

Ask, Assess and Act

A pocket guide to preventing older people falling in three simple steps.



Falls Prevention – Helping older people stay independent and live stronger for longer

Falls prevention is everyone's business and we can all help by following these three easy steps:

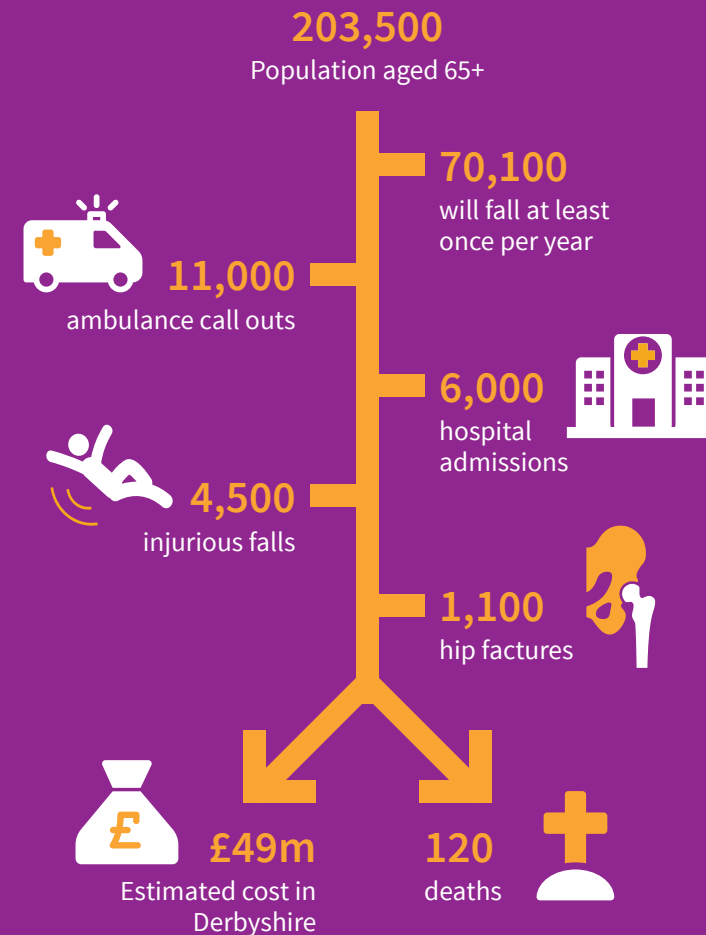
- A. **Ask** about healthy ageing
- B. **Assess** the older people at risk of falls
- C. **Act** to reduce the risk of falls and fractures

Why are we concerned about falls involving older people?

- Falls are a common and serious health issue faced by people aged 65 years and older
- Falls can lead to pain, distress, loss of confidence and may trigger the loss of independence and can be a sign of frailty
- One in three older people aged 65 and over will fall each year
- Around one in 20 falls results in serious injuries such as fractures



The impact of falls in Derbyshire, including Derby City, is shown below:



What causes older people to fall?

Falls are not a normal part of ageing and many falls are preventable.

Falls involving older people are usually caused by a combination of risk factors such as a history of falls, muscle weakness, poor balance, poor vision, using four or more medicines (polypharmacy), age, dementia and hazards in the home such as loose rugs and absence of grab rails.

Some of these risk factors cannot be changed or modified such as age and history of falls. However many can including strength, balance, medication, vision and home hazards.

By tackling these risk factors we can help to prevent older people falling.

What can I do to help prevent falls?

- Think about falls when working with any older person
- Use the Derbyshire Falls Pathway in this leaflet to tackle falls in three easy steps – Ask, Assess, Act
- Talk to the older person and their family about the risk of falling and ask them what they think will be most helpful
- If you identify that an older person is at risk of falling then tick the relevant risk factors on the Derbyshire Falls Pathway. Give the older person the leaflet and ask them to contact their GP practice to talk about what can be done to keep them safe and independent.

By using Ask, Assess, Act you can identify older people at risk of falling and help keep them independent.

This guide gives you information on the impact of falls involving older people, what the risk factors are, how to reduce the risk of an older person falling and what to do if you think an older person maybe at risk of falling.

For additional copies of this leaflet please contact the Public Health Department, Derbyshire County Council or call **01629 536179**.



Derbyshire Falls Pathway – Falls prevention and management in three easy steps

One – **Ask** about Ageing Well → Two – **Assess** Risk of Falling → Three – **Act** to reduce risk

All older people (65 years +)

ASK older people about ageing well and explain how they can be supported to improve their health to reduce falls, stay independent and live stronger for longer by:

Promoting healthy ageing

All older people should be encouraged to adopt healthier lifestyles. Live Life Better Derbyshire can provide free help to people to lose weight, stop smoking, improve diet and get more active.

www.livelifebetterderbyshire.org.uk or Tel: 0800 0852299

Encourage strength and balance exercise

Strictly No Falling is a community based falls prevention exercise programme.

Tel: 01773 768240 or search 'no falling' at www.ageuk.org.uk/derbyandderbyshire

Give information about falls prevention

Age UK Derbyshire can provide advice on falls prevention.

Tel: 01773 768240 or search for 'falls prevention' at www.ageuk.org.uk/derbyandderbyshire

Ensure a safe home environment

The Handy Van Service provides practical support with changing light bulbs, securing carpets and rugs etc.

The Derbyshire Falls Alert Service lets older people get assistance at the push of a button using an alarm system.

Find out more about these services at www.derbyshire.gov.uk/helptoliveathome or Tel: 01629 533190

First Contact refers any concerns about housing to the relevant organisations such as District Councils or Housing Associations who can provide advice on affordable warmth and housing repairs and adaptations.

Complete First Contact referral form online at www.derbyshire.gov.uk/firstcontact

ASSESS the risk of the older person falling by asking them (or their family/carer) at regular intervals whether they:

- Have had 2 or more falls in last 12 months?
- Had a single fall and needed medical attention from a healthcare professional in last 12 months?
- Are anxious or worried about falling and has one or more of the following risk factors:
 - Appears unsteady
 - Finds it difficult to get out of a chair
 - Takes four or more prescription medicines

Low risk of falling
NO to all questions

Higher risk of falling
YES to one or more questions

ACT – Continue to encourage ageing well to reduce risk of falling

1. **ACT** to tackle any immediate modifiable risks if possible using the guide below:.

Falls Risk Factor	Suggested action
Home hazards e.g clutter, trailing cables, loose rugs, no lighting, cold home	Remove clutter and loose rugs, re-route cables. Advise to use heating and contact First Contact who can refer to housing provider/handy van for home adaptations and assistance with small DIY tasks
Footwear	Advise to replace worn out slippers that look 'lived in'
Poor eyesight	Advise to see optician
Worried about getting help after falling	Advise to get a falls alarm
Fear of falling	Encourage to join Strictly No Falling

2. Advise the older person to contact their GP practice and speak to someone about their risk of falling. Use this form to tick any risk factors. Include your contact details so the GP practice can contact you for further information and give the older person this leaflet to take with them to their GP.

Contact Name: _____ Tel: _____