

Falls prevention Lunch and Learn Oct 2021

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Why are falls important to us and the wider community?

“Preventing falls is important to us first and foremost because of the physical, mental and emotional impact on the person who falls and their families and partners, in addition to the impact on the health and care system. Let’s make falls everybody’s business.”

Falls risk factors

- **Physical**

- Age
- History of falls
- Reduced strength and balance
- Slow walking and mobility issues
- Frailty
- Postural hypotension, low blood pressure
- Sensory impairment in particular vision and hearing impairment
- Incontinence
- Gender – women more at risk due to hormonal changes
- Syncope syndrome (fainting) resulting in a loss of consciousness
- Pain, in particular foot pain and chronic pain
- Arthritis and joint disorders
- Physical disabilities
- Medical conditions e.g. diabetes, stroke, osteoporosis
- Foot problems. Ill- fitting footwear
- Cognitive impairment
- Confidence
- Dizziness and vestibular issues

- **Environmental**

- Hazards in the physical home environment such as rugs, obstacles, hoarding, insufficient lighting and low seating
- Hazards in the external built environment such as uneven paving
- Public transport for people with other falls risk factors
- Pets

- **Lifestyle**

- Low physical activity
- Insufficient nutrition and hydration
- Alcohol and substance misuse
- Medications including multiple medication, sometimes called polypharmacy

Impact of COVID and Lockdown

Deconditioning – the loss of physical, psychological, and functional capacity due to inactivity – can occur rapidly in older adults, is not straightforward or quick to remedy and, among other health impacts, increases the risk of falls.

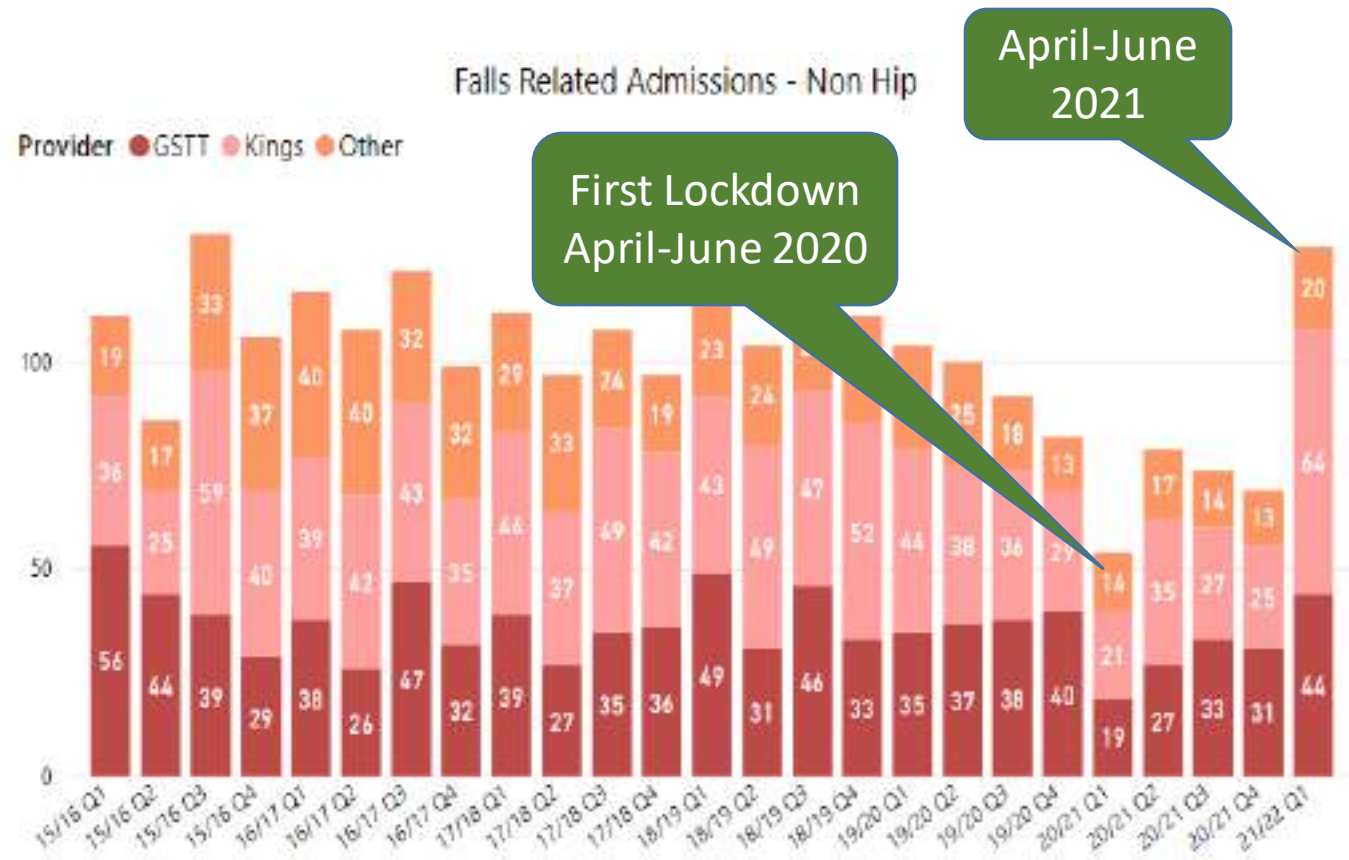
This, in turn, creates a risk that, without mitigation, would result in an increase in the rate of falls as older adults engage in more physical activity as lockdown restrictions are lifted.

