



Investing in Communities

Energise Me are coordinating Investing in Communities. This programme is supporting groups across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight in the wake of COVID-19. The aim is to reduce widening inequalities in physical activity and sport. It is funded by Sport England and National Lottery's Tackling Inequalities Fund.

Basingstoke and District Disability Forum (BDDF) offer support for anyone affected by disability within their local community, including disabled people and their carers, fellow disability charities and local businesses looking to be accessible and inclusive.



Why did we create this project?

Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, BDDF ran two popular activities: a **Chair Yoga** class, and a **Wednesday Walking Club**. The pandemic meant that BDDF's members were shielding, isolated, less active, and heavily reliant on the online services provided by BDDF. The charity had to cancel planned fundraising activities, furlough staff, and saw delivery partners equally impacted.

Pandemic restrictions, and the lack of funding meant the Wednesday Walking Club was cancelled, and Chair Yoga was at risk of ending. Meaning members might have been even more isolated, and even less active.

“Key barriers to being active during the pandemic are: self-isolating, the impact on health, the fear of contracting the virus, and concerns about social distancing. Disabled people are also more affected by a lack of space at home and a lack of support.”

- Activity Alliance

<https://www.activityalliance.org.uk/how-we-help/research/5854-covid19-and-disabled-people-snapshot-march-2021>

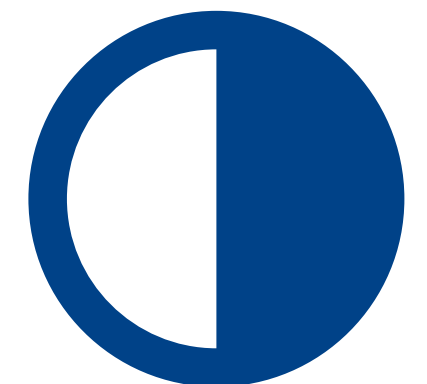
The National Picture

Even before the pandemic, disabled people were almost **twice as likely to be inactive** as non-disabled people. Research published by Activity Alliance in March 2021 showed that:




Disabled people are less likely to feel they have the ability to be active because of coronavirus.

Just over half (54%) feel they have the opportunity to be physically active (compared to 72% of nondisabled people).




56% are worried about leaving their home to be active (compared to 39% of non-disabled people).


What did the project look like?



A mixture of online and in-person activity to support people ready to return to face-to-face activity and those still shielding.



Weekly Wednesday Walking Club, followed by a coffee club and support group.



Small groups and outdoor activity meant members felt safer.



Walks were supported by staff so members with visual impairments and members who use wheelchairs could join in.



Twice monthly online Chair Yoga classes – live-streamed, and recorded for easy access.



A woman with blonde hair, wearing a red tank top and red shorts, is walking on a paved path. She is using a white cane in her left hand. The background shows a brick building and greenery.

**£3,750
invested**

15 walks

**23 yoga
classes**

14 virtual / 9 hybrid

Key ingredients for success

Partnerships

Sport England's Tackling Inequalities Fund provided vital money for this project to take place.

Energise Me, the Active Partnership for Hampshire and Isle of Wight provided advice and support to access the funding.

Marzia from Cherry Yoga delivered the Chair Yoga sessions.

BDDF worked with a number of local charities to promote the activity sessions, including: Connect to Support Hampshire, North Hampshire Parkinson's Evening Group, Mencap Local Basingstoke, Hampshire Parent Carer Network, and Basingstoke Voluntary Action.



Flexible funding allowed BDDF to adapt to changing guidelines. For example, by putting on more virtual sessions when in-person activity was not possible.



Partnership working allowed support for a local business, and meant that BDDF have been able to promote sessions to a range of people.



Providing activities **free of charge** – many of BDDF's members do not have disposable income to spend on physical activity.



Use of **social media** – BDDF have expanded their reach by over 25%.



The right team! Members said that Sarah, the walk leader, was friendly, inclusive of different abilities, and supportive. People said that Marzia, who delivered the chair yoga, was calming, welcoming, and put people at ease.

What BDDF and their members said...

"The funding has enabled us to continue to support our members to stay physically active and mentally healthy during a challenging autumn/winter 2020 and early 2021. We were able to continue to run and expand our Chair Yoga classes and walking groups. We have been able to keep in weekly contact with many of our members through our groups." BDDF

"It was my first time so I was a bit unsure what I had let myself in for but I needn't have worried, everyone was so friendly and the class sped by. Couldn't believe an hour had gone by. I have osteoarthritis and mobility problems but managed to complete the class comfortably." Chair Yoga participant

"I wasn't sure what to expect but from day one it has always been so enjoyable, I have met some really lovely people." Walking Club member

"For many of our chair yoga attendees it is the only physical activity that they can take part in. The walking group was a lifeline during a very challenging 2020, our members found it helped them greatly and kept them motivated when life was difficult." BDDF

"Chair yoga with Marzia is an essential hour in my hectic week. My body is constantly in pain, my muscles are solid and every movement is a struggle. When I'm doing Chair Yoga my whole body does a sigh of relief, it gets its down time." Chair Yoga participant

"I found the chair yoga really good. I have fibromyalgia so I don't exercise much.... I liked the thought of gentle exercise." Chair Yoga participant

"If these were not arranged then I would probably stay home and not see as many people nor get any exercise." Walking Club member

"The funds have also helped us promote our groups and have been able to gain new members as well as work with even more other local charities and groups. We have also been able to encourage members new and old to take up volunteering opportunities. Two of our members became 'Walk leaders' before we had to stop sessions. We have also gained over 14 new volunteers for some of our other projects due to our increased social media presence." BDDF