

Transform your quality of life with Belong's award-winning exercise service



Personalised exercise programmes for rehabilitation,
independence and wellbeing



Your life, your pace, your way.

Never too old to exercise

Exercise brings a huge range of benefits for your physical and emotional wellbeing – as long as it's done in the right way.



Belong is committed to helping people stay active and independent for as long as possible.

For most individuals, maintaining a core strength and skill base is what is achieved through a regular programme of exercise. The basic skill of standing up from a chair and walking can be lost if core strength is not maintained.

The benefits of regular exercise include reducing the risk of falls and huge gains for everyday living through:

- Increased muscle strength
- Increased flexibility
- Improved balance
- Better co-ordination

Additional wellbeing outcomes include:

- Decreased stiffness and pain
- Lower blood pressure
- Improved sleep patterns
- Improved mood, promoting greater participation in social activities
- Greater memory capacity



The NHS Physical Activity Guidelines for Adults over 65 recommend at least 2½ hours of moderate intensity exercise each week, supplemented by 75 minutes of vigorous exercise for those who are already active.

- This should include activity to improve muscle strength at least two days a week.
- Those at risk of falls should also incorporate activity to improve balance and co-ordination at least two days a week.

What we provide

Belong's fitness instructors work alongside other health professionals to design a personalised exercise programme that is tailor-made to you.



Following an assessment, we create programmes to manage the symptoms of conditions, including:

- Diabetes (type 1 & 2)
- COPD and asthma
- Hypertension
- Lower back pain
- Dementia
- Obesity
- High cholesterol
- Osteoporosis
- Arthritis
- Joint replacements
- Mobility and balance issues

All exercise sessions are supervised, and our specialist instructors are qualified and experienced both in fitness and supporting older people.

Exercise programmes are regularly reviewed and updated, and correct techniques in posture, walking and safe transferring are taught and maintained. This helps individuals improve lost skills and maintain strength capacity.

“Belong has made exercise a fundamental part of its culture and of every customer’s support plan, so that it is a measurable key performance indicator, reported on at Board level.”



Multi-professional

Local health professionals and organisations are very supportive of Belong's award-winning service, which was developed within the framework of existing NHS initiatives and in line with accepted health and fitness ethics.



There is an effective system of referral, consultation and communication in place, and we work closely with GPs, physiotherapists and others, to develop a programme of exercise that is personalised to individual customers and appropriate to their health and fitness level.

The involvement of family to understand the exercise programme and walk with their relative between exercise sessions can also be beneficial.

Evidence-based

Belong's exercise service has been independently assessed by the National Centre for Sport and Exercise Medicine (Nesta), achieving a level 2 for 'Emerging Practice'. This means that it provides each resident the opportunity to improve their quality of life through physical activity no matter what their physical or mental capacity.

The assessment reflected that Belong captured data that shows a positive change. Both qualitative (diary logs) and quantitative (blood pressure, mobility and cardiorespiratory fitness) measures of impact were used. Results show an improvement in quality of life, which has been demonstrated by customers previously restricted to wheelchairs regaining the ability to walk; an increase in mobility and strength and greater participation in meaningful activity. Other indicators included shorter hospital stays.



Specialist gym equipment

We use specialist gym equipment for older people, including hi-tech SilverFit equipment. This includes large mobile screens, viewed by residents while participating in exercise and transporting them overseas to view breathtaking scenery while cycling in the gym.



The gyms also include virtual reality games to help give individuals targeted support to build strength, balance, cognition or movement. Games are also designed to stimulate brain function, with different patterns for people living with dementia, Parkinson's or recovering from a stroke.

These are linked to the personalised assessments and are based on the science that when we engage our brains in games in this way, it prompts our bodies to move almost 'in spite of ourselves'.

The use of these technologies has extended periods of exercise on a machine – with most people happily exercising for 15 minutes where they may previously only have managed five.

“The personalised nature of the exercise programmes is crucial and they are developed in conjunction with other professionals to meet the specific needs and aims of individuals.”



Case studies

We have a great track record in achieving tremendous outcomes for individuals through exercise. These include supporting people to walk again after they have been led to believe this would not be possible: for example, a lady who regained mobility in order to be able to walk her daughter down the aisle after two years with lymphedema.



We have also supported people to realise other personal goals through exercise, such as dancing again after periods of immobility or a customer who was supported to play golf after a programme of exercise to strengthen his arms following two strokes.

The exercise service is also open to people living in the wider community. For example, Belong worked with a person who lives with cerebral palsy at a local supported housing scheme, who has seen reduced falls and improved balance, strength and co-ordination as a result of his exercise programme.

These case studies illustrate the difference regular exercise makes to older people's independence and quality of life. They are based on real customer experiences, although the names are fictional.

SUE had a fall, which caused a hip injury, for which bed rest and physiotherapy were prescribed.

Staff thought that a hoist would be needed, but with the help of weekly exercise sessions, Sue maintained her independence in standing, walking and transfer. A member of staff assists with balance issues, but no hoist was needed.





JOHN has a brain dysfunction but is able to be stimulated physically and mentally.

Without exercise, he is likely to sleep all day. After regular exercise, he began to remember parts of his programme and could identify the time, heart rate and distance he had cycled from reading the electronic panel. People noted he was more relaxed after exercise and interacted more with others. He has become fully independent, needing only prompting, and has mastered tying his shoe laces.

JENNY needed two support workers to help move her out of a chair and dress in the mornings.

After three months following a personalised exercise programme, she was fully independent again, needing only prompting to get ready. She was able to walk outside with her family, using the aid of a walking stick, and can climb a flight of stairs again.

VERA has scoliosis and arthritis.

Movement was becoming limited to the point that staff were helping her out of a chair and with all transfers. Exercise two – three times per week helped strengthen Vera's back, increasing her flexibility and mobility, thus allowing her more independence and less stiffness. She can walk a flight of steps and is independent in all physical movements. Her balance has also improved greatly.



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To find out how our exercise service could help you, contact your local Belong village fitness instructor to arrange a visit or assessment.

This publication is available in large format on request.

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