

# Falls Awareness Week

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Action pack for event holders  
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# Introduction

You'd be forgiven for thinking that falls are a part of ageing, something that 'just happens' as you get older. Most people do.

And it's not surprising when they happen so often – around a third of over-65s and half of those over 80 will fall every year. But there are many simple things that older people can do to prevent falls, and their potentially devastating consequences, if only we can get the message across.

Through local events and national media coverage, Falls Awareness Week offers an opportunity for older people, relatives and carers to find out more about falls and take part in the local classes and services that can help to prevent them.

## Why take part?

Many event holders also find that their Falls Awareness Week activities lead to developments in their projects and services, such as new partnerships and classes being set-up or ongoing training for staff.

If you're not already convinced about holding an event, here's what some of our previous event holders have to say:

'We have participated in Falls Awareness Week annually and find it to be a positive experience for publicising the service, advising on safety issues and team building.'

'It is great fun and very rewarding. People are so pleased with the help and advice.'

'Well worth doing, both for team-building purposes and improving communication links with other services and service users.'

'Go for it! If we can prevent another person from sustaining an injury from a fall, it has got to be worth it.'

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Falls Awareness Week offers an opportunity for older people, relatives and carers to find out more about falls and take part in the local classes and services that can help prevent them.

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# How it works

## Using the action pack

This action pack is a working document. It is designed for you to keep and refer to each time you hold a Falls Awareness Week event. It will provide you with examples of the types of organisations that get involved and the activities they run, in order to inspire you with ideas for your own event. It also explains how to register your event and receive support from Age UK to enable you to take part.

You'll find event ideas, tips and comments from past event holders throughout the pack, which you can use to:

- draw up a checklist for planning
- read about what others have done
- receive support from Age UK and order free promotional materials by registering your event
- create your own resources
- photocopy materials for use at your event
- find out how to order advice leaflets.

## Themed supplement

Along with the action pack, each year we will provide you with a themed supplement. This includes information and facts about the theme we are running, as well as useful resources and event ideas relating to the theme.

You can store the action pack and themed supplements and any additional materials produced each year in the folder provided.

The themed supplement can all be downloaded from [www.ageuk.org.uk/fallsweek](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/fallsweek) or ordered by emailing [falls@ageuk.org.uk](mailto:falls@ageuk.org.uk)

## Other themes and activities

Many event holders find the annual theme useful to focus their activities and put a new 'spin' on the topic of falls prevention. It also shapes our national media work for Falls Awareness Week.

If you prefer to focus on a different topic or highlight the range of risk factors associated with falls, you may also like to consider including activities about:

- footcare
- exercise
- sensory loss (vision, hearing)
- bone health
- medication
- home hazards
- extrinsic causes of falls (e.g. buses, pavements)
- health conditions (e.g. Syncope, Parkinson's).

You'll find event ideas and information on some of these topics throughout the action pack.



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# Taking part: a step-by-step guide

## 1

### Read through the action pack and themed supplement

The action pack and themed supplement can help you plan and prepare for your Falls Awareness Week events and activities. They offer ideas and tips on holding events, examples from previous event holders' experience, and links to other useful resources.

## 2

### Decide on your Falls Awareness Week activity or project

Anyone can host Falls Awareness Week activities and events, as long as your aim is to raise awareness on the impact of falls and key interventions that can help older people prevent falls. No event or activity is too big or too small – everything counts.

## 3

### Register your event

Use the registration form to let us know what you are planning and to order your free promotional resources, including posters, balloons and banners. You can also complete the form online at [www.ageuk.org.uk/fallsweek](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/fallsweek)

Once registered, and with your permission, we will upload your event details to our online map of events.

## 4

### Order your free Age UK leaflets

Age UK has a range of information guides on growing older that you may find useful for your event. For falls prevention, we recommend our *Staying steady* guide.

A full list of our guides can be found and downloaded from [www.ageuk.org.uk/publications](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/publications). Hard copies are free to order from **0800 169 65 65**. Please allow 21 days for delivery, due to the high volume of orders that we receive during Falls Awareness Week.

## 5

### Keep up to date with our regular e-bulletins

Once you have registered your event and provided us with your email address, you will start to receive our *Preventing falls* e-bulletins, containing helpful tips and reminders, as well as information and links to additional resources.



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# Engaging older people



‘Be careful how you approach the older person with regard to falls. They can be very reluctant to admit to any problems, and therefore reluctant to accept advice.’

While some older people welcome the opportunity to talk about their fall, there are many others who do not want to associate themselves with what is often seen as a sign of old age and frailty.

Research into communicating falls prevention messages shows that many older people will be more receptive to messages about maintaining independence and the benefits that interventions such as exercise can bring, so the key is to be positive!

Our event holders suggest that the following approaches may help to engage older people successfully.

## **Temptation is key**

Have something to entice people through the doors or towards your stand. Once you’ve got their attention, it’ll be much easier to engage them in conversation. If you can’t get hold of any freebies, a free health check will be just as good. Team up with a partner organisation that can run blood pressure and diabetes tests, or walking stick MOTs, if you can’t do this yourself.

