Hampshire Active Health Programme Evaluation

FH Associates on behalf of Energise Me

March 2025

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Executive summary

In October 2023, Energise Me launched the Hampshire Active Health Programme. Commissioned by Hampshire County Council Public Health, and funded by the Contain Outbreak Management Fund, the programme aimed to support organisations across the Hampshire County Council area to reduce health inequalities through physical activity. Through the Hampshire Active Health Programme, Energise Me has distributed funding and support to 32 projects across Hampshire.

People who experience health inequalities are less likely to be physically active, therefore projects worked with the following target groups:

- Carers
- Older people (55+) who are physically inactive
- People above a healthy weight
- People experiencing income deprivation
- People from Black, Asian or ethnic minority communities
- People living in areas of high deprivation
- People with a disability
- People with a long term health condition

Find out more about the projects and watch our impact videos on the Energise Me website

Hampshire Active Health Programme

The programme

32 funded projects

£1.4M awarded

6 workforce development & networking events

The projects

Reached a minimum of
3,398 people

Supported delivery of over
3,440 sessions

Enabled creation of
90+ videos
to support people to get started

The projects

Alabaré - Boots On The Ground, a project for homeless young people in Andover, and homeless veterans in Gosport.

Andover Mind - A co-designed activity for mental health project in partnership with Valley Leisure in Andover.

Andover Young Carers - Providing inclusive physical activities for young carers in Andover.

Autek CIC - A co-created accessible information project.

Basingstoke & Alton Cardiac Rehabilitation Charity - A new long-term exercise project for older people in Alton.

Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council - A community exercise pilot in Basingstoke.

Coda Music and Arts Trust Ltd - A club night and dance project for disabled people in the New Forest.

Dementia Friendly Hampshire - Outdoor activities for people living with dementia and their carers in Hampshire.

Dementia-friendly Alton - Organising new activity sessions for people living with dementia and their carers in Alton.

East Hampshire District Council - Leisure centre and community interventions in East Hampshire.

Eastleigh Borough Council - Activities for children and young people with SEND, and older people or people with long-term health conditions in Eastleigh.

Educating Individuals Empowering Families - Dancing with a Difference group for disabled young people in Fareham.

Hampshire Outdoors - A family bikeability project in Gosport and Havant.

Havant Borough Council - Get Up And Go expansion for people experiencing income deprivation In Havant Borough.

Horizon Leisure - "Beat It!" project for people with long-term health conditions in Havant.

Living Well Partnership - Behaviour change project for older people above a healthy weight in Eastleigh.

Love Outdoors CIC - A co-created Find Your Things activity project in Gosport.

Love4Life - A physical activity pilot project for people with learning disabilities in Hampshire.

Motiv8 South Ltd - An after-school and holiday partnership project with Oarsome Chance for young people in Havant and Gosport.

Move Momentum - Online dance project for older people and people with disabilities or long-term health conditions in Winchester.

Off the Record South East - Weekly physical activity project for young carers in Havant.

Places Leisure - Neurodivergent friendly activities at Gosport leisure centre.

RHL (Rushmoor Healthy Living) - Small group and specialised exercise sessions in Rushmoor.

Solent Mind - A physical activity pilot project in Gosport and Eastleigh.

Sovereign Network Group - Resident wellbeing and activity project for older people in Basingstoke & New Forest.

Stormbreak - Improving the mental health of children through movement, across 13 primary schools in Fareham and Gosport.

The Source Young People's Charity - Physical activity project for disabled and neurodivergent young people in Aldershot.

Winchester Street Reach - Active youth club for young people in Winchester.

Winchester Youth Counselling - Expanding a walk and talk service for young people requiring mental health support in Winchester.

Yateley Industries for the Disabled - Physical activities for disabled people in Hart.

Youth Options - Introducing physical activity elements to the Step In, Step Up, Step Forward programme for young people within the care system.

Youth Options - After-school physical activity for prevention work in Eastleigh.

FHA, with Energise Me, Hampshire Public Health, and the funded partners, have been evaluating the different approaches to:

- Reducing health inequalities, in particular those most impacted by Covid-19
- Improving health outcomes, in particular those most impacted by Covid-19
- Increasing access to and participation in physical activity.

"I can honestly say that it has completely changed my life in so many ways, allowing me to get back to full health…and feeling so much better. My blood pressure has dropped dramatically."

