

Co-produced strength & balance groups: an exercise in active listening

Authors

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Background

Evidence demonstrates that people supporting someone at home are often unable to commit to attending an Allied Health Professional (AHP) led strength and balance exercise class for 12 weeks. Those who do attend, regularly miss sessions and rarely transition to one of the community groups after 12 weeks. We spent time talking to the people involved, gathering their stories and finding out what they felt was needed. We worked closely with service users to redesign this service, experimenting with different models of delivery, and eventually co-designing a more inclusive group. The new model encourages couples, friends or family members to attend together and has good attendance rates and physical outcomes.

After completing the 12 week AHP led class participants struggled to make the transition to a community class and identified four key obstacles:

- Feeling unfamiliar with the new venue and staff.
- Having to start making "connections" and friendships again.
- Worry about standing out in a "mainstream" class.
- Loss of the support networks and friendships made in the AHP led group.

Integrated working between NHS Grampian and local sports trust, Sport Aberdeen (SA), combined with a "kick start" from the Health Improvement Fund helped create a positive way forward.

What we did

After considering the options we co-designed the "Carers Stable and Able Group". This group is open to everyone who has completed the 12 week AHP led group.

- A Health & Wellness Advisor from Sport Aberdeen visits the AHP led group towards the end of the 12 weeks to talk about transition to the Carers Stable and Able Group, where it is held, when it meets and how to get there.
- The format is the same as the AHP led group, making it familiar to participants.
- The same Outcome Measures are used to monitor improvement in strength and balance so people can continue to see their progress.
- The same Occupational Therapy Staff provide support to the SA group, providing continuity across the service.
- Participants who have made the transition are invited to return to the AHP led group to talk about their journey and encourage "new starts" to keep going.

Staff Feedback

"It's great to really get to know people and see their confidence and ability progress"

"You see friendships developing between people who have probably felt quite isolated"

"The most powerful thing about the Carers Stable and Able group is the camaraderie. Participants tend to arrive as a couple which instantly changes into being part of a group. Everyone is extremely supportive of each other and celebrate each other's success. It's a fantastic, rewarding environment to be a part of".

Participant Feedback

"Excellent: gets us out, provides structured exercise and a social gathering"

"The exercise keeps me going so I can look after my husband"

"It has made me more active"

"It helps to keep my body supple"

"It is really good and is helping with my balance"

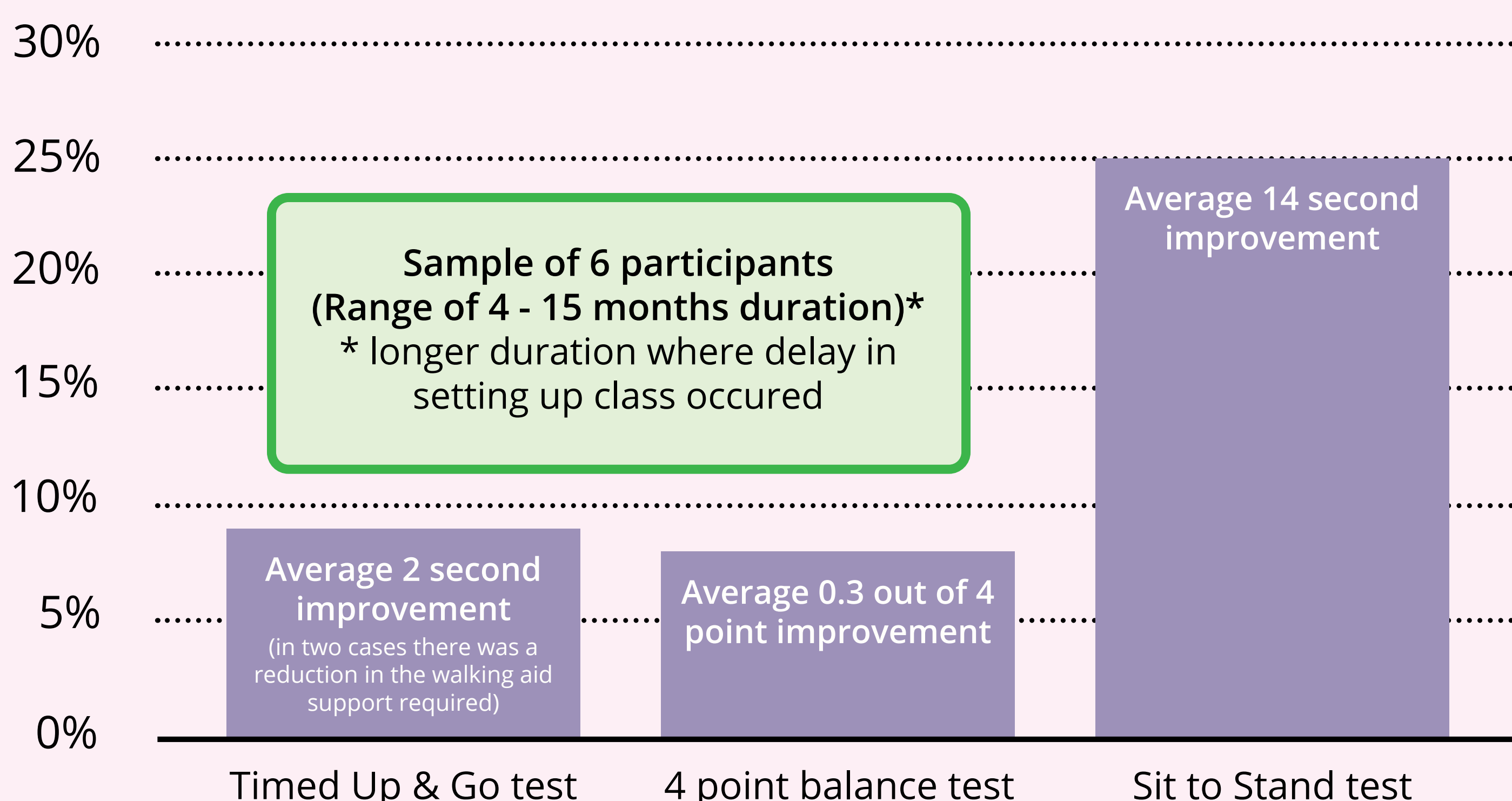
"We've been taught exercises that we can do at home and have met others in the same situation"

What Next?

- This group now has permanent funding which has secured its future.
- We will continue to use a co-production approach, working closely with participants and across agencies.
- This project has resulted in shared learning between staff and we are currently looking for other opportunities to work across the two agencies.
- We are working on processes that will encourage referral of wider SA group participants for AHP assessment.
- Encourage participants to join other follow on physical activity programmes including Techno Gym, Table Tennis and Ballroom Dancing.

"NHS Occupational Therapy staff working in a Sports Trust to deliver exercise programmes and raise health and wellbeing issues breaks new ground and is a huge step forward."

Percentage Improvement: Outcome measures from start of NHS Carers class to completion of a minimum of 12 weeks at Carers Stable & Able Class.



Carers Stable & Able Classes - Led by SPORT ABERDEEN Health and Wellness Advisor



31 people attended in the period from 23/10/17-01/10/18

Out of 31 individuals, 22 regularly attend the group

From a sample of 6 participants, 100% rated their confidence as above 7/10

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To see our group in action, scan here:

