggest ways Hanover can contribute to reducing the risk of falls among our residents is by supporting opportunities to take part in evidence-based exercise such as Otago and FaME (Falls Management Exercise); programmes which have been shown to reduce the risk of falls by as much as 35% and 54% respectively.

### What are we doing?

We know of some estates where classes are already taking place. This usually stems from a local instructor getting in touch with residents, or where residents have taken part in an NHS class and wanted to continue beyond the prescribed 12 weeks. So, we know the classes are effective, and we know they can be popular. The next questions are whether we can sustain classes for long-term effect, and whether we can create more opportunities across our estates.

In order to explore this, we set up weekly Active Balance classes at Hanover Court, Bude, as part of the [Community Connector pilot](#) back in January this year. The classes follow the FaME programme, and we're very pleased to say that, so far, they've been a great success.

We've worked in close collaboration with the class instructor and have monitored participants using a series of validated balance and stability tests.

**Through this we've seen that 100% of participants showed improvements in their functional ability.**

In practical terms, this means that all participants have become steadier on their feet and/or shown improvements in walking or getting around. This is particularly important – and potentially life changing – for the two residents who were assessed at the beginning of the classes as being at high risk of falling.

One resident commented:

*“I suffer from osteoarthritis...walking and standing for periods of time can be debilitating and painful... already David’s [the instructor’s] regime has had benefits for me...”*

*I find that simple tasks such as rising from a chair, or seating myself, have become more easily manageable. With the right technique I can also bend my knees now, something I’ve not been able to do for years. I can balance better, using minimal aid – or sometimes no aids at all.”*

The personal outcomes from the trial period were so positive that the residents involved decided to take ownership, and have since successfully applied for a Greenshoots grant to continue them.

A minimal charge is in place to help them sustain the classes long term; and participation from residents of neighbouring retirement schemes is helping to bring in enough income for this.

## **What next?**

Falls prevention is high on the agenda for many local authorities and health trusts, and many estates are ideally placed to support local communities of older people to reduce their risk of falls through appropriate exercise.

We are continuing to monitor the classes in Bude, and are supporting the residents involved to help them develop their classes further. We’re also hoping to find additional estates where FaME classes could run in the same self-sufficient way, or with some help through local funding opportunities, to demonstrate the role housing can play in this public health arena.