## **Peer-to-peer is best**

Enlist the help of your previous or existing service users to spread the message and tell people about their positive experience. You could ask them to help out on your stall; take part in presentations, talks and exercise demonstrations you are holding; or use written case studies and photos with their permission.

## **Make it fun**

Make your event or activity as interactive as possible. Give participants a chance to get creative by holding a ‘wrong glasses’ activity using the template in this action pack (page 10), or encourage them to find out the facts for themselves by running a quiz or competition. Intergenerational approaches are a good way of maximising the fun, so you may want to get local schools or youth groups involved.

## **Positive action**

At the end of your event, it may be useful to have participants think of five things they would change in their lifestyle, in the light of what they have learnt about falls prevention. You could get them to write the five things down, if you include a page in any resources you have, perhaps titled ‘Change 5 challenge’. This can encourage participants to take positive action.

## **It’s the simple things that count**

Never underestimate the value of tea and coffee or the opportunity to chat. This will not only get people through the doors but may also help them open up to you and other participants.

See the *Resources and websites* section (page 22) for links to research publications on communicating falls prevention messages.

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# Event ideas

‘Just have a go, from anything small such as sharing information, to exercise classes or vision loss training.’

Over the years, event holders have come up with all sorts of ways to promote falls prevention messages and celebrate Falls Awareness Week. Some choose to run information stands and stalls; others hold presentations and talks; and some quite literally make a song and dance out of it!

We’ve put together a menu of ideas and activities from previous events, as well as some case studies with further details, to help you get started. More information and links to the resources and tools mentioned can be found in the Resources and websites section (page 22) and online at [www.ageuk.org.uk/fallsweek](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/fallsweek)

## General ideas

- **Hazard-spotting** can be made into an interactive activity to highlight the risks of slips and trips within the home. Many event holders ask participants to ‘spot the hazard’ using simple visuals or illustrations. Some have even created their own life-size versions at outdoor venues, complete with curtains and step-ladders.
- **Sloppy slippers** are a good way of grabbing attention. If you have the funds, you can purchase new slippers and offer them in exchange for the old ones. If you don’t have the funds, have some examples of ‘unsafe’ and ‘sensible’ slippers on hand to highlight the risks.

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Hazard-spotting can be made into an interactive activity to highlight the risks of slips and trips within the home.



## Health

Some of these activities are a great way to draw people in and initiate conversations about risk factors, as well as ways to prevent falls.

- **Health checks**, e.g. blood pressure and diabetes tests. A local pharmacist, community nurse or member of the falls team might help you with this if you don't have the means to do it yourself.
- **Message in a bottle** – this is a scheme operated by charities and local authorities in many parts of the UK. It is used to alert emergency services to medications and allergies, and provide details of emergency contacts in the event of a call-out.

## Staff events

Many event holders use Falls Awareness Week as a backdrop for launching new falls programmes and strategies, running training sessions to provide a general understanding of falls among all colleagues who come into contact with older people.

Quizzes and competitions are a great way to engage everyone's interest. For more in-depth training, you could invite along a falls prevention specialist from your local NHS trust, or consider running sessions on other specialist topics, such as sensory deprivation.

Falls Awareness Week is also a great opportunity to celebrate and promote the success of your project or service. Invite your commissioner or director to attend your event so they can see for themselves what an impact you're having and what your clients or patients think.

## Falls-specific activities

These are some activities that you can incorporate into your event to make people aware of the risk factors for falls, as well as coping techniques.

- **FRAT** (Falls Risk Assessment Tool) is a simple series of five questions that only takes a few minutes to complete. It can be used by non-health professionals to identify people living in the community who are at high risk of falls.
- **Backward-chaining** is a technique for getting down onto the floor and up again safely. It is usually taught to older people as part of a falls prevention exercise programme to reduce the chance of a 'long lie' following a fall. A physiotherapist or health professional from your local falls service can demonstrate this at your event for you if it is something you're not familiar with.



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# Themes

## Healthy feet

Keeping feet healthy is fundamental to maintaining mobility and independence. As we get older, we're much more likely to suffer from foot conditions and complaints, such as bunions, difficulty with cutting toenails, and stiffness in toe joints and ankles. These problems, along with the foot pain they can cause, can affect our balance and walking and reduce sensation in our feet, and therefore often lead to falls.

Studies have shown that different types of footwear and going barefoot indoors can also contribute to falling.

Older people can improve their balance and reduce the risk of falls caused by foot problems by:

- **taking regular exercise** to stretch and strengthen toes and ankles
- **wearing well-fitting shoes** with high sides, a firm slip-resistant sole and a heel height lower than one inch. Shoes or well-fitted, slip-resistant slippers should also be worn indoors, rather than walking barefoot or in socks or tights
- **speaking to a GP, chiropodist or podiatrist if you have any foot pain**, as this may affect your balance and increase your risk of falls.

There are many activities that you can do to promote these issues, including the following.

- **Don't lose your marbles** – picking up marbles with your toes and dropping them into a cup one at a time is a great way of highlighting some of the exercises that you can do to strengthen toes and ankles and reduce foot pain. You could run a competition to see who can collect the most in a set time.

