

Ugborough Chair Exercise Class

The class began life in January 2024 in Ugborough Village Hall, so it is well into its third year. It is based on the model experienced in Yealmpton and Newton Ferrers. Three Ugborough seniors, two in their nineties, one approaching that milestone, attended the weekly class in Yealmpton. One of the ninety-year-olds asked the question “Why can’t we have a class in Ugborough?” The three agreed it was a good idea – less travel for them, and an opportunity for Ugborough folk to have the good experience they were having. They discussed the idea with the lead physiotherapist and it was decided to try and start a class in Ugborough. A one-hour slot was found in the Village Hall which the physiotherapists were able to fulfil on Friday afternoons, either side of sessions of the Pre-School’s all day care, and the class was opened up to adults of all ages wanting group exercise which was not as strenuous as more conventional exercise classes.

All our classes are led by experienced chartered physiotherapists who are adept at creating and delivering a developmental exercise programme particularly directed at seniors and people wanting tutored exercise which is within their physical capability. Many, but not all, modalities are undertaken sitting in the comfortable chairs of the Village Hall. The thrust of the weekly class is to assist in maintaining mobility, exercising all parts of the body systematically, both to help in daily living, such as walking, balancing, reaching, sitting and standing, and to benefit our general well-being. Our regular physiotherapists Michelle and Sine (pronounced Sheena) and other visiting colleagues draw on their wide experience of working with individuals and classes, in the National Health Service and privately, to give us supervised exercise in keeping with our ages and capabilities. We are a dementia friendly group, and welcome supporting carers.

We rely on participants paying a modest attendance fee towards the costs of putting on the classes: the physiotherapists’ fees, Village Hall rental, and more recently, in common with many community groups and charities, bank charges. We are particularly grateful to our local authorities for grant aid support. Without that, our continued opportunity to offer the classes would not have been possible. In the financial year 2023/24 we received a community grant from South Hams District Council, courtesy of Councillor Alison Dewynter. And in the financial years 2024/25 and 2025/26 we received community grants, towards the sessional fees of the physiotherapists, from Devon County Council, courtesy of Councillor Dan Thomas.

Inevitably, with a group such as ours, illness, injury, incapacity, medical consultations, hospitalisations, has reduced attendance since our inception, and our aspiration to be financially self-sufficient has not been fulfilled. Sadly, several of our inaugural class members have died. To maintain viability, we aspire to encourage more people in Ugborough and surrounds to join us: to have fun with us; and thus, to improve their health and well-being. Appropriate support in promoting this from Ugborough Parish Council and other statutory bodies would be much valued, particularly as our class members believe this would give overall benefits in the health and welfare of residents of our wonderful Ugborough community.

Peter Povey. May 2026.

