

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION REPORT

well
together

CHAIR YOGA



INTRODUCTION

In May 2025, at The Clockhouse Project in The Leys, 5 women from the Seniors group met Jane Gallagher - a Community Capacity Builder from the Well Together programme - to talk about their experiences of the Chair Yoga group. They discussed their engagement in the activities, prompted by open questions. The following report summarises the main themes, supported by participant quotes.

THEME 1: "IT MAKES YOU FEEL BETTER"

Participants mentioned the profound improvements they have felt with their physical health and mental wellbeing, even when they have had serious health issues.

"Chair yoga makes you feel better. I have been doing this for 7 years, and it's been wonderful. Since coming to chair yoga I feel more supple, and I feel more relaxed. I can see a lot of improvement. I love coming here, I couldn't do without it."

"When you get older you don't stretch enough. I'm stretching more now. I've seen people's confidence improve, and they really feel better after coming here. Over time you really see the improvement, you think, 'Oh I've improved a bit. I'm stronger and I can stand up a bit more now!' If you do a class like this, you are more mobile."



"When you get older you think, 'I can't be bothered to do that today', but I always want to come here to the yoga class."

"There isn't a bus here anymore. But when people find this class, they tend to stay. Some people even say they like the exercise of walking here!"



"I come for lots of reasons, and obviously one is the exercise. The yoga teacher knows us now, and knows any illnesses we have, so she can adapt it for us. It's really improved my health. I've got an illness, and I think the yoga really does help. OK, I'll just say I've got stage 4 cancer. Other people have had heart operations, hip replacements, stenosis of the back, shoulder problems like frozen shoulder, some people have had wrist problems. This class helps you recover from age-related illnesses, and it helps you recover quicker. I was off for about 6 months and then I came back and it was really good. I just come and do what I can. Sometimes I just have a rest, and that's OK, we can just go at our own pace, and adjust what we can do. The teacher is so good, we are very lucky to have her."

"And it has mental benefits – it's not just about muscles and bones and joints. It helps your brain to calm down. At the end of the class we do relaxation, that's one of the best bits, it makes you feel good."

"These types of classes help to prevent people from having falls. So it's preventative. But it's also good for recovery, so it's restorative as well. If you've had an operation, this class is good for helping you recover. And it helps well people keep good health, so it also maintains health."



THEME 2: "IT IS SOMETHING TO LOOK FORWARD TO"

The class participants spoke about how having something in their diaries each week helps them keep positive.

"At my stage of life you need something positive to grasp onto. Every Thursday I think, 'Oh great, it's yoga today', and I'm up and out of the house!"

"Everyone who comes here, they always come, and if they can't come, they will always phone up the yoga teacher and apologise - and they really are sorry that they can't come, that's how much they like it!"



"When you say 'chair yoga' people don't really know what it is, they think it is just sitting in a chair and not really doing anything, but when they come, they find it's completely different, they see it's great and they like it. My husband thinks, 'What's she doing?', and I just let him think what he likes to think!"

THEME 3: "IT'S ABOUT MEETING PEOPLE"



"First of all, coming here is about meeting people. Everyone is so friendly. Actually, I think it's one of the best places, people here have time for you and are ready to listen. As soon as you come into this place, people ask you how you are, and they will ask you things like how your cat is! It's about connecting. And realising we all share problems. We try and perk each other up!"



"The group is such a nice atmosphere. It's a group of regular people who come, so we get to know each other and everybody gets on well here. People are always asking how you are, it makes you feel a bit special, and we always have a chat."

"Some people don't have the confidence to go to a class, they are frightened to go. You've got to say, 'Come with me' so they have a friend to go with. A lot of people on their own don't feel that confident to make the move to come, but when they come here, we say, 'You can sit here, sit by us.' There's a warmth in the group. One person likes it so much she gets two buses to come here."



THEME 4: "IT'S AFFORDABLE"

Well Together provided funding for the Leys CDI so that they could provide affordable classes and groups for local people - for many of the participants, a more expensive class would not be accessible.



"We pay £3 a session which is fabulous. There was another class in another place that was £12, not being funny, but if you go to two classes a week, you can't afford it. If you are retired, you just couldn't pay that."



"This is fantastic, we are so lucky to have it, and to have the funding to keep the price low – absolutely fantastic. I couldn't afford it if it was expensive. These activities are not a luxury, they are essential."

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3. CONCLUSION

The focus group discussion highlighted the positive impact of Leys CDI's chair yoga in providing:



-  A place to improve physical health and mental wellbeing
-  Something to look forward to in their week
-  Friendship, connection and support
-  An affordable place to go

Participants repeatedly emphasised how the group has given them a place where they feel they belong, where they can improve or maintain their health and where they can have a chat and make friends.

Well Together is delivered in partnership by OCVA and Community First Oxfordshire. The Programme is funded by the NHS Buckinghamshire Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board.



Community First
Oxfordshire



Oxfordshire Community and Voluntary Action



Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire
and Berkshire West
Integrated Care Board



To help us understand and communicate the impact of Well Together for the participants and attendees of funded activities, we have completed a series of focus group discussions. Each has been facilitated by the Well Together teams' Community Capacity Builders with the support of activity organisers / facilitators. The outputs of these focus groups sit alongside stories produced using storytelling methodology and data submitted through online forms.

The focus groups discussion were based around open questions like:

- What does it mean to you to be able to take part in this activity? / What does it mean to you be a part of this group?*
- What do you like about coming here? / What do you like about being a part of this group?*
- What do you get up to when you come here? / What do you get up to with this group?*

before moving on to more specific questions about the health inequalities / clinical areas that the groups are addressing through their activities (where appropriate) - such as:

- Have you found out more about health checks? / Do you know how to get a health check?*
- Has attending this activity encouraged you to eat more healthily? / What have you found out about eating well? / Have you changed what you eat since coming here?*
- Has your level of physical activity changed since coming here? / Have you been more active since coming here? / Do you move more since coming here?*

With thanks to everyone who has been involved!