(Be aware of health and safety issues and clear the marbles away before getting your participants to stand up again. You may also want to clean or use new marbles for each participant.)

- **Foot checks** – draw in new participants and service users and raise awareness of the importance of maintaining good foot health by inviting a podiatrist to give a free foot health check. If your local Age UK provides a footcare service, they may also be able to run this for you.

More information and resources on falls and foot health can be found in our Falls Awareness Week 2013 pull-out guide at the back of this action pack. You can also download it from our website at [www.ageuk.org.uk/fallsweek](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/fallsweek).

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Draw in new participants by inviting a podiatrist to give a free foot health check.



## Exercise

The UK physical activity guidelines for older adults recommend that those over 65 should build up to 150 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity a week, in addition to taking part in two sessions a week of strength and balance exercises to prevent falls and maintain healthy bones.

Specific programmes for strength and balance exercises have been shown to reduce the risk of falls by as much as 50 per cent. These kinds of activities can be a great way of showing the fun side of falls prevention, and the ways in which we can all stay active and independent. They can also be easily incorporated into most events, either through demonstrations and taster sessions, or with handouts that illustrate how to do simple exercises at home.

It's never too late for older people to start exercise, and the best way of demonstrating that is to involve some good role models who can show how regular exercise has improved their lives.

For more information on the evidence base for falls prevention exercise, visit our Professional Resources page at [www.ageuk.org.uk/preventingfalls](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/preventingfalls)

### Here are some other ways of promoting exercise.

- **Dancing** can be an effective way to build leg strength and balance, and makes for a very popular falls awareness event. Why not hold a tea dance or get your participants line dancing?
- **Play games** using a Nintendo Wii Fit console and balance board.
- **Set challenges** to highlight the importance of progression and getting to the 'next level'. This can be done with all ages and abilities, and is a particularly accessible activity for care homes or organisations that work with frailer older adults. For example, ask participants to stand on one leg for ten seconds (with assistance, if necessary) and gradually build up to longer or unaided attempts as they become stronger.
- **Make use of local gyms**, especially those with Balance Master and Power Plate machines, which are particularly effective in improving balance. You may be able to organise your event there or arrange for some free passes. Anyone diagnosed with osteoporosis who is considering using vibration therapy should discuss their plans with their doctor.



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## Vision

Many different factors linked to vision can increase the risk of falls. Natural deterioration in eyesight as we age can make it difficult to see obstacles and negotiate steps or uneven ground, as can wearing the wrong glasses at the wrong time.

To maintain good vision and reduce the risk of falls, older people are advised to:

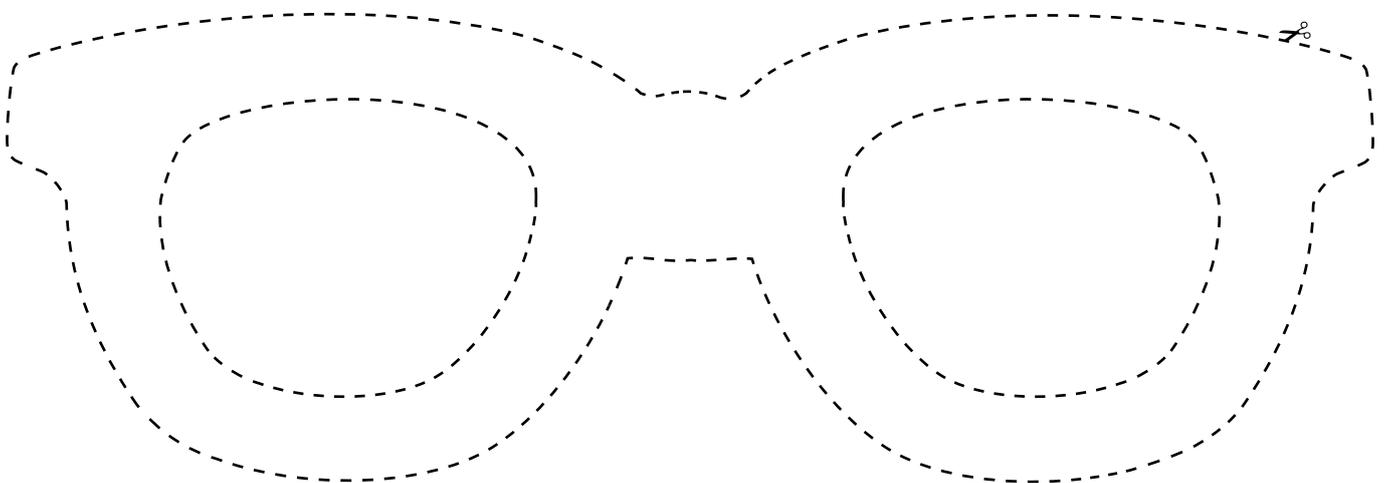
- **have regular eye tests** – everyone aged 60 and over is entitled to a free NHS eye test (In Scotland everyone can have a free eye test) – it is important to have one's eyesight tested at least once every two years, and optometrists often recommend that people aged 70 and over have a test every year
- **use good lighting** – this makes tasks less tiring for your eyes and reduces the risk of falls, particularly when using stairs or doing other activities that may be likely to cause falls
- **avoid smoking** – this is the biggest risk factor for developing macular degeneration
- **take regular exercise** – this can reduce the risk of sight loss from narrowing or hardening of the arteries, high blood pressure and diabetes
- **eat a balanced diet** – foods such as dark, leafy, green vegetables and oily fish contain vitamins A,C and E which may safeguard eye health.

