

NHS service helps Warrington woman regain her confidence and strength after fall

The patient in this case study has been anonymised. For the purposes of the case study the patient is referred to as 'Mrs Smith'.

Mrs Smith, an 80 year old woman from Warrington, was referred to Warrington's Community Falls and Rehabilitation Team by The North West Ambulance Service (NWAS) in September after she had a fall in her kitchen.

Three years prior to the fall, Mrs Smith had experienced a stroke which left her unable to drive. This reduced her ability to go out, exercise and socialise.

Her son and neighbours visited her regularly throughout the week to bring shopping, clean and take her to church but ultimately she had lost some of her independence.

In September, it was a neighbour who found Mrs Smith on her kitchen floor at home after she had fallen 30 minutes earlier. She fell whilst turning to open a cupboard which caused her to go dizzy and fall sideways.

An ambulance was called and she was helped into a chair. NWAS advised Mrs Smith to go to A&E as she was left shaken and anxious about walking alone but she refused. NWAS then referred her to Warrington's Community Falls and Rehabilitation Team.

On receiving the referral one of the team's physiotherapists, Robert Walters, called Mrs Smith and arranged to see her at home. When Robert visited Mrs Smith he carried out a falls assessment to ascertain how and why she had fallen which involved a series of questions, physical examination and specialist tests.



“We’ve all been there together. Spurring each other on and it’s just been marvellous.”

“The tests indicated that the fall had occurred due to a number of factors.

“Firstly I realised she had an issue with her vestibular system (the parts of the inner ear and brain that help control balance and eye movements) which caused her to experience intermittent dizziness.

“She had reduced lower limb power especially at her quadriceps muscles on the front of her thigh and she also had poor balance which meant she needed to grab onto furniture for support.

“I explained to Mrs Smith the likely causes of her fall and prescribed a walking stick, a kitchen trolley and practiced walking with her. I also taught her neck and vestibular exercises to practice on a daily basis.”

The team’s Occupational Therapist advised that a grab rail should be put in her shower and at the back door to stop her falling and these were fitted with the help of Warrington’s Home Information and Improvement Agency (WHiA).

Robert also referred Mrs Smith to Care Call, a 24-hour tele-monitoring and response service for older and vulnerable people, who installed a pendant alarm in her home.

After the GP was alerted, Mrs Smith was diagnosed with, and prescribed medication for, an inner ear infection in an attempt to reduce her dizziness.

“Mrs Smith’s mobility and confidence had much improved, her dizziness had reduced significantly and she was in a more positive mood. I then referred her to our falls class at Orford Jubilee Park. She attended several sessions with the support of her friends and Warrington’s dial-a-ride service.

“Three months later she reported her dizziness had gone. She has avoided any further falls and is no longer worried about turning or walking.

Warrington’s Community Falls and Rehabilitation Team is provided by Bridgewater Community Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust in partnership with Warrington Clinical Commissioning Group. Find out more about the service at:

www.bridgewater.nhs.uk/warrington/fallsrehabilitationsevice/

“Mrs Smith has been really happy with the service provided by Falls and Rehabilitation Team and we are so pleased to have been able to help her regain her independence and confidence