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Friendship and  
exercise clubs

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## Overview

The first **Friendship Club** was established nearly three years ago and since that time there have been new clubs starting all across South Gloucestershire and one in Bristol. The objective is to target isolated older people of all abilities, and to engage them in physical and social activity.

The philosophy of the '**Friendship Club**' model is to offer people a feeling of ownership and belonging to the club. The aim is to continue in keeping people active in older age, build friendships, and most importantly improve self confidence and maintain independence.

## Physical Benefits

- Endurance strength
- Balance and fall prevention
- Postural stability
- Joint mobility and flexibility

Each session focuses on one or more of these fundamentals of exercise for older people. The sessions also include group games, in order to build teamwork, coordination, and strength. Every session also involves a team game (floor based) e.g. New Age Kurling, Skittles, Boccia, or Shuffleboard.

## Social Benefits

The social benefits of **Friendship Clubs** are evident on many levels. The members seek to belong, adopt ownership, and develop new friendships. The games facilitate



members in gaining confidence. They also offer a chance for members, especially new ones, to interact and talk to people in the group.

*“I love the friendship club, I look forward to seeing everyone each week and the atmosphere is lovely.” (Gladys, Staple Hill FC)*

*“We are made to feel so welcome by the host and all the people in the club, we do gentle exercises followed by a nice tea break!” (Eileen, Kingswood FC)*

*“I didn’t know anyone when I came to the club but I managed to pluck up the courage to go...I now go every week and on the social outings arranged by the club!” (Marion, Downed FC)*

## **All-round Health Benefits**

### **“Friendship Clubs...One of the healthiest things you can do”**

Like most people, you've probably heard that physical activity and exercise are good for you. In fact, being physically active on a regular basis is one of the healthiest things you can do for yourself. Studies have shown that exercise provides many health benefits and that older adults can gain a lot by staying physically active. Even moderate exercise and physical activity can improve the health of people who are frail or who have diseases that accompany aging. Being physically active can also help you stay strong and fit enough to keep doing the things you like to do as you get older. Making exercise and physical activity a regular part of your life can improve your health and help you maintain your independence as you age.

## Prevent or Delay Disease

Scientists have found that staying physically active and exercising regularly can help prevent or delay many diseases and disabilities. In some cases, exercise is an effective treatment for many chronic conditions. For example, studies show that people with arthritis, heart disease, or diabetes benefit from regular exercise. Exercise also helps people with high blood pressure, balance problems, or difficulty walking.

## Manage Stress, Improve Mood

Regular, moderate physical activity can help manage stress and improve your mood. And, being active on a regular basis may help reduce feelings of depression. Studies also suggest that exercise can improve or maintain some aspects of cognitive function, such as your ability to shift quickly between tasks, plan an activity, and ignore irrelevant information.

Some people may wonder what the difference is between physical activity and exercise. Physical activities are activities that get your body moving such as gardening, walking the dog and taking the stairs instead of the elevator. Exercise is a form of physical activity that is specifically planned, structured, and repetitive such as an aerobics class. Including both in your life will provide you with health benefits that can help you feel better and enjoy life more as you age.



## Friendship Clubs near you?

- Staple Hill Methodist Church (hall).
- Falcon Court, Kingswood.
- Cambrian Green Court, Yate.
- The Beechwood Club, Fishponds.
- Coniston Community Centre, Patchway.
- Badminton Gardens, Downend.
- Nutfield House, Filton.
- St. Nicholas Family Centre, Yate.
- The Chantry, Thornbury.
- The Old School Rooms, Stoke Gifford.
- Greenfield Community Centre, Winterbourne.

If you are interested in starting a Friendship Club in your local area and require the assistance to start up then please don't hesitate in calling Spencer Davies or Brian Gardner at South Gloucestershire Council. We also welcome people to come and join in or to watch a Friendship Club taking place.

## Contacts

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