Age no barrier to exercise, new training course shows

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The mince pies and Christmas cake may be a distant memory, but older adults can still beat the post-Christmas bulge, as a new training scheme designed to teach instructors how to run exercise classes for older people kicks off in Birmingham.

The scheme is run by the University of Birmingham's Centre for Healthy Ageing Research in conjunction with Move It or Lose It and launched on Monday (17 February).

Professor Janet Lord from the University's School of Immunity and Infection and Move It or Lose It director Julie Robinson put Lord Mayor of Birmingham, Councillor Mike Leddy, through his paces to demonstrate some of the exercises which would-be instructors will be taught on the course.

The scheme follows an earlier project the Centre launched with Move It or Lose It in October 2013. Prof Lord and Julie Robinson devised an exercise DVD for older adults to enable them to maintain their independence and mobility into old age. Only 7% of over 75s achieve the weekly recommendation of 150 minutes of exercise, yet exercise has been proven to maintain health and reduce chronic illness. The exercises are designed to preserve musculoskeletal mass and function which deteriorate with age and inactivity.

Professor Lord said: "We know that after an illness such as a hip fracture, older adults struggle to get back to their previous level of physical functioning. Even older adults who are not unwell find it hard to get the motivation to exercise. This course will teach some of the techniques we know help to motivate people to take part in exercise, such as the use of music and using older adults as demonstrators."

Prof Lord's research focuses on how the ageing of the immune system predisposes adults to chronic inflammatory diseases such as rheumatoid arthritis, and also how lifestyle can improve immunity. The training scheme will equip instructors to deliver classes safely for older adults.

The start of the scheme comes a week after a University report featuring Prof Lord's input was launched in the House of Commons entitled Healthy Ageing in the 21st Century: The best is yet to come. The Birmingham Policy Commission report urged policy makers to "recognise and accommodate super-diversity" when planning services for an ageing population and make more effort to give older people a louder voice when planning any kind of service for an ageing population, not just those related to health and social care.

An open day for those interested in the training course will be held on Saturday 15 March at the University's School of Sport, Exercise and Rehabilitation Sciences. More information is available from the Move It or Lose It website or on 0800 612 7785.

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Notes to editors

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