



Finding Strength, Finding Confidence: Cross Gates Good Neighbours Scheme CIO Strength and Balance Classes

The rooms are already buzzing before the classes begin. Walking sticks are propped carefully against chairs, friends greet one another, and there's laughter as the instructor sets up the music. It doesn't feel like a medical intervention or a therapy session. It feels like a community.

Why the Class Matters

For many older people, falls are a serious concern, not just because of the physical injuries they can cause, but also the fear and loss of confidence that often follow. Yet falls are not an inevitable part of ageing. With the right support, most can be prevented.

That's why Cross Gates Good Neighbours created its strength and balance pathway, which includes the Moving On class. It grew out of the realisation that many people who completed short-term programmes began to deteriorate again afterwards. They missed the structure, the motivation, and the friendships of a group setting. Without somewhere to "move on" to, their confidence, mobility, and wellbeing declined, and with it, their risk of falling increased.

Moving On was developed to tackle this problem head-on. It offers not only ongoing, gentle exercise but also a regular routine, a safe social space, and the reassurance that no one has to do this alone.

As this year's Falls Prevention Awareness Week (15—19 September 2025) theme "From Awareness to Action" reminds us, falls are not an inevitable part of ageing, and older adults can lower their risk of falling through strength, balance, and regular activity.

The Class in Action

The exercises are simple and effective, including seated warm-ups, slow rises from chairs, balance holds, and light strength training. Everybody is encouraged to participate in some way, and suggestions for easier exercises are given for those who find it more of a struggle.

Every wobble is met with encouragement, and every small win is celebrated. But what really stands out is the atmosphere. There are amused and knowing looks that translate to camaraderie and a shared sense that everyone is in this together.

Importantly, the classes don't stop at exercise. After each session, participants gather over light refreshments, building friendships and offering peer support. For some, this is the only time all week they get out of the house, and the chance to chat and share stories is as important as the physical activity.

Removing Barriers

Cross Gates Good Neighbours has worked hard to make sure nothing stands in the way of attendance. Participants receive reminder phone calls the day before, and those who need it can use the charity's door-to-door transport service with volunteer drivers. A warm welcome team of volunteers helps with sign-in, settling people in, and refreshments.

This attention to detail ensures the classes are inclusive, so that even people who might otherwise stay at home can take part, feel safe, and know they belong.

Wider Impact

Some participants have joined the lunch club afterwards, enjoying a weekly hot, home-cooked meal. Others have progressed into different activities such as chair-based Flexi-cise or short supported walks, expanding both their mobility and their social networks.

Demand has exceeded expectations, the Moving On group quickly outgrew its first venue and had to be relocated to a larger hall. The popularity has even led to a waiting list, and a new “Stepping Up” class was created to bridge the gap for people who weren’t quite ready for general exercise classes and still needed more than the short 20-week Moving On programme.

Participants don’t just attend a class, they become members of the Crossgates Good Neighbours community, with access to a wide range of activities, support, and friendship.

The People

Participants say the classes have given them:

- **Physical confidence:** fewer stumbles, stronger muscles, steadier walking.
- **Emotional resilience:** a sense of achievement and less fear of falling.
- **Connection:** new friendships, shared laughter, and a reason to look forward to each week.

“I can’t do a lot with my arms but my legs are a lot better and more flexible. I’ve been to a lot of places before but they always close down.”

“I just needed to get away from the house for a little bit. I think a lot of people come for the company.”

“I have dementia and find the exercise focuses my mind as well as being beneficial in a social way.”

Looking Ahead

Cross Gates Good Neighbours is now exploring how this model could be shared and replicated across the city, supported by new referral pathways and ongoing partnership work. The charity has learned valuable lessons about the importance of continuity, transport support, clear signposting, and creating space for social connection alongside exercise.

The message is a clear one, when older people are given the chance to stay active in a supportive, social environment, the results are transformative.

However it does not come without a cost. The Newman Centre that the classes are held in, is rented by the hour, and for a charity that relies on volunteers and keeping costs down, it's an expense that threatens to put a halt to beneficial services such as these.

Why It Matters During Falls Prevention Week

This class is living proof that falls can be prevented and lives transformed. It shows that with the right support, older people can rebuild independence and confidence. And it highlights the power of community, providing a holistic approach to health and well-being.

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