The following activities can help to raise awareness of the importance of having regular eye tests after the age of 60, especially to identify many of the sight problems that are treatable if caught early.

- **'Grimy glasses' lens clean** – team up with a local optician who may be able to provide you with some cleaning cloths and come along to give advice.
- **Domiciliary eye tests** are available free of charge to those unable to get to an optician's because of illness or disability. You could promote their availability or arrange for a local provider to attend your event.
- **'Simspecs'** are glasses that simulate different eye conditions and can be used to highlight to both the public and professionals working with older people the difficulties that low vision can cause.

## Wrong glasses template

Photocopy or trace our template below onto card, cut out and decorate. This can help highlight the importance of wearing the right glasses at the right time.



## Bone health

Taking steps to prevent falls and keep bones as strong as possible helps reduce the likelihood of breaking a bone as we get older.

There are many ways in which we can do this, including the following.

- **Weight-bearing exercise** – this is one of the best ways to maintain healthy bones and often incorporates a lot of strengthening and balance-challenging work that can help to reduce the risk of falls.
- **Eating a balanced diet rich in calcium** – this is particularly important for bone health. Calcium can be found in a number of foods, e.g. milk, cheese and yogurt, canned fish such as sardines or salmon (including the bones), green leafy vegetables, and nuts.
- **Getting enough vitamin D** – vitamin D is essential for the absorption of calcium. About 90 per cent of our vitamin D is normally obtained from sunlight and we should all aim to get ten minutes of sun exposure to our face and arms without sunscreen once or twice a day between May and September, taking care not to burn. Older people who have problems getting out and about, or who cover their skin for cultural reasons, can be at higher risk of vitamin D deficiency so are advised to speak to their GP about taking supplements. Holding your event outside (weather permitting!) will contribute towards the recommended daily quota of sunlight and vitamin D.

**In addition to exercise sessions, the following activities can help to promote messages about good bone health.**

- **Food tastings** – events with food tastings are always popular and can be a fun way to encourage healthy eating and get messages across about what foods contain calcium and vitamin D. If you don't have funds to purchase enough food for your participants to sample, a food hamper with a few donated foods can be an easy alternative and a great way to add interest to your event by using it in a prize draw. You may also like to include recipe ideas so participants can try out different foods at home.
- **Chocolatey treats** – create a talking point too hard to resist, using different kinds of chocolate to teach older people about falls prevention and bone health: Crunchie for healthy bones and Aero for bones affected by osteoporosis.
- **Boost Your Bones quiz** – use the Age UK Boost Your Bones quiz to raise awareness of how to maintain healthy bones and prevent fractures.
- **Osteoporosis questionnaires** – the National Osteoporosis Society runs an online Healthy Bones Questionnaire with personalised information and details of the factors that can increase the risk of fragile bones. You can also download and print out a one-minute risk test from the International Osteoporosis Foundation. See the Resources and websites section (page 22) for links.



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# Word search

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| S | V | O | S | T | E | O | E | F | I | S | H |
| M | I | L | K | C | A | L | C | I | U | M | A |
| B | T | S | U | N | L | I | G | H | T | E | R |
| S | A | L | O | I | L | Y | F | I | S | H | D |
| E | M | L | F | R | B | A | L | A | T | A | C |
| R | I | H | A | M | O | N | C | G | N | F | H |
| U | N | D | S | N | U | P | N | L | R | I | E |
| T | D | A | O | P | C | E | O | E | P | M | E |
| C | E | S | I | C | R | E | X | E | F | A | S |
| A | N | K | G | T | S | C | H | B | T | I | E |
| R | L | I | S | H | W | T | D | E | M | S | X |
| F | R | M | E | D | I | C | I | N | E | S | O |

**Osteoporosis**

**Oily fish**

**Hard cheese**

**Exercise**

**Fractures**

**Strength**

**Balance**

**Milk**

**Vitamin D**

**Sunlight**

**Calcium**

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## Buses

For many older people, travelling on buses is an essential means of getting about and keeping independent, yet it can cause a lot of concern and result in falls, especially for those who are unsteady on their feet.

Over the years, many event holders have worked with local bus companies, offering training to drivers to raise their awareness of the risk of falls among their older passengers, and looking at ways in which safety and communication between passengers and drivers can be improved.

Many event holders have found these activities to be a great way of building relationships and reaching older people with messages about falls prevention, as well as overcoming common causes of falls on buses, for example rushing to get up before the bus has stopped for fear that the driver will not wait.

