

NATIONAL FALLS AWARENESS DAY YEAR ONE SUMMARY & EVALUATION REPORT

AUGUST 2005

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ABOUT NATIONAL FALLS AWARENESS DAY

National Falls Awareness Day is a Help the Aged initiative organised by the charity's Preventing Falls Team.

Launched for the first time in 2005, the first National Falls Awareness Day took place on Tuesday 19 July.

This report outlines the day. How it happened, who took part, what they did and the impact it had.

Aims & objectives

The aim of National Falls Awareness Day was to raise awareness of the risk of falls amongst older people and to encourage them to find out about ways to reduce this risk in order to maintain their independence and mobility into a healthy old age.

Our objective in creating a national day was to provide a focus for falls awareness activity across the UK, giving all relevant professionals a basis on which to disseminate the falls prevention message, and creating a recognisable brand with which both practitioners and older people could identify.

By encouraging local events to take place on the same day around the country, we aimed to strengthen links between older people and practitioners and to overcome older people's negativity towards the issue of falls.

Strategy

Limited resources and funds meant that simplicity was key to the campaign strategy. It was decided therefore that the focus should be on regional activities and that these should be organised at a local level with Help the Aged offering strategic central support.

Plans to work with partner organisations were made at an early stage, to provide practical resource and to add weight to the initiative. By partnering with organisations such as Age Concern, British Geriatrics Society and Royal College of Nursing, valuable links were made with large networks and primary care trusts.

Falls prevention techniques were chosen as a focus for the day under the theme of 'Be Strong Be Steady'. This formed the basis of all National Falls Awareness Day activity, with the key messages being:

- You can remain strong and mobile at all ages
- Everyone can actively improve their balance
- Falls do not have to be an inevitable part of getting older
- It's never too late to start reducing your risk of a fall.

How we made it happen

Consultation

Having created the idea of National Falls Awareness Day, it was important to assess its feasibility. Consultations were therefore held with potential partners and falls professionals to establish, firstly, the achievability of the initiative and, secondly, the mechanics of making it happen.

Having established that it was a viable proposition, a dedicated point of contact was then established within the Preventing Falls Team. She coordinated activities and provide central support to all those involved throughout the campaign.

Funding

The event was funded in the main by Help the Aged and initial plans were made on the basis that no external funds were available. However, an application was made for funding from the Department of Health and a grant of £5,000 was secured. This, together with existing funds, enabled us to create an effective and targeted promotional campaign.

Materials

Key to the campaign was the development of campaign materials. Focusing on the 'Be Strong Be Steady' message the following tools were produced:



The Website - To minimise costs and generate efficiency a dedicated webpage was created at www.helptheaged.org.uk/fallsday. Information sheets including falls prevention advice leaflets, promotional literature, ideas for events and media advice were posted and available for download. Whenever possible, enquiries were directed to the website.

The Information Pack - Receipt of the DH grant also enabled us to produce 1,000 printed versions of the packs including a promotional poster and Help the Aged's new falls prevention advice leaflet 'Staying Steady'. All 1,000 packs were distributed on request. Nearly 250,000 subsequent requests were received for the new Staying Steady leaflet.

Partners & their role

Plans to work with partner organisations were made at an early stage, both to provide practical resource and to add weight to the initiative. Thirty six organisations provided valuable database resources, links to networks and additional promotional and advisory support. The 36 partners were:

Age Concern
AGILE
Alzheimer's Society
Association of Charity Officers
Association of Retired Persons
Beth Johnson Foundation
Brendoncare Foundation
British Geriatrics Society
Care Directions
CCPR
College of Occupational Therapists
Counsel and Care
Department of Health
Eastleigh Community Services
Extend
Greater London Forum for the Elderly
Foundations
Kensington and Chelsea Community Alarm Service
Independent Age (RUKBA)
Later Life Training
MHA Care Group
Milan Senior Welfare Council
National Community Fire Safety Centre
National Information Forum
National Primary Care Development Team
Open Age Project
ProFaNE
Queen Alexandra Cottage Homes
Royal College of Nursing England and Wales
RoSPA
Salford Primary Care Trust
Society of Chiropractors and Podiatrists
Third Age Project
Visibility
Wandsworth PCT

Communications

Limited funds meant that promotional activity had to be carefully planned and targeted. A two-tier communications strategy was compiled firstly to mobilise practitioners into organising events and secondly to encourage people to attend.

Media relations

Media Relations was key to the strategy and to that end a dedicated PR consultant was appointed to exploit the opportunity to its full potential.

Running over a five month period, in-house activity focused on national coverage with regional activity handled locally by event organisers. A limited regional campaign was also conducted by Help the Aged on the day of launch.

To ensure continued coverage throughout that period, a calendar of PR activities was planned:

Press releases – A series of press releases were issued at regular intervals throughout the campaign to both national and trade press. A cartoonist was commissioned to provide supporting images with others sourced from existing library shots. Five releases were issued in total.



