

Zimmers warm up 'fit as a fiddle' to the tune of £15M

Age Concern joined the Zimmers today for an invigorating work out on London's South Bank to celebrate a £15.1million well-being investment in their generation by the Big Lottery Fund.

The award to Age Concern is part of a weighty £126.2 million package of investment to regenerate the nation's health and well-being, from the Big Lottery Fund's Well-being programme.

Sir Clive Booth, Chair of the Big Lottery Fund, said: "This investment in the healthy living and active lifestyles of older people will ensure that some of the most isolated people across England are not forgotten. This fantastic scheme will get older people fit in mind and body, offering them the chance to get physically active, access preventative health support and meet other older people at the same time."

The charity's £15.1 million Fit as a Fiddle scheme will improve the mental and physical health of older people through physical activity and healthy eating, proving that age is no barrier when it comes to fitness. More than 800,000 older people across England will benefit from the funding during the next five years.

The scheme will deliver 26 projects of physical activities tailored for older people, from producing educational resources to encouraging physical activity and good eating habits, with some activities led by older mentors. The approach aims to encourage older people to live healthier lifestyles and for them to get involved in community activities.

The Zimmers, who shot to fame with their version of the Who's My Generation, have welcomed the Age Concern award. Alf Carretta, the 90 year old lead singer of the band, said: "The Big Lottery Fund is certainly talking about our generation with this announcement today. Our 40 strong band has a combined age of around 3,000 years and there's plenty of older people out there who are just like us, active and fighting fit! The money will give older people the opportunity to get out there, remain active and keep the mind sharp – it's fantastic news! "

Gordon Lishman, Director General of Age Concern, said: ""This award will enable our ActivAge Unit to deliver truly life-changing benefits to hundreds of thousands of older people across the UK. By providing safe and enjoyable activities and facilities that promote healthy, active ageing in the community, we will help older people to make real the goal of a 'fit body, fit mind'. Better physical health and healthier eating goes hand-in-hand with improved mental well-being and will help older people to stay independent for longer."

A total of 6 national and 8 regional grants are being awarded, including £4.6 million to the Peabody Trust and over £4 million to the North East Strategic Health Authority, which are also working with older people.

The Peabody Trust's Active 8 London scheme will roll out 84 projects to improve healthy eating across the capital, including specific projects for older people. The Trust hopes to reach over 12,700 older people through programmes like Project Paws, which will recruit volunteers with dogs to visit older people in sheltered accommodation and the Fifty-Five Alive Club which will encourage older people to organise social activities like tea dances and craft classes.

The North East Strategic Health Authority (NESHA) will work with partners to deliver a portfolio of 32 projects through the Passionate about Health and Well-being scheme. Part of the scheme will engage older people, who are isolated and not engaged in any physical activity, by signposting them to healthy lifestyle activities. A weekly exercise programme will be set up to provide one to one support on keeping physically active and older people will be trained to work as volunteer health mentors to work with other older people in delivering physical activities.

Further information:

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Full details of the Big Lottery Fund programmes and grant awards are available on: www.biglotteryfund.org.uk

Notes to Editors

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The Well-being programme, launched in April 2006, is providing funding to support the development of healthier lifestyles and to improve well-being. The programme will focus on three strands: mental health – to help people and communities to improve mental well-being; physical activity – to help people to become more physically active in their daily lives and in their communities; and healthy eating - for children, parents and the wider community to eat more healthily. To deliver this programme, the fund will appoint a number of organisations that will each deliver a portfolio of projects in England. The grants are from the scheme of up to £165 million, which aims to improve mental wellbeing, make people more physically active, and encourage children, parents and the wider community to eat more healthily.

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The Big Lottery Fund rolls out close to £2 million in Lottery good cause money every 24 hours which together with other Lottery distributors means that across the UK most people are within a few miles of a Lottery-funded project.

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The Big Lottery Fund, the largest of the National Lottery good cause distributors, has been rolling out grants to health, education, environment and charitable causes across the UK since its inception in June 2004.

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On 1 December 2006 the Big Lottery Fund was officially established by Parliament and at the same time assumed the residual responsibilities of the dissolved National Lottery Charities Board (Community Fund) the New Opportunities Fund, and the Millennium Commission. The Fund is building on the experience and best practice of the predecessor bodies to simplify funding in those areas where they overlap and to ensure Lottery funding provides the best possible value for money.

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Since the National Lottery began in 1994, 28p from every pound spent by the public has gone to Good Causes. As a result, over £20 billion has now been raised and more than 250,000 grants given out across the arts, sport, heritage, charities, health, education and the environment.

www.ageconcern.org.uk 18th July 2007