Age Concern Liverpool

**Summary:** The Nintendo Wii Ten Pin Bowling Project was set up by Age Concern Liverpool’s Active Living Programme in 17 sheltered schemes and has so far been outreach to 700 residents. It has received vast media coverage and organisations have used the search engine Google to locate us. The project works well with all abilities and disabilities. People have felt like they have a new lease of life and have also had fantastic benefits, both of a physical and psychological nature, including a sense of belonging.

Judges’ comments:

"A very fun and interactive way to get the community actively involved. I am very impressed.”

"Such a simple idea that has improved so many older people’s lives...love the idea and would be great to see it extended further”

"The idea behind Age Concern Liverpool's Nintendo Wii project is refreshing in its boldness, challenging the assumption of some that older people can’t enjoy technology or will find it too hard. It has created an excellent platform for shared fun and achievement right across the age spectrum as the project takes its next steps." 

Shona Caldwell, Active Living Outreach Manager at Age Concern Liverpool

**How did you get involved with the Nintendo Wii Ten Pin Bowling Project?**

I run an Active Living Programme at Age Concern Liverpool that focuses on a preventative approach to health and aims to appeal to all generations and abilities. Part of my job is to come up with innovative ideas to promote healthy lifestyles (we run a youth club for the over 49s) so we came up with the idea of using the Nintendo Wii and the Ten Pin Bowling game as a way to encourage activity across a wide range of people.

**What was the inspiration behind the idea?**

Elderly people often see their grand-kids playing Nintendo Wii’s at Christmas or birthdays and can feel left-out or nervous about joining in and playing it themselves. We thought it’d be a good idea to use the Wii as part of our Active Living Programme – as a way to break down generational barriers and encourage people to be more active. We work widely in deprived areas where many older people become socially isolated so we thought this would also be a great way to bring people together.

**How did you get the ball rolling?**

We visited a local sheltered housing scheme run by Liverpool Mutual Homes to try out some sessions and see what people thought of the Wii and the bowling game. We got a fantastic response from the start and as a result the individual schemes each had a Wii installed. There was lots of media coverage from newspapers and TV because it was quite an unusual idea! Now news spreads by word of mouth and we run monthly tournaments to allow new people to get involved and also promote a bit of healthy competition among the pros.

**Were there any obstacles along the way? How did you overcome these?**
Getting older people to try the Wii was a bit of a challenge at the start. We made sure that we focused on the fun, social side of things not the health benefits, and we made a point of showing how simple it is to use (it was important we used an easy game like ten pin bowling that everyone could play and was based around teams). Soon everyone was up for having a go. In terms of getting the go ahead from others in the organisation – there were a few raised eyebrows when we suggested it! But after some informal discussions people came round to the idea and were willing to try it out. I handle the budget for the programme so it wasn’t too difficult to get my hands on a console.

**What have you gained from this experience?**
Anything can appeal to any age – we shouldn’t be so quick to dismiss things. We’ve heard some really lovely stories from people who’ve played on the Wii with their grand-kids and felt closer to them. People feel better about themselves, physically and emotionally, and you can see from the look on their faces how much they enjoy playing it.

**What piece of advice would you give to others who’d like to get involved in this kind of work?**
Just go for it – don’t let barriers stop you, this is something that can be done in a chair by people with disabilities as well as by people who are more active and can move around. The most important thing is that it’s inclusive; people make new friends and have fun as well as get a bit of exercise.

**More info:**
[www.ageconcernliverpool.org.uk](http://www.ageconcernliverpool.org.uk)