NOP survey – To secure on-the-day coverage an NOP survey was conducted amongst older people across the UK to highlight the gap between the perception and reality of falling amongst the over 65s. The results provided a news angle for the day on which to hook further stories about the day's events. Results were also regionalised to provide stories for local press.

The photocall – A photocall was also held on the day at a Tai Chi class in North London where Liam Byrne MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for care services, officially launched the day. Professor Ian Philp also attended. As well as providing a visual representation of the day the activity provided a valuable PR opportunity for Help the Aged to engage with the minister.

Press coverage resulting from all of the above activity was widespread and covered all areas of the media. Three days before National Falls Awareness Day, The Times ran a two-page feature (including a front cover) in their Body & Soul section. The Express also ran a double page story on the day and BBC Breakfast started the day with two outside broadcasts from an event in Portsmouth. Regional press coverage was also extensive including newspaper stories, radio items and local TV news.

Other communications

The website - Once the audiences had been informed of the event, the main avenue of communication was the website which was regularly updated to include details of all registered events.

Newsletters - Regular newsletters were also sent to all event organisers. Allowing us to keep in regular contact with them, these included updates on planned events, ideas for organising events and tips on how to contact the media.

Shops - Help the Aged Shops were also mobilised to promote the day by displaying posters and handing out advice leaflets.

NATIONAL FALLS AWARENESS DAY

The launch

National Falls Awareness Day took place on 19th July 2005. Liam Byrne, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for care services, launched the day at the Third Age Project in North London. The Minister was joined by older people taking part in a Tai Chi demonstration and by Professor Ian Philp, National Director for Older People's Services.



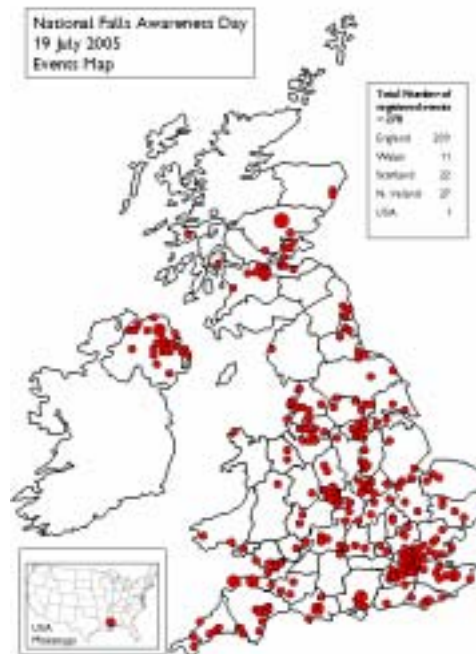
Who took part

Over the course of the day 270 events took place right across the UK from Fife to Redruth and from County Antrim to Cambridge. News of the day even reached America with an event taking place 5,000 miles away in Crystal Springs, Mississippi.

What they did

Activities on the day were many and varied. Organised by over 200 organisations including NHS groups, local councils and older people's forums, they included events both for older people and for falls practitioners.

Exercise demonstrations including strength and balance classes, Tai Chi demonstrations and dancing were particularly popular with over half of the events consisting of some sort of activity. Others focused on health checks offering, amongst other things, osteoporosis screening, blood pressure checks and balance assessments whilst others invited speakers to help spread the falls message. Hot topics for discussion included podiatry and foot care, medicine management, optometry and environmental hazards.



Information stands were available at most events and information packs were distributed to most attendees.

EVALUATION

The events

Prior to the day an evaluation form was sent to all registered event holders. Seventy six responses were received, covering 169 events. Questions were aimed at evaluating how successful the day was in terms of attendance, how successfully the falls message was disseminated, the popularity and effectiveness of different activities and suggestions for future events. The results will be used to evaluate and plan future activity.

On the whole, responses were very positive. Most notable was the fact that 97% of respondents said that they would hold another National Falls Awareness Day event and 88% found Help the Aged's information resources useful. Over 9,000 people attended the events and 11,000 information packs were distributed.

Full evaluation results are available as Appendix I.

Communications

The communications campaign was also evaluated, primarily to establish which activities worked and what could or should be done differently in the future.

Overall, all methods of communications were deemed to have been effective, each one playing a valuable part in the overall campaign. The website received over 5,500 hits with over 3,000 people downloading campaign materials. Over 4,000 requests were received for campaign posters as a result of the information pack, and nearly 250,000 Staying Steady leaflets were distributed on request.

The press campaign also achieved significant results. 127 press articles were written spanning national, regional and trade publications and with a total readership of over 23 million people and an equivalent advertising value of over £390,000. High profile coverage also appeared on both national and local TV news and on 25 regional radio stations across the country. More significantly, nearly all the press articles included all or most of the key messages of the day.

Regionally, over half of the 169 events which were evaluated were covered by local media.

Media evaluation results are available as Appendix II. A breakdown of press coverage is available as Appendix III.

SUMMARY

How successful was the day?

Overall, National Falls Awareness Day was a great success. Both the number of events held and the number of people attending far exceeded our expectations indicating that the day was a much needed initiative for both older people and professionals.