- Project Participant

17% of Asian participants reported, pre-intervention, that their **physical activity was enough to raise their breathing rate**. Post-intervention, this rose to 69%.

On average, those participants who completed both pre- and post-intervention monitoring questionnaires **increased their active minutes by 18 minutes per week** from 59 to 77 minutes per week.

97% of survey respondents agreed that

"I feel more positive about physical activity since taking part in these sessions"

Children & Young People **increased their number of active days** from 8.2 in a 28 days period, to 9.4, and the **number of minutes they were active for** on each of these days (from 1.39 hours to 1.48).
Meaning that **average weekly minutes increased from 172.2 to 208.2 minutes** per week.

58 **participants with a disability** answered the question "During the past 4 weeks, on how many days were you physically active?" at the start, and the end, of the funding period.
At the start, participants were active, on average, 3.06 days in a month. At the end, this **increased to 5.01**

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Recommendations

For **funders and commissioners**, the key ingredients for investing in projects working to reduce health inequalities and/or increase access to and participation in physical activity are: **values**, **time**, **support**, and **flexibility**.

For **organisations** working to increase access to and participation in physical activity, or to reduce health inequalities through physical activity, the key ingredients are: **listening and responding**, **collaboration**, **getting the right offer**, and **place-based working**.

For both funders and commissioners, and funded partners, some key principles to ensure your **monitoring, evaluation, and learning** is as useful as possible are: that is is **co-designed**, **proportionate**, **balanced**, and that it **takes time**.

Values

Time

Support

Flexibility

Listening and responding

Collaboration

Getting the right offer

Place-based working

Co-designed

Proportionate

Balanced

Time

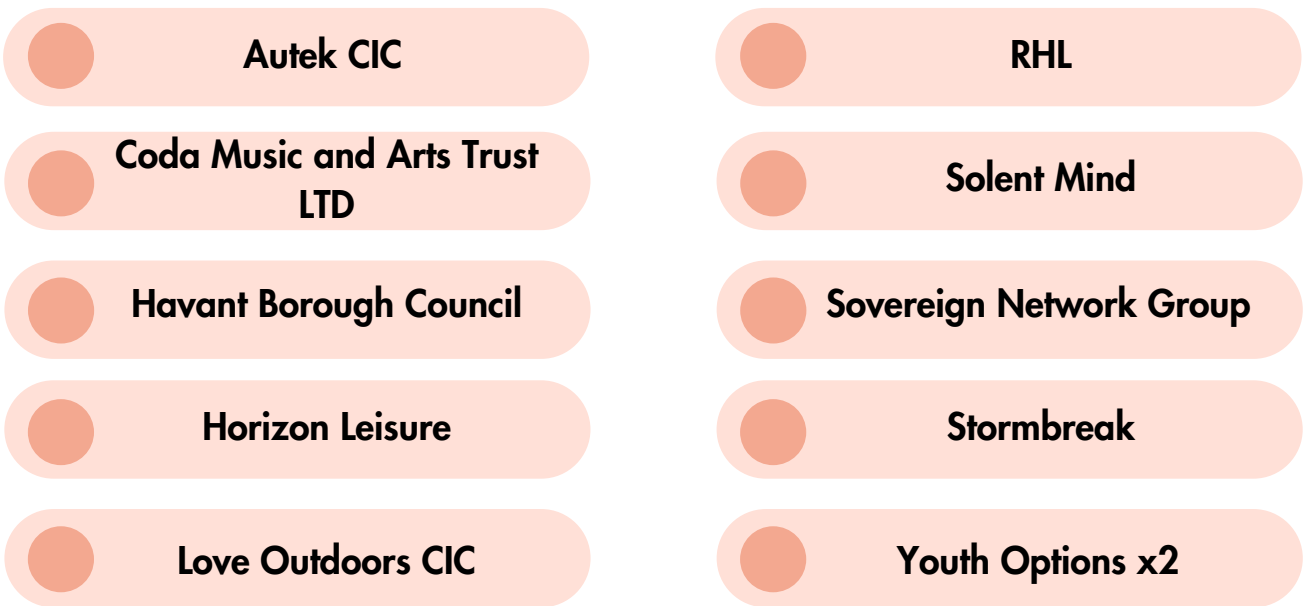Section 1: Introducing the evaluation

Evaluation scope

In December 2023, FH Associates (FHA) were commissioned by Energise Me to support the evaluation of the programme. Recognising the short programme timescales, and Energise Me's values-led approach to funding, a methodology built on gathering a balance of quantitative and qualitative data was designed. Utilising a Realist approach, FHA worked collaboratively with Energise Me and a range of funded partners to capture the impacts, and **how** and **why** they were emerging.