This increase is likely to continue if levels of physical activity remain at their current reduced levels. This may increase demand for falls services, the strain on hospitals due to emergency admissions and health and social care costs.

The largest reductions in strength and balance activity were seen in males aged 65 to 74 and females aged 65 to 84

(PHE August 2021)

Number of Southwark residents over 65yrs admitted to hospital with a fall and (non hip) fracture 2015- 2021
Already a worrying increase since lockdown lifted



Falls Prevention: Everyone's business #1

- **Home environment:** clear of trip hazards e.g. on stairs, on route to the bathroom, in the garden. Consider minor adaptations eg handrails. Check stability and height of chair, bed, toilet.
- **Eyesight:** encourage to get regular check ups at an optometrist – even if the client wears glasses, the prescription needs regular review
- **Footwear:** footwear worn at home should fit properly, and have good grip
- **Medications:** if on 4 or more, to organise a medication review through their GP
- **Dizziness or fainting:** organise an urgent review by GP
- **Hearing aid:** check whether it is clean, batteries are working and it is worn
- **Nutrition and hydration:** malnutrition and dehydration are falls risks. Encourage regular water drinking and healthy eating
- **Appropriate walking aid** and in good condition eg check ferrules

Services

- Southwark and Lewisham Age UK handyperson – older adults only sail@ageuklands.org.uk
- Handyperson – for council tenants handyperson@southwark.gov.uk
- Telecare - Telecare@southwark.gov.uk
- [Linkage group activities - https://www.linkagesouthwark.org/Pages/Category/group-activities](https://www.linkagesouthwark.org/Pages/Category/group-activities)

Falls Prevention: Everyone's business #2

General older population

- **Promote awareness of deconditioning, and the need to gradually build up activity levels to individuals, family and friends, unpaid carers, and health and social care professionals**
- **Focusing on non-seated exercise that involves careful challenge to balance**

Resources

Some suitable activities and helpful resources aimed at self-management of falls risk can be found on the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy webpage, Self-management: older people and falls management.

<https://www.csp.org.uk/news/coronavirus/patient-advice-exercise/supporting-patients-stay-active-during-covid-19/older>

Self-management strength and balance apps which have been peer-reviewed with 4 apps and 6 websites which can be recommended [44].

<https://bmgeriatr.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12877-020-01880-6/tables/1>

PHE's Active at Home booklet provides practical guidance to older adults on home-based activities to maintain their strength and balance.

<https://campaignresources.phe.gov.uk/resources/campaigns/50-resource-ordering/resources/5118>

<https://fallsassistant.org.uk/> This is a new one- NHS 24's Scottish Centre for Telehealth and Telecare

Targeted interventions

Individuals whose reduced physical activity (deconditioning) has led to a change in function or fear of falls should be referred to an appropriate rehab or falls service.

A change in function may be indicated by, for example, one or more falls in the past year, a change in mobility and balance or reduced independence.

Those who are recovering from Covid may need specialist support and advice on how to manage their symptoms, improve activity levels and reduce falls risk

Community Falls service

Specialist Falls Services

- Falls clinics - for falls with unknown cause
- Physiotherapy
- Walking aids - new and review
- Range of strength and balance exercise options- home- based or virtual or face to face classes
- Service is still recovering from COVID and may have long waits

Professionals should refer using the CRAFs referral form or direct clients to call the helpline themselves

Public referral route

020 3049 5424

Flyers are available →



Telephone triage to allocate directly to relevant falls service and/or to provide advice and signposting



**Have you had a fall or nearly fallen?
Are you worried about falling?**

Research shows specialist strength and balance exercise can help you avoid a fall.

For more information about free classes for Lambeth and Southwark residents call our Strength and Balance helpline.

020 3049 5424