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## Clinic's success in preventing falls

A new NHS service is helping older patients in South Tyneside to deal with dizziness, which can lead to risk of falls and injury.

Last year, South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust's community falls team introduced a special clinic at South Tyneside District Hospital to tackle the problem and the results have been impressive. Over a third of patients reported that their symptoms had completely resolved after receiving treatment and a further 21% reported an improvement.

In some cases, the problem was tackled within minutes through the teaching of a simple technique involving a series of gentle head and neck movements. Another effective treatment is a programme of exercises that improves communication and co-ordination between the inner ear, the brain and the eye.

Falls specialist physiotherapist Dean Metz said: "Dizziness linked to an inner ear disorder is a common problem in older adults, with approximately a third of people over 70 and half of people in their late 80s suffering symptoms. It can have serious consequences as it can result in them falling and badly injuring themselves.

"Since we introduced a vestibular clinic dealing specifically with inner ear disorders, we have seen some great results for patients. The Dizziness Handicap Inventory (DHI) is used to measure how dizzy a person feels on a scale of 0 to 100. The average improvement in DHI score was 25.25 points after accessing the clinic, which should lead to a significantly reduced chance of falling for these patients."

Patients are referred to the clinic by their GP or other health and social care professional.

*Pictured above: Falls specialist physiotherapist Dean Metz*

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

For press enquiries on this release, contact 0191 404 1128 or email [kay.jordan@stft.nhs.uk](mailto:kay.jordan@stft.nhs.uk)