



# Together Fund

The Story of the Programme



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# The Together Fund

Between April 2020 and September 2023, Sport England worked with a network of Partners around the country to deliver the Together Fund (previously Tackling Inequalities Fund).

The Together Fund focused on providing access to physical activity for four priority audiences that were disproportionately impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic:

- Disabled people,
- People with long-term health conditions
- Lower socio-economic groups
- Culturally diverse communities

In funding grassroots community organisations, the Together Fund also aimed to support survival and resilience during a period of significant uncertainty.





# Learning from the Together Fund

Learning and evaluation were an integral part of the Together Fund approach.

This summary report provides an overview of some of the key themes and learnings from Renaisi's evaluation of the programme.

If you want to read more, you can access the full evaluation report [here](#)

Throughout this report, we also link to case studies and reports shared by Partners involved in the Together Fund.



# The Together Fund

## Supporting physical activity

**81** Partners supported **3,300** community organisations to deliver Together Fund activities across the country.

In total, community organisations completed over

**3,700** Together Fund projects, from horse riding sessions to chair yoga.



# Together Fund Partners

Sport England distributed the Together Fund through a network of partners. This included working with existing partners as well as establishing new relationships with others.

Partners delivering the Together Fund included:

- **Active Partnerships** – a nationwide physical activity and sport network of 43 local and independent non-profit organisations across England, who take a place-based approach.
- **National Governing Bodies** – organisations that govern and administer a specific sport on a national basis.
- **National or local charities / organisations** who also receive other Sport England funding.
- **Specialist organisations, some non-physical activity or sports-related**, who have not previously been funded by Sport England, who have links to specific target audiences.



# Delivering the Together Fund







# New approaches to funding physical activity

The Together Fund was delivered through a network of **81 Partners** around the country rather than centrally through Sport England.

This enabled Partners and community organisations to work together more closely. Partners could take time to support community organisations to develop applications or access other forms of support.

As a result, smaller grassroots organisations were able to access Sport England funding and offer physical activity – often for the first time.

*“To complete an application, we held discussion meetings with the groups to refine their project idea...The approach helped groups apply as we could build their application with them without the barrier of completing a long application form like some grants.”*

Living Sport

Find out more about the Together Fund model in pages **9–22** of our full report.



# Building connections through the Together Fund



[Read more here](#) about **Active Devon's** experiences of building links to strengthen local systems

The flexibility and autonomy provided by the Together Fund model enabled Partners to form connections with a range of local organisations.

Some Partners worked closely with local VCSE infrastructure organisations to identify and connect with community organisations.

Partners also used Together Fund funding to support and connect with local networks, building local capacity and linking physical activity to broader local priorities, e.g. around public health.

The contribution of the Together Fund to systemic working is explored in more detail in the fourth section of our full report.

# Connecting Partners around the country

During the Together Fund, Sport England and Partners came together regularly for virtual sessions, called Open Calls.

Open Calls provided opportunities for Partners to share their experiences of supporting the Together Fund and troubleshoot challenges. They also created opportunity for Partners to share live issues to Sport England.

Partners and Sport England colleagues highlighted the calls as **a key element of the Together Fund**, facilitating collaboration, sharing learning, and enabling open communication.

*“The open calls themselves were fantastic, because as somebody who had not been in the development space before now, it gave me immediate connections with active partners, and other partners within the system.”*

Partner interviewee







# Supporting community organisations

A key aim of the Together Fund was to support community organisations emerging from the pandemic. Involvement in the Together Fund had a positive impact on many community organisations around the country.

**89%** of community organisation survey respondents indicated that Together Fund had helped them offer more opportunities to be active.

**76%** indicated that it increased their confidence to deliver sport, and **74%** their ability to develop new partnerships



# The impact of Together Fund

# Engaging priority audiences

Across the 3792 Together Fund projects, community organisations expected to reach over **350,000** people.

**45%** of projects reached participants in the **most deprived areas of England**, based on Index of Multiple Deprivation data.

A high proportion of projects engaged many participants in the four priority audiences. **28.8%** of projects reported that at least **75% of their participants were from culturally diverse communities**, for example.



Find out more about the reach of the Together Fund across priority audiences in pages 36–55 of our full report





# Supporting physical activity

Across all four priority audiences, participation in Together Fund activities had a **range of positive impacts** – from increased activity levels to building stronger connections and boosting wellbeing.

**85%** of participants who completed the Together Fund participant survey indicated that participation had a **positive impact on their physical health**.

**81%** indicated that the Together Fund impacted their ability to be **physically active**.

# The Together Fund: impact across the country



Volunteer Matters: Offering activities for people seeking asylum  
**Active Suffolk**



Yo! Street Zone: Football sessions for young people in Margate  
**Active Kent**



Ancaster Day Centre: Walking Football and Nerf Battles  
**Active Lincolnshire**



# Spotlight: Engaging culturally diverse communities

Culturally diverse communities were one of the Together Fund's four priority audiences.

Offering culturally appropriate, adapted and accessible spaces were key to supporting communities to access physical activity. **Women- and girls-only classes, for example, were key for encouraging participation.**

Participants from culturally diverse communities also valued activities that were in **familiar locations** and **free of charge**.

As a result of joining Together Fund activities, participants explored new activities, became more active and built stronger social connections.



