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## Health service is helping to prevent falls

A new health team is working to reduce the number of falls among older people in South Tyneside.

One in three people over 65 and one in two over 80 have at least one fall a year. Doctors, nurses, physiotherapists and healthcare assistants, based at South Tyneside District Hospital, are helping patients to overcome this common problem, which can cause increased fear and isolation, injury, or even death.

The new initiative builds on the great success of South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust's community falls service in Sunderland, which has evidence showing an 81 per cent reduction in the total number of falls among patients completing its rehabilitation programme, with 69 per cent going on to have no further falls.

Patients are seen in a 'one-stop' clinic, where they have all the necessary tests, such as blood pressure and fracture risk, and are offered joint assessments by a nurse and a physiotherapist to identify possible contributory factors to their falls and the best way to help them. Depending on their individual needs, they are then given physiotherapy and a tailored exercise programme.

Falls specialist practitioner and physiotherapist Dean Metz said: "Our service is unusual in that the patient is seen by all the relevant health professionals at one appointment. In many other areas, each health professional does an assessment and patients can become tired of repeating the same information and sometimes detail can be left out when answering the next clinician's questions. We felt that joint, concurrent assessment would give patients the best experience and that it was the best way of ensuring no information was lost or missed."

Clinical Business Manager Lee Whitfield said: "We are delighted that South Tyneside patients are now benefiting from this service. We know from the experience of our Sunderland team that the type of assessment we offer, coupled with the individually-tailored follow-up, works in terms of patient outcomes and patient experience. Patients who attend tell us they feel stronger, that their confidence is improved and that they have not had any further falls."  
**ends**



*Pictured above: The photograph shows front, left to right, staff nurse Lisa Wren and nursing assistant Rachel Hamilton; back, left to right, falls specialist practitioner and physiotherapist Dean Metz and nursing assistant Anne Ray.*

Issued on behalf of South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust by Kay Jordan

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