Previous research has shown us that the best way to motivate older people to engage in falls prevention activity is to focus on positive actions such as exercise and to enable them to personally choose activities that suit their lifestyle. National Falls Awareness Day provided the perfect platform to allow this to happen and the number of older people attending events suggests that this research holds true.

Comments received from professionals also indicate that the day provided an invaluable opportunity for falls practitioners to distribute information in a friendly, enjoyable and non-patronising environment.

What lessons were learnt?

Support from partner organisations and from the Department of Health was helpful in raising the profile of the day. Future events might also benefit from commercial sponsorship.

The provision by Help the Aged of advice booklets and posters was extremely popular amongst events. However, requests for materials exceeded expectation and orders were dealt with on an ad hoc basis via email and telephone. In the future a more organised order system is required. Further collateral such as balloons or t-shirts would also be useful.

Although information was initially meant to be distributed via the website, printed packs proved extremely popular and all 1,000 had been distributed by the beginning of June. A bigger print run is required in the future.

National Falls Awareness Day was a popular topic amongst the press. However, regional press clippings tended to focus on local events without exploring the wider issues. In the future, some, if not all, regional activity should be handled in-house to ensure that opportunities are exploited to their full potential, securing bigger features and focusing both on local events and the campaign message as a whole.

What next?

Plans for another National Falls Awareness Day are currently under consideration. For updated information visit www.helptheaged.org.uk/fallsday

APPENDICES

Appendix i Events Evaluations

1. Who was your event aimed at?

118 events were specifically for older people (69.8%)
49 events were for practitioners and for older people (29.0%)
2 events was specifically for practitioners (1.2%)

2. Did you find Help the Aged's information pack useful when organising events?

Yes	68	90.7%
No	4	5.3%
Didn't receive	2	2.7%
Not requested	1	1.3%

3. Was there anything missing that would have been helpful? If so, what?

More posters
Selection of different posters
Adaptable poster
More leaflets
Balloons
Banners
Headed paper
Give away i.e. bookmarks with falls prevention messages on
Ideas on seeking event funding
Larger print
Contact detail for Regional Development Officers
Consistent theme
Stickers, badges, key rings, pens, lapel pins
Video/DVD

4. Did you find our monthly newsletters useful?

Yes	64	85.3%
No	4	5.3%
Didn't receive	3	4.0%
Unanswered	4	5.3%

5. How many people attended your event?

Of the 169 events, approximately 9103 people attended, averaging around 54 people per event.

The numbers attending ranged from 16 to 500 depending on the nature of the events.

Some events such as poster displays had an unknown number of people attending.

6. Did you distribute information packs?

96% of events distributed packs to attendees.

Of these, 90.5% distributed Help the Aged leaflets, 43.8% distributed practitioner information and 75.7% distributed their own information leaflets. In total 13,910 packs were distributed across the 169 events examined.

7. Did you have speakers at your event?

40% of events had speakers. Many of the other events had information stands with advice available.

Of the 40% that had speakers these topics were focused on:

Environmental hazards	83/169	49.1%
Exercise	78/169	46.1%
Podiatry / foot care	71/169	42.0%
Medicine Management	68/169	40.2%
Optometry / eye care	28/169	16.5%

8. Did you have activities at your event?

117 events (69.2%) had activities, 42 events did not, 10 did not answer

Exercise classes 75

Tai Chi 44

Dancing 16

Other activities included

Sloppy Slipper Exchanges

Spot the hazard competitions

Blood Pressure checks

Walking

Equipment demonstrations

Demonstrations of getting up off the floor

Word searches, quizzes and raffles

Coffee morning

Tea Dance

Indoor Kurling

Bingo

Videos

Balance master, wobble board demos

Balance assessments

Fashion Show

Yoga

Line Dancing

Various shows

Older person's drama group

Walking aid checks and ferrule replacement

9. Would you hold another National Falls Awareness Day?

1 said Don't know, 1 didn't answer, 73 said yes.

97% of event organisers would hold another National Falls Awareness Day event.

Appendix ii Media evaluation

1. Total circulation of editorial coverage from 1 April to 31 August 2005

August 2005	700,616
July 2005	11,736,468
June 2005	112,054
May 2005	92,951
April 2005	22,000
Total	12,664,089

2. Total readership of editorial coverage from 1 April to 31 August 2005

August 2005	1,750,620
July 2005	21,335,598
June 2005	218,824
May 2005	263,662
April 2005	55,000
Total	23,623,704

3. Total number of articles from 1 April to 31 August 2005

August 2005	7
July 2005	109
June 2005	5
May 2005	4
April 2005	2
Total	127

4. Total advertising value of coverage from 1 April to 31 August 2005 (£)

August 2005	£6,802
July 2005	£369,297
June 2005	£6,722
May 2005	£5,399
April 2005	£2,000
Total	£390,220

Appendix iii
Press coverage

Total press cuttings from 1 April to 31 August 2005

National newspapers	5
Regional newspapers	107
Consumer magazines	4
Trade publications	11