In addition to driver training, you may also like to consider activities to promote messages to older people, such as:

- **holding joint events** with local bus companies and inviting older people along so they can discuss safety concerns and practise getting on and off the bus safely
- **running a stall** at the local bus station to provide general information and advice on preventing falls and accessing local services – you could also take your show on the road and visit bus stops, or hand out information on the buses themselves

- **promoting safety advice** for passengers at regular events, especially to those who have travelled there by bus – local bus companies may support you in producing materials and some already provide leaflets and information, such as ‘safe journey cards’ that can be slotted into a travelcard holder and used to alert drivers if the passenger needs extra time to sit down or get off the bus.

### The following is good safety advice for passengers.

- Use handles on the bus to help steady yourself when stepping onto and off the bus. If you are having difficulty, ask the driver to lower the floor.
- Do ask other passengers for a priority seat at the front of the bus.
- Don't feel you have to rush to sit down; you can ask the driver to wait until you are seated before driving off.
- If at all possible, try not to travel with lots of bags. These will prevent you from holding the handrails. A shopping trolley may be a safer option.
- Stay seated until the bus stops and ask the driver to give you time to leave the bus safely.

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# Examples from previous events

## The sin bin

Over the last few years, Gentoo Living in Sunderland has been featuring the ever-popular ‘sin bin’ at its Falls Awareness Week event: a place for people to discard old and unused items that may be cluttering up their houses and/or increasing their risk of falls, including walking sticks, glasses with outdated prescriptions, and ill-fitting shoes and slippers.

Residents, neighbours, family and friends have all been actively involved, bringing in large quantities of items and exchanging their ‘sins’ for a free raffle ticket. Where possible, the organisation has also recycled these items, or, in the case of disused glasses, donated them to charity.

## Scary statistics

The Healthy Communities Group – preventing falls in North Lincolnshire – developed close relationships with the local hospitals and ambulance service, which provide it with monthly reports on the number of people referred to hospital after having a fall. The group used this information at its event, and found that publicising the figure of 2,200 falls-related referrals that year was extremely effective in raising awareness and highlighting the widespread nature of the problem.

Using this local data in its ongoing work has enabled the group to identify and target ‘hotspots’, and also provide a benchmark to assess the impact of its work.

## The big bus

Age UK Solihull had a strong presence in the town centre, hiring a converted mobile library and using a giant ‘Falls Awareness Week’ banner, which was produced without dates so it could be used again.

A variety of volunteers from different agencies, including health and pension advisers, were well briefed and on hand to provide information about the range of products and services available. Visitors were given a chance to chat to an optician and have their glasses cleaned, to take part in a hydration quiz run by a specialist health visitor, to have their blood pressure taken, and to have their ferrules (ring or cap on the end of a stick) replaced. Personal alarms were also promoted and particularly well received by some of the visiting carers.

The bus, together with the tables and displays outside, provided a great focal point, as well as a shelter and space to run different activities inside.

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## On stage

Physiotherapists at NHS Lothian came up with an inventive way of maintaining attention and aiding memory loss by using role play rather than their normal mobility class. Members of the team enacted scenarios on lighting and wearing the right glasses, and ran discussions with patient groups to increase awareness of how vision problems can lead to falls.

They gave patients details of opticians who do home visits and told them about vision aids, such as different magnifiers and audio books, as well as information on diet and lifestyle factors that can contribute to vision loss, such as smoking.

## Medicines and more

Mount Elgon Pharmacy has been taking part in Falls Awareness Week for several years. The pharmacists offer a drop-in falls service, which includes medicine-use reviews, information and advice, free blood pressure checks, walking stick MOTs, a grimy glasses clean, and shoe-and-slipper assessment.

As part of their activities, the pharmacists involved have also worked together to devise a quick survey to identify falls risks and promote the role that local pharmacists can play in providing essential support and medical advice.

## Supermarket sweep

Bradford District Care Trust held a week-long road show that visited local supermarkets and retail shops to promote falls prevention messages and its services.

Staff, including the falls co-ordinator, an exercise and balance instructor, nurses, healthcare assistants, a podiatrist and a member of the local Age UK, were on hand to offer advice on eating and exercise, keeping feet healthy and maintaining strong bones.

The trust was able to secure support and a small donation from the supermarket chain involved and used this to purchase a food hamper filled with food rich in vitamin D and calcium. By offering the hamper as a raffle prize, and entering into the draw each person who filled in a risk assessment, it was possible to identify a number of older people at risk of falls and to refer them on to the appropriate services.

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Visitors were given a chance to chat to an optician and have their glasses cleaned, to take part in a hydration quiz run by a specialist health visitor, to have their blood pressure taken.

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# Top tips from past events holders

‘Start planning early and involve all local partners that have an interest in older people.’

The most frequent piece of advice we hear from event holders is to plan well in advance, know who you’re working with, and book them and your venues early.

Below are some other points to consider.

## Equipment

If you’re holding a presentation or talk, make sure that everyone in the room is able to hear. Check sound and audio-visual equipment if you’re using it. Consider lighting and colour choice on PowerPoint presentations – reduced vision may make it hard to follow the information presented. See the RNIB website for information on accessible formats ([www.rnib.org.uk](http://www.rnib.org.uk)).

## Use local statistics

Local statistics are great for media work and also in developing ongoing relationships, programmes and projects to reduce falls in your area. Some local ambulance services, hospitals or A&E departments will be able to give you the details of how many people call 999 or are referred to hospital because of a fall.