The Israac Centre: Offering activities for women from the Somali community  
**Yorkshire Sport Foundation**

Read more about the impact of Together Fund on culturally diverse communities [here](#).



# Spotlight: Offering tailored activities for Disabled people



Caxton Youth: tailored activities for Disabled young people  
**London Sport**

The Together Fund also funded projects supporting Disabled people. The activities offered encouraged greater participation in physical activity and **supported people to feel more confident and independent.**

Together Fund activities had **a particular impact on children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)**, boosting wellbeing through participation in physical activity.

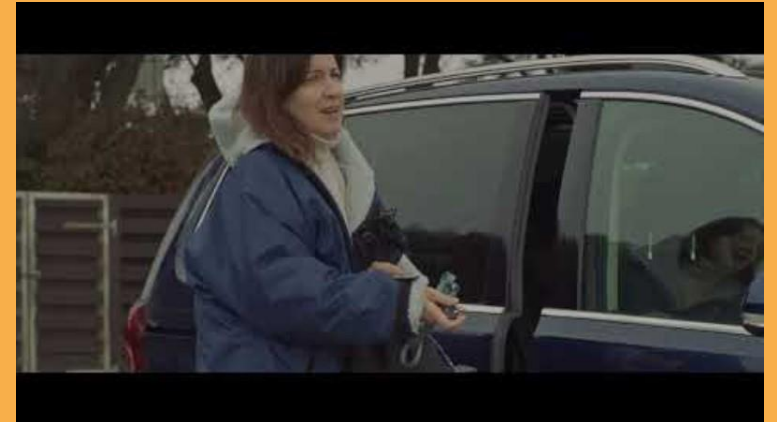
Offering **hybrid activities** (online and in-person) supported Disabled participants to continue to join activities – especially during the Covid-19 pandemic.

# Spotlight: Adapting activities for people with long-term health conditions

Activities had a significant impact on the **physical health, wellbeing, and daily life** of people with long-term health conditions.

Organisations found that **clear communication about planned activities** supported participants to feel more comfortable in joining sessions.

Activities provided a **platform for social connection** for people experiencing similar conditions. This helped to connect people following periods of self-isolation during the Covid-19 pandemic.



Chill Dorset: Sea swimming therapy for long-term health conditions  
**Active Dorset**

# Spotlight: Delivering provision for lower socio-economic groups

Participating in activities boosted **physical health, activity levels**, and **social connections** for lower socio-economic groups.

**Addressing barriers to access** was particularly important for this priority audience.

Delivering sessions in **familiar and local venues** reduced the impact of travel costs, while offering **activities free-of-charge** reduced the impact of financial constraints.



VYD CIC – Offering football sessions in Sussex.  
**Active Sussex**





# Key enablers for engagement

Our evaluation highlighted several key enablers for encouraging communities to take part in physical activity, cutting across all priority audiences:

- **Skilled and engaging instructors or coaches** who could tailor activities to participants' different needs
- **Framing physical activity as part of everyday life** in resources and delivery – challenging perceptions of sport and exercise as “not for me”.
- Bringing physical activity into **familiar and accessible settings** – e.g. mosques, libraries, community centres.

Offering **sessions free of charge** to participants.

# Key learnings and reflections

Across the Together Fund, we have learned a huge amount about supporting communities to access physical activity, funding in different ways, and fostering collaborations.

In the next section we highlight some of the key things we learned through the evaluation.



# Funding community organisations

- Partner organisations can play a **key role in supporting grassroots organisations locally**, through signposting, grant-writing support, and building connections.
- Developing **low-burden, relational application processes** can enable organisations to access national funding pots. **However, supporting organisations in this way takes considerable time and capacity – and needs to be adequately resourced.**
- To make these approaches as effective as possible, **offering longer-term funding** could enable grassroots organisations to build sustainable provision and develop their capacity.



# Fostering collaboration with Partners

- The process of **devolving investment from a national funder through intermediate partner organisations can be an effective mechanism for building trust** between funders and Partners.
- Creating **structures and spaces to enable collaboration and networking between a national funder and intermediate partners enables stronger relationships, closer coordination, shared learning and greater responsiveness to emerging need in the system.**
- More relational and devolved funding approaches will necessitate a high volume of communications, a key challenge to navigate is **identifying appropriate structures and spaces to facilitate open communication**, without causing confusion or overwhelm.

# What's next?

The Together Fund continues to have an impact locally and nationally, as Partners and Sport England build on their experiences of delivering the fund.

Sport England has recently launched the Movement Fund, a new funding programme combining both small grants and crowd funding which aims to deliver against its Uniting the Movement Strategy.

Learning from the Together Fund has supported the initial design and will continue to shape the on-going development of the new Movement Fund. More information can be found here;

<https://www.sportengland.org/funding-and-campaigns/our-funding/funding-guidance>



# Image Credits

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p5: Sport England (top), Somerset Activity and Sports Partnership (bottom)

p8: Active Devon and Phil Mingo

p12: Active Suffolk

p14: Active Lincolnshire (top), Salus Foundation (Health Exchange)

p15: Somerset Activity and Sports Partnership

p21: Sport England

p22: Sport England (top), British Racing School (British Equestrian)

p25: Sport England (top left), Canal and River Trust (top right), Active Lincolnshire (middle left), Sport England (bottom right)