

CASE STUDY

The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea and Westminster City Council
Lesley Derry, Community Champions Programme Manager



Community Champions supporting their community through exercise



As the Programme Manager for the Community Champions, I oversee this public health-commissioned programme across two London boroughs: The Royal Borough of Kensington and Westminster City Council.

The Community Champions are local volunteers dedicated to supporting community health and well-being. They achieve this by organising various activities, events, and public health campaigns, often becoming key sources of support and information within their communities.

In what ways has our chair-based exercise instructor training addressed the specific needs of your workforce/volunteers?

Over the past eight years, our teams of Community Champion volunteers and project staff have undergone chair-based exercise instructor training. This training has been specifically tailored to meet the needs of our volunteers, many of whom have childcare commitments. As a result, they have been able to work effectively with local residents across the community hubs, providing weekly exercise classes.

Could you share any success stories?

Project Manager, Leny Ghazal, from Earl's Court has been making a significant impact by working with some of the most vulnerable members of the community, particularly through their breakfast club and weekly activities. Have a look at some of the user comments below.

'My son is always looking forward to your chair exercise classes. He tells me that you are always cheerful and friendly, and I know this makes him feel happy. I think he feels at ease with other people he meets in your breakfast club due to your ability to make everyone in your presence feel comfortable and welcome. I know that the work you do as Community Champion makes a difference. Thank you from a grateful mother.'

'My mum Ruth currently attends this Community Champions breakfast club in Earl's Court and a god send for my mum who at 74 with grown up children and become lonely and very low with depression. Since attending this group it has given her a new lease of life, she has made new friends, learned new skills, joined the easy pace chair exercise which she really enjoyed and had a reason to get out two days a week. Thank you from her daughter'

'I just wanted to say Thank you for everything you have done for me and for the whole group. My first day attending your session was on Friday. I met you and your team with such kind hospitality. You welcome me with smiles and care. I enjoyed the chair exercise very much and also meeting new friends in the breakfast club. I am now retired and coming to your sessions regularly, makes me busy. It's my first time joining this kind of group, so I am proud to tell people about you and what community champions do to people like us. You help me to become more active physically and mentally. You cared genuinely for the people in your community, especially the older adults. God bless you.'

What do the user comments reveal?

- (1) **Creating a welcoming atmosphere:** Participants always highlight the warm and friendly environment. One person commented: "He tells me that you are always cheerful and friendly, and I know this makes him feel happy." Another participant shared their appreciation of the kind hospitality, saying, "You welcome me with smiles and care." These experiences show the programme's success in making everyone feel comfortable and valued.
- (2) **Enhancing mental and emotional well-being:** The programme has a significant positive impact on the mental and emotional well-being of its participants. A grateful daughter described how the programme helped her 74-year-old mother, saying, "Since attending this group it has given her a new lease of life." Another participant noted the mental and physical benefits, saying, "You help me to become more active physically and mentally." These comments show how the programme helps individuals overcome loneliness and depression, leading to improved overall well-being.
- (3) **Improving social connections:** The programme strengthens social connections and community involvement. One comment highlights how easy participants find interacting with others: "I think he feels at ease with other people he meets in your breakfast club." Another participant shared their joy in making new friends, saying, "I enjoyed the chair exercise very much and also meeting new friends in the breakfast club." These experiences show how the programme helps individuals build meaningful relationships and feel a sense of belonging.
- (4) **Chair-based exercise classes were viewed as enjoyable, beneficial for physical and mental health, and a positive social activity:** One user noted that their son found the chair exercise classes enjoyable and that they contributed to his happiness: "My son is always looking forward to your chair exercise classes... I know this makes him feel happy." Another highlighted the benefits for her elderly mother, saying the classes gave her a new lease of life: "She has made new friends, learned new skills, joined the easy pace chair exercise which she really enjoyed." A third user appreciated the physical activity and social interaction, stating, "I enjoyed the chair exercise very much and also meeting new friends... You help me to become more active physically and mentally."