## Freebies

Nothing draws in the crowds like the word ‘free’, even if it’s just a free walking stick MOT or exercise booklet. Don’t be afraid to write to or call local companies and potential sponsors to see whether they have anything they can offer. Past event holders have had a lot of success and given out pens, foot moisturisers and drinking glasses. Others have teamed up with local opticians to provide lens-cleaning cloths. If you can get hold of them, free vouchers or discounts at local coffee shops will draw attention to your event and may also encourage your visitors to get out with friends and family.

Make sure that you mention any freebies in any press work you undertake to advertise your event.

## Evaluate your success

Count your visitors if you can. Keep track of how many leaflets you started with and how many you ended up with. If you have time, ask people what they thought of the day and make some notes as you go along. Numbers of referrals made, either to your own service or others, will give you (and us) a good idea of visitors who went on to do something as a result of taking part in your event. This feedback will help you to plan future events and receive ongoing support for your service.

We’ll also provide you with an evaluation form to hand out, which can be sent back to us by Freepost so we can assess the overall impact of the week.

## Suggestions from past event holders

- Use logos on T-shirts and display materials, particularly if you work for the NHS: it makes you stand out from the street fundraisers and tells people you're not asking for money.
- Be prepared for the risk assessment when planning the venues.
- Plan for and be prepared for bad weather if you are holding your event outside.
- Get exhibitors on board early, as many get requests to attend other functions.
- Ask for financial support in January or February when there could be a little left in someone's budget.
- Involve local celebrities and people of interest, especially those with a story to tell: we had an older gentleman who has worked with the Red Cross in Nepal to reduce blindness. He made the link between nutrition and eye health really powerfully – you could have heard a pin drop when he talked about it.
- Invite people directly, using personal invitations and reply slips.
- Encourage your regular participants to bring a friend.
- Aim to make the event lead to something else.
- Make contact with 50+ social groups, as they enjoy visitors coming in with something different.
- Have information and contact details on hand for referrals.
- Don't just focus on 'older people' – try to engage a wide audience, including relatives and carers.
- Try to put over the information in a light-hearted way – not all gloom and doom!
- If you're developing your own resources, such as T-shirts, don't include dates on them so that they can be reused.
- If food can be purchased, it draws interest to the events.
- Remember: it doesn't have to be a big event to work!



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# Choosing your venue and promoting your event

‘Choose a comfortable, accessible venue where older people meet normally.’

Think about whether you want to target a place with a high footfall or get to a smaller group with some in-depth advice. Some previous event holders have found it easier and had a better response by choosing places where older people are likely to go, such as day centres, rather than manning stalls within their own organisations.

It’s also worth considering which day is best to hold your event. Some choose to run week-long activities, while others concentrate on busy days and times, for example market day, or to coincide with other local events and activities.

You could also use the venues to publicise your event. Additional promotional channels to consider include:

- local churches and faith groups
- talking newspapers
- past patients or service users
- older people’s forums and groups
- local authority event calendars and ‘What’s on’ web pages.

Age UK also has an online directory of events that you can check to see whether other groups in your area are organising activities. Consider getting in touch to team up and combine forces or jointly publicise your events. Visit [www.ageuk.org.uk/fallsweek](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/fallsweek) for more details of local events.

Some of the popular venues for holding events and also promoting activities include:

- supermarkets
- bingo halls
- hospital settings: outpatients, community and day hospitals
- leisure centres
- community halls
- day centres
- GP surgeries
- church cafes
- hairdressers
- libraries
- pharmacies
- on buses, or at bus stops and stations
- extra care or sheltered housing schemes.

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Visit [www.ageuk.org.uk/fallsweek](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/fallsweek) to see what else is going on in your area and to make contact with other event holders to team up or jointly publicise your events.



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# Quick guide to working with the media

‘Draw up useful media contacts to help promote the events and obtain great coverage.’

Once you’ve registered your event, we’ll also provide you with a template media release. You can use this along with the tips below, or create your own media release, to promote your event in the local newspaper and on local radio. Your local newspaper should have online event calendars or ‘What’s on’ listings where you can post your event details.

## Using the template release

Once you’ve registered your event, we’ll notify you ahead of the week, via our *Preventing Falls* e-bulletin, when the template media release is available. Fill in the blanks with your details and make sure that you include other bits of interesting information about your event.

## Say cheese!

Everyone prefers reading text with images, and journalists will want to use this to appeal to their readers. Make sure that your media release includes the best time, date and location to turn up at your event for a photo opportunity. This will help you compete with other stories that week and give you the best chance of getting coverage. Don’t forget to include your contact details so the photographer and journalist can get hold of you on the day.

## Get your message across

Make sure that you prepare a few bullet points with all the key information you want to get across – if you’re interviewed by a journalist, it’s useful to refer to so that you make the most of the opportunity!

## Local statistics for local news

Use local statistics if you have them to complement the national picture we’ve outlined in the template media release. You could approach your local council to find out about activity levels among older adults in your area or try to find out how many older people were admitted to your local A&E department because of a fall.

