



Somerset Activity and Sports Partnership launches new campaign for people to build strength and balance and prepare for the future

Somerset Activity and Sports Partnership (SASP) has announced the launch of Stronger 4 Longer, a new campaign encouraging people aged 50 to 65 to build strength through everyday movement to enable them to stay well, feel younger and protect their future health.

As we age, our muscles naturally get weaker. A sedentary lifestyle can speed this up – and since the COVID-19 pandemic hit, the UK working population has never been less active. In 2019, a quarter of UK adults were already classed as inactive (source: ukactive), a number which has since increased, as the pandemic forced millions to work from home and options for exercise were limited. Over time, an inactive lifestyle can dramatically increase the risk of falls and associated injuries later in life.

Certain types of exercise can help to prevent this loss of strength and associated injury risk, by targeting specific muscle groups which are involved in balance and stability. A wide range of exercises are recommended, including sports such as tennis and football, gardening, cycling, dance, and yoga, as well as resistance training and lifting weights.

The campaign is targeting people over 50 as from this age onwards, maintaining muscle strength becomes essential to prevent injuries and loss of mobility later in life. However, younger people can also reap the benefits of this type of exercise, as muscle strength can begin to decline from as young as 30.

Lianne Clarke, Active Ageing Manager at Somerset Activity and Sports Partnership, said: “We recognise that strength and balance are two very important, but often overlooked, fitness elements that directly influence someone’s risk of tripping and falling, now and into the future. Our new Stronger 4 Longer campaign makes it easier for people in those late middle years to take action in order to rebuild what has been lost, with benefits felt immediately as well as in years to come.”

Teri Underwood, Public Health Specialist for Healthy Ageing at Somerset County Council, said: “If you were a lot less active than usual during the pandemic, your muscles will be weaker than normal, and you will certainly be less fit than you were. You might feel that doing everyday jobs you used to do easily is now tiring. Perhaps walking up and down the stairs makes your legs ache and you’re short of breath or going for a short walk is wearing you out.”

She continued: “By being active and starting some exercise you become stronger and fitter. You may notice your tiredness increase and some breathlessness at first, but these should improve the stronger you get - this is a normal response to doing more exercise for all of us.”

“Regular physical activity along with eating well can help build muscle strength, maintain independence and keep us stronger for longer.”

Over the next year SASP will be rolling out an exciting social marketing campaign looking at providing improved awareness, confidence, and opportunities for people to build strength and balance in ways that are relatable to them now and prepare them for the future as they get older. The Stronger 4 Longer campaign is funded by Public Health at Somerset County Council. Somerset Activity and Sports Partnership is the lead provider for the campaign, working in partnership with Age UK Somerset.

SASP are fortunate to have several amazing ambassadors to share their inspirational stories to demonstrate how physical activity has improved their health and happiness through fun, friendships, and fitness. They will help to spread the campaign message across Somerset and assist local communities with access to useful online resources, activities, and events.

Georgina, 55, lives in Highbridge and is an ambassador for the campaign. She said: "I'm actually feeling better now than I did in my 20s, 30s and my 40s, and I want to feel like this when I'm 60, 70s and 80s. I still want to be that person at parkrun on a Saturday morning way ahead, whether running, walking, or volunteering." She continues, "It's really important to build strength, because naturally, your strength declines and I did notice just doing normal household chores, like changing a duvet, I was weak, so things like Pilates and strength exercises have made me feel better."

The [campaign webpage](#) offers a host of useful information and links to exercise videos and other resources to help people get started. Each ambassador also has their own page describing their unique story and why maintaining muscle strength is important to them. The campaign will be promoted across Somerset on social media, in local newspapers and in public spaces such as GP surgeries, libraries and public transport.

For further information on the campaign, visit the [Stronger 4 Longer](#) webpage.

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Notes to Editors

For press enquiries, please contact Tabitha Jay, SASP Digital Marketing and Communications Officer on tjay@sasp.co.uk or call 01823 653990.

About SASP

Somerset Activity and Sports Partnership (SASP) is dedicated to increasing the health and happiness of residents in Somerset through physical activity and sport. SASP is a charitable trust and a member of the nationwide network of 43 Active Partnerships (APs), sharing a mission of transforming lives through sport and physical activity. Each AP is independent, governed by a Board of Trustees and funded through Sport England, and grant giving bodies, companies and individuals who share their mission.