## Case studies

A personal story about someone who’s had a fall or how your service or project has helped will appeal to readers, so if you have one, be sure to use it!

We’ll also be looking for case studies to use in national broadcast and print media. If you know of someone living in the UK who would be happy to share their story in this way, please contact us at [falls@ageuk.org.uk](mailto:falls@ageuk.org.uk)

## Be prepared

Find out when your local paper is printed, and the deadlines for the next edition. If you can find out the name and email address of the journalist who covers health stories, you could save a lot of time and your media release will find its way into the hands of the right person a lot sooner.

## Documenting the day

If you are happy to share photos of your event with us, email them to [falls@ageuk.org.uk](mailto:falls@ageuk.org.uk). With your permission, we’ll use them for publications such as our Falls Awareness Week evaluation report.

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# Potential partners

‘Because the partner agencies we work with are all so supportive, it was a really positive experience for those people who attended.’

Working in partnership has many benefits: it can maximise what you are able to offer on the day and may lead to the development of new practices and projects or help to share the cost if you want to produce any of your own materials, such as joint information leaflets.

The following is a list of some of the different agencies that operate locally and get involved in Falls Awareness Week. You may like to consider approaching them to run a joint event, for information materials, or for help in promoting your event.

## Health teams and services

- Falls prevention teams and community nurses
- Ambulance services
- Opticians
- Pharmacists
- GPs

Check NHS Choices to find out about services in your area. See the Resources and websites section (page 22) for links.

## Charities

- Local Age UKs
- Parkinson’s UK local support groups
- Stroke Association local clubs and services
- Action on Hearing Loss local support and outreach services
- National Osteoporosis Society support groups

See the Resources and websites section (page 22) for links.

## Council teams and services

- Carers support services
- Sensory impairment teams
- Older people’s forums
- Home improvement agencies
- Leisure centres and gyms

Check your local council website for further information.

## Other organisations

- Bus companies
- Faith groups
- Social clubs
- Extra care or sheltered housing schemes
- Telecare and community personal alarm schemes – these may be available through your local Age UK or council, or run by private companies in your area.

# Event checklist

Use the checklist below as a guide to start planning your event. You might like to add additional items specific to your activity along the way.

- Confirm date and venue  
(check for any conflicts with other local activities)
- Identify and invite local partner organisations and speakers
- Draw up a contact list to promote your event or activity
- Identify funding sources and approach potential sponsors
- Register your event and order promotional materials  
at [www.ageuk.org.uk/fallsweek](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/fallsweek)
- Order advice leaflets  
(see Resources and useful websites section page 22)
- Organise resources for the day including photocopies,  
prizes and refreshments
- Check Falls Awareness Week website and e-bulletins  
for additional resources
- Invite VIPs, including local celebrities,  
MPs and commissioners
- Check local falls statistics
- Complete the template press release  
and send to the local press and media
- Plan your evaluation
- Check any equipment you will be using

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# Resources and websites

## Age UK advice leaflets

Age UK produces a range of guides and advice leaflets, including *Staying Steady: Improving your strength and balance*, which can be ordered free of charge by calling Age UK Advice on **0800 169 65 65**.

Advice leaflets are delivered separately from promotional resources and may arrive later. Please allow 21 days for delivery of leaflets, due to the high volumes of orders we receive for Falls Awareness Week.

For a full list of our information guides and factsheets, visit [www.ageuk.org.uk/publications](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/publications)

## Strength and balance exercise book

*Strength and Balance Exercises for Healthy Ageing* is an A4 tabletop display book that includes instructions and illustrations of exercises to help maintain strength and balance.

Hard copies cost £6 plus p&p. To place an order, call **0800 169 65 65**.

Also available to download from [www.ageuk.org.uk/falls](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/falls)



## Resources for professionals

### Falls prevention webinar series

Age UK has run a series of webinars to provide professionals with information on the latest research and best practice guidance for falls prevention. Topics have included:

- vision and falls
- falls and bone health
- preventing falls among people living with dementia.

You will automatically receive notifications about upcoming webinars once you have registered for Falls Awareness Week. The webinars are free to attend and, in some cases, can be viewed on-demand via our website.

### Research publications and policy

The following publications outline research on communicating falls prevention messages to older people and Age UK's campaign to improve access to evidence-based falls prevention services.

- *Don't Mention the F-word*, Age UK (2012)
- *Breaking Through: Building better falls and fracture services in England*, Age UK and National Osteoporosis Society (2012)
- *Stop Falling: Start saving lives and money*, Age UK (2010)
- *Fall Stop: Making falls prevention programmes more effective*, Help the Aged (2007)

For more information on our range of falls prevention resources for professionals, visit [www.ageuk.org.uk/preventingfalls](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/preventingfalls)

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## Other resources and websites

Here you'll find details of some of the publications, resources and websites mentioned throughout this action pack.

Links to all of the resources are available from [www.ageuk.org.uk/fallsweek](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/fallsweek)

Please check the back of your action pack for an updated list of more recent materials and publications.

### Falls and fracture risk assessment tools

- FRAT (Falls Risk Assessment Tool):  
[www.ageuk.org.uk/fallsweek](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/fallsweek)
- Backward-chaining – a technique for getting down onto the floor and up again safely. Instructions and illustrations are available in *Keeping Moving: Exercise and Parkinson's*:  
<http://tinyurl.com/keepingmoving>
- The One-Minute Osteoporosis Risk Test:  
[www.iofbonehealth.org/iof-one-minute-osteoporosis-risk-test](http://www.iofbonehealth.org/iof-one-minute-osteoporosis-risk-test)
- Healthy Bones Questionnaire:  
[www.nos.org.uk/page.aspx?pid=1157](http://www.nos.org.uk/page.aspx?pid=1157)

### Top Tips for Staying Steady

Age UK has produced a one-sided information sheet, aimed at older people. It highlights the number of ways older people can improve their strength and balance [www.ageuk.org.uk/falls](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/falls)

### Boost Your Bones quiz

Use the Age UK Boost Your Bones quiz to raise awareness of how to maintain healthy bones and prevent fractures [www.ageuk.org.uk/fallsweek](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/fallsweek)

### Power Plate locator

Search for healthcare centres, as well as fitness clubs and studios, with a Power Plate machine in your area, using the online Plate Locator:  
[www.powerplate.com/uk/locations](http://www.powerplate.com/uk/locations)

## Accessible formats

The RNIB produces the following advice on making your information accessible, whether it's a leaflet or PowerPoint presentation:

<http://tinyurl.com/accessibleformats>

### Message in a Bottle

The Lions' Message in a Bottle scheme is a simple idea designed to encourage people to keep their personal and medical details on a standard form and in a common location – the fridge – to help the emergency services identify any needs a person may have. For more details and information on how to order, visit [www.lionsmd105.org](http://www.lionsmd105.org)

### Simspecs

Visual Impairment North East (VINE) produces a set of spectacles which, when worn, can give some idea of what a visually-impaired person may see. See [www.vine-simspecs.org.uk](http://www.vine-simspecs.org.uk) for further details.

### Other useful websites

Action on Hearing Loss:  
[www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk](http://www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk)

Department of Health: [www.dh.gov.uk](http://www.dh.gov.uk)

National Osteoporosis Society: [www.nos.org.uk](http://www.nos.org.uk)

NHS Choices: [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

Parkinson's UK: [www.parkinsons.org.uk](http://www.parkinsons.org.uk)

Prevention of Falls Network Earth (ProFaNE):  
<http://profane.co>

Stroke Association: [www.stroke.org.uk](http://www.stroke.org.uk)

Syncope Trust and Reflex Anoxic Seizures:  
[www.stars.org.uk](http://www.stars.org.uk)

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## Further reading for professionals

Below is an outline of some publications that might be useful for your professional and service development. Links to these publications can be found on our website at [www.ageuk.org.uk/fallsweek](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/fallsweek)

- *Falls and Fractures: Exercise training to prevent falls*, Department of Health (2009)
- *UK Physical Activity Guidelines for Older Adults*, Department of Health (2011)
- *Start Active, Stay Active*, Department of Health (2011)
- *Deteriorating Vision, Falls and Older People: The links*, Visibility (2005)
- *The Importance of Vision in Preventing Falls*, British Geriatrics Society and The College of Optometrists (2010)
- *Housing for People with Sight Loss: A practical guide to improving existing homes*, Thomas Pocklington Trust (2009)
- *Three Steps to Unbreakable Bones*, International Osteoporosis Society (2011)
- *Protecting Fragile Bones*, National Osteoporosis Society (2009)
- *National Osteoporosis Society 25th Anniversary Report – A fragile future*, National Osteoporosis Society (2011)

## Information for older people and their carers

Age UK's website provides information on falls, including on how older people can find a local falls service, and describes simple interventions that older people can take to reduce their risk of falling. More details can be found at [www.ageuk.org.uk/falls](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/falls)

The National Osteoporosis Society also produces a wide range of information leaflets for the public, for example on exercise and diet. Visit [www.nos.org.uk/leaflets](http://www.nos.org.uk/leaflets) to find out more.

Eating well can help older people stay healthy and reduce their risk of falls. There are many simple and tasty recipes available to older people. The following publications contain some recipes.

- *A Feast for Your Eyes*, The College of Optometrists, available at: [www.college-optometrists.org/en/laye/campaigns\\_\\_\\_/a-feast-for-your-eyes.cfm](http://www.college-optometrists.org/en/laye/campaigns___/a-feast-for-your-eyes.cfm)
- *Recipes for Healthy Bones*, International Osteoporosis Society, available at: [www.iofbonehealth.org/bone-friendly-recipes](http://www.iofbonehealth.org/bone-friendly-recipes)
- *Fit as a Fiddle: Cooking for one*, Age UK (2012)
- *Fit as a Fiddle: Cooking on a budget*, Age UK (2012)

All resources and links are correct at time of printing. As resources and information may change on the internet, we will endeavour to provide the most up-to-date links on our web page.

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For more information, please email [falls@ageuk.org.uk](mailto:falls@ageuk.org.uk) or call **0800 169 65 65**. You can also find details of your local Age UK at [www.ageuk.org.uk/about-us/local-partner](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/about-us/local-partner)

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