In collaboration with FHA, Energise Me and Hampshire Public Health took an active role in shaping and participating in the evaluation. It was agreed that the evaluation should explore:

- **Key demographic, activity, and attitudinal monitoring data provided by funded partners**
- **How, why, and for whom funded partners were able to reduce health inequalities through physical activity**
- **How, why, and for whom collaboration occurred across the funded partners and wider system**
- **How, why, and for whom workforce development manifested itself across the programme**
- **Key learnings and reflections from Energise Me for wider system learning.**

This involved the synthesising of data across all 32 projects with a **deep dive into 10 focus projects**, chosen to give a sample across our geography, target audiences, and investment values:

Autek CIC	RHL
Coda Music and Arts Trust LTD	Solent Mind
Havant Borough Council	Sovereign Network Group
Horizon Leisure	Stormbreak
Love Outdoors CIC	Youth Options x2

Our Three Methodological Pillars

To understand the impact of the Hampshire Active Health Programme, we developed a set of methods underpinned by the following three pillars striking the balance between **qualitative** and **quantitative** data.

1: Quantitative monitoring data captured from all 32 funded partners.
2: Quantitative and qualitative data captured through a survey exploring the targeted reduction of health inequalities through physical activity.
3: Qualitative depth captured through rich How and Why conversations and Stories of Change.

Our Evaluation Framework

This evaluation framework draws upon the implementation of Realist Evaluation (Pawson and Tilley, 1997). Realist evaluation is becoming routinely used within public health, health, and social care evaluations, and holds significant promise in exploring how and why programmes work to produce certain outcomes.
Realist evaluation holds potential as it takes into consideration the importance of 'context'. Realist evaluation gets to the bottom of how people (stakeholders, system leaders, system architects and communities) respond towards the resources provided in a programme to establish 'what works for whom, in what circumstances and why'. This is significant, as this understanding can support learning, improvement, and strategic direction towards sustainability.

Methodology

Monitoring data

Funded partners were tasked with collecting and reporting on key monitoring metrics for their projects. This was completed at regular intervals capturing demographic information such as age, ethnicity and postcode. Data was also collected that captured participants activity levels, their intensity levels and confidence in being physically active. Some projects have also provided additional data such as blood pressure or BMI measurements of their participants.

Survey

A combination of qualitative and quantitative questions. This survey was designed to provide a greater depth of data linked to Learning focus area: Reducing inequalities through physical activity and the related hypotheses. This survey was distributed to all 32 funded partners for wider dissemination to project participants.

How and Why Conversations

Discussions (similar to interviews or focus groups) with individuals or small groups to share and delve into identified hypotheses.
These conversations took place with project participants, project deliverers and wider stakeholders. As part of the workforce development opportunities, Energise Me staff and all funded partners were given the opportunity to learn how to conduct how and why conversations.

Stories of Change

A rich qualitative approach that brings to life the key stories and impacts that emerge from projects. The story of change approach draws upon all of the data emerging from the how and why conversations to create a composite story.
Here, we developed a composite story for each learning focus area, capturing how and why the programme led to changes (or not) in people's journeys.

Data outputs

Through the outlined data collection methods, qualitative and quantitative data has been collected from over 2,000 people: project participants, staff, volunteers, and the programme delivery team.

Of the 1,944 pre-intervention baseline questionnaires completed, only 437 of these participants also completed post-intervention questionnaires. In some cases, a language barrier posed a challenge to data collection. In others, participants were uncomfortable with the questions being asked, or the timing or method. Funded partners fed back that it was harder to get participants to complete the post-intervention questionnaires. Reasons included: organisational capability and capacity, "survey fatigue" from organisations and participants, and feeling that post-intervention questionnaires fit less organically into delivery timelines.
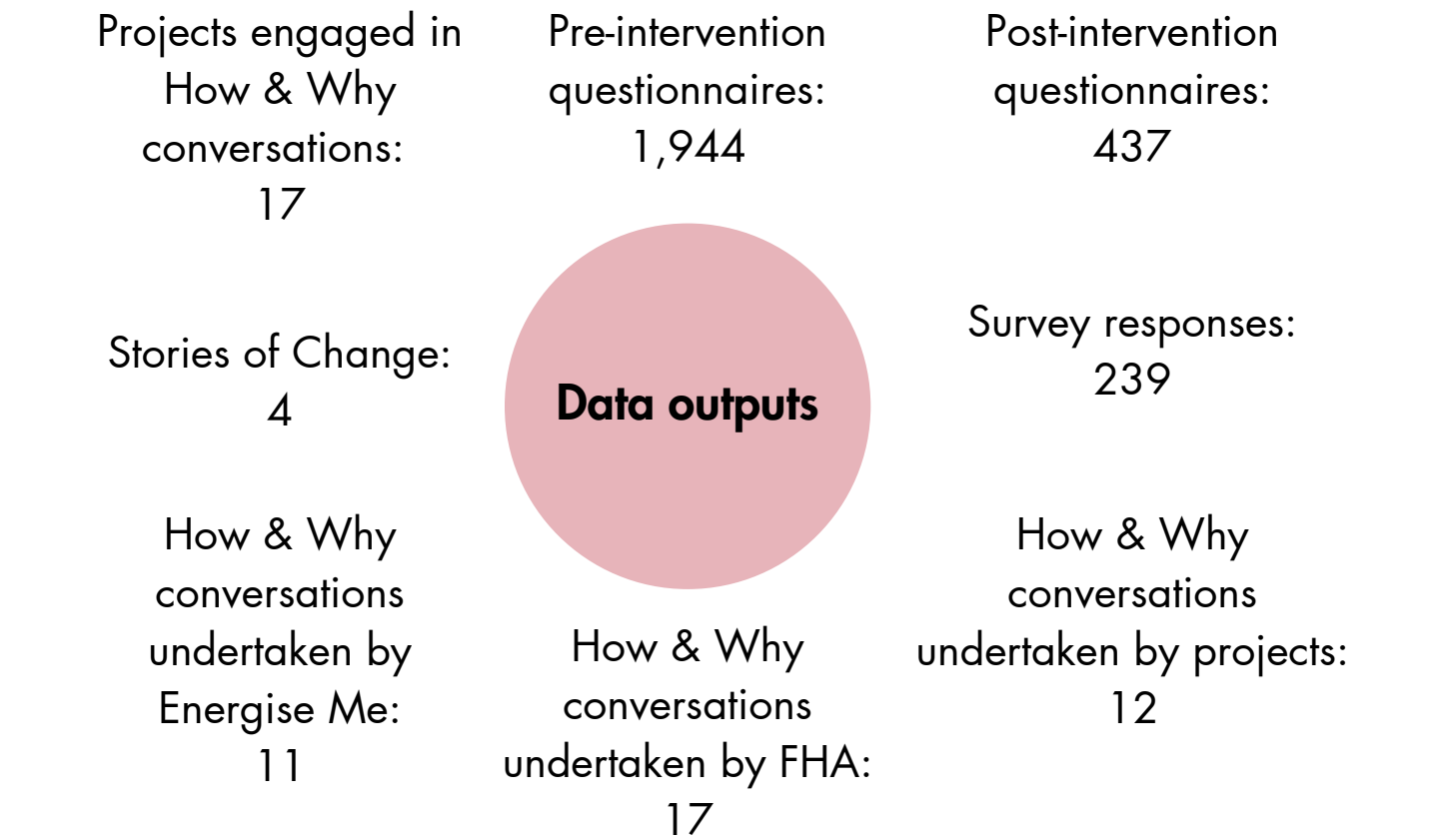
Learning focus areas

In collaboration with Energise Me and Hampshire Public Health, FHA identified four learning focus areas to guide the evaluation, each with a set of hypotheses to capture and test our assumptions and beliefs. The learning focus areas are:
- Reducing health inequalities through physical activity
- Workforce development
- Collaboration
- Energise Me and wider system learning

See **Section 3: Learning focus areas** for more.

In this section of the report we present the following:

- Key headlines from the **monitoring data** reported by the 32 projects
- Key headlines from the **survey** that was promoted across all 32 projects
- A deeper dive into the 10 identified focus projects exploring (through **how and why conversations and survey data)** the learning focus areas of interest and their respective hypotheses to capture the how and the why informing change
- In addition to the 10 focus projects, 7 further funded partners undertook **how and why conversations**, either by themselves, or in partnership with Energise Me.

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Projects engaged in How & Why conversations:
17

Pre-intervention questionnaires:
1,944

Post-intervention questionnaires:
437

Stories of Change:
4

Data outputs

Survey responses:
239

How & Why conversations undertaken by Energise Me:
11

How & Why conversations undertaken by FHA:
17

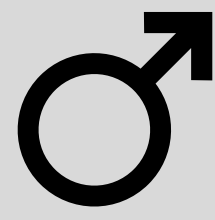How & Why conversations undertaken by projects:
12

Section 2: Findings
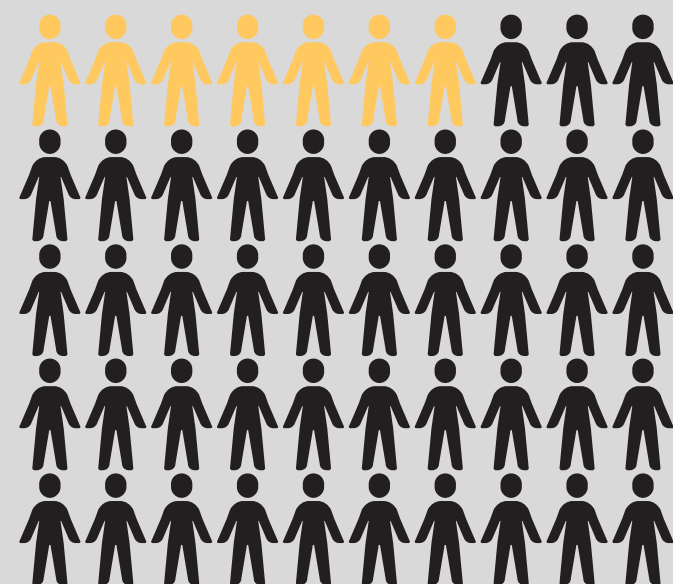
Participant reach

1,944 people completed pre-intervention monitoring

♀ 68.8% ♂ 31%

14% of participants with a postcode ranked IMD 1-3.

Age of participants (Percentage)

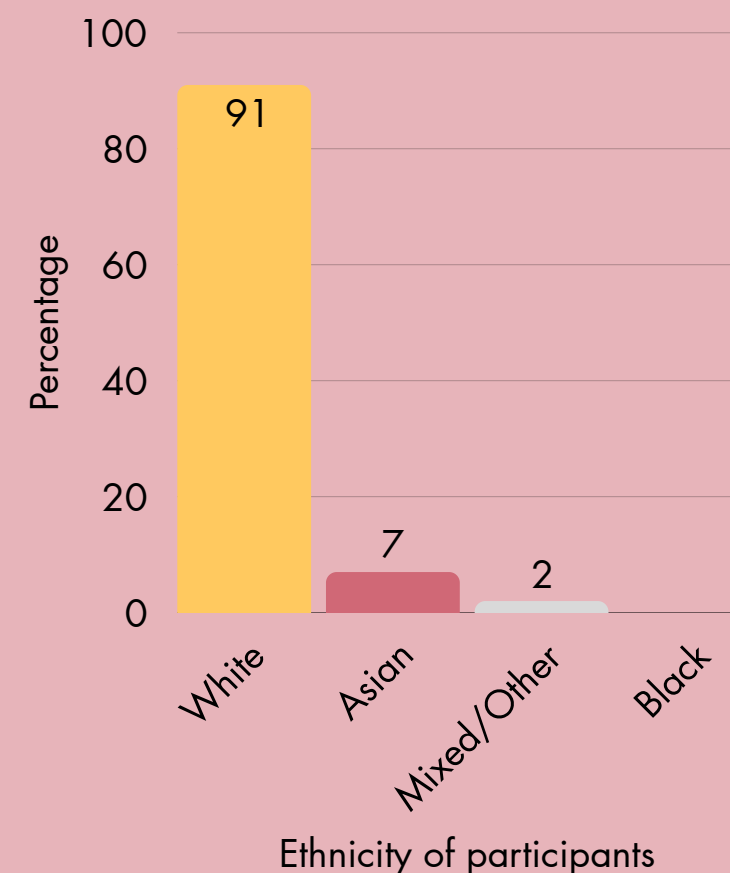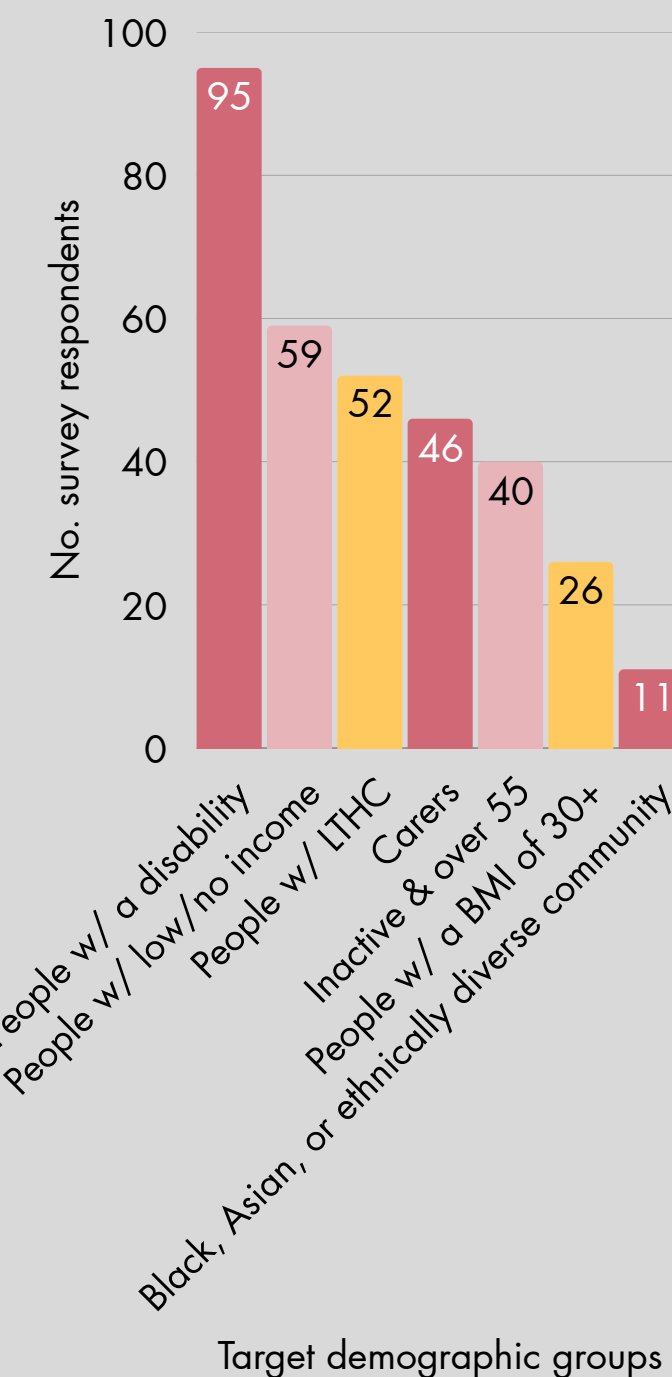| Age	Percentage
0-14	23
15-24	10
25-34	6
35-44	11
45-54	10
55-64	16
65-74	11
75+	13
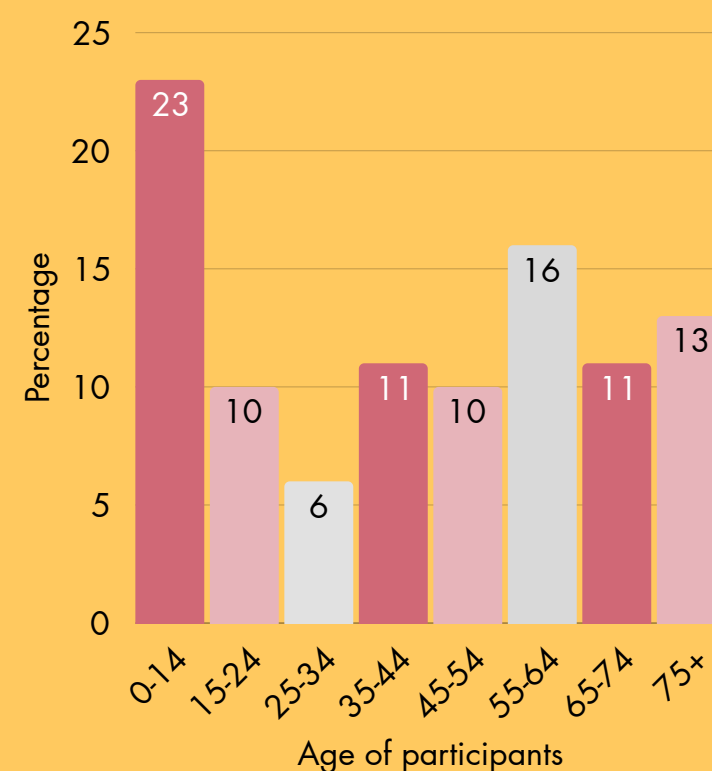
Sessions run by funded partners ranged from activities for children and young people to older adult exercise classes.

Ethnicity of participants (Percentage)

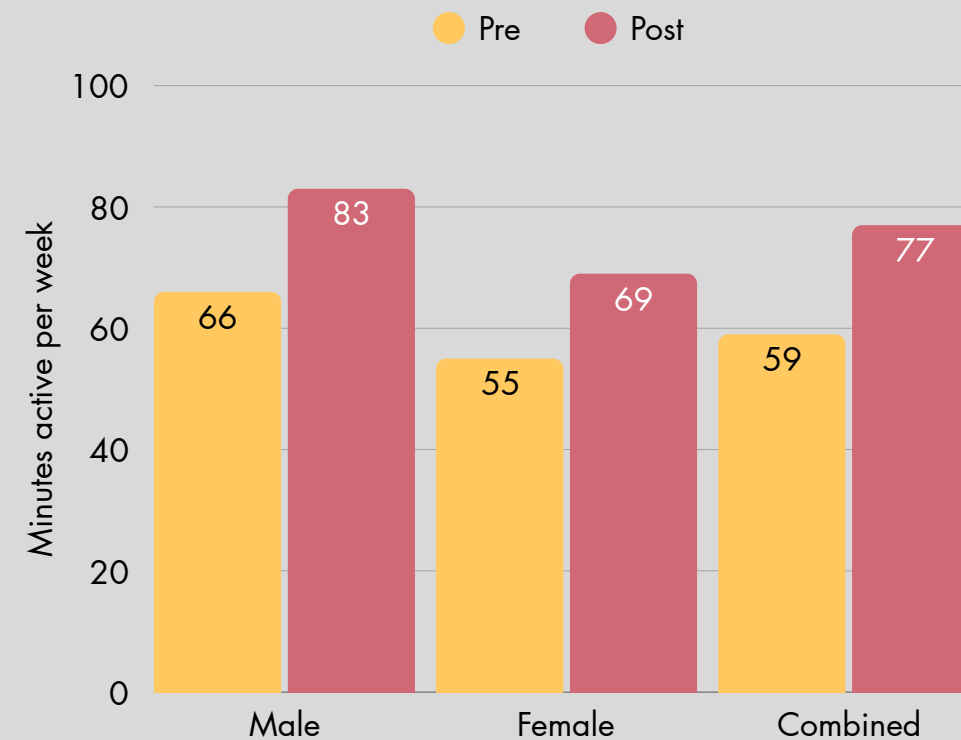| Ethnicity	Percentage
White	91
Asian	7
Mixed/Other	2
Black	

91% of participants identified as White with 9% of participants being from from Black, Asian or ethnic minority communities. This reflects the ethnic make up of Hampshire according to data from the 2021 Census where **92%** of the population are White and **3.8%** are Asian.

Target demographic groups (No. survey respondents)

Target demographic group	No. survey respondents
People w/ a disability	95
People w/ low/no income	59
People w/ LTHC	52
Carers	46
Inactive & over 55	40
People w/ a BMI of 30+	26
Black, Asian, or ethnically diverse community	11

Activity data

Participant activity levels (minutes per week) by sex

Pre ● Post

Minutes active per week

	Pre	Post
Male	66	83
Female	55	69
Combined	59	77

On average, participants increased their activity levels by **18 minutes per week**.

Male participants saw an increase of **17 minutes per week**; female participants an increase of **14 minutes per week**.

Participant activity levels (minutes per week) by ethnicity

Pre ● Post

Minutes active per week

	Pre	Post
White	58	84
Asian	34	46
Mixed/other	68	79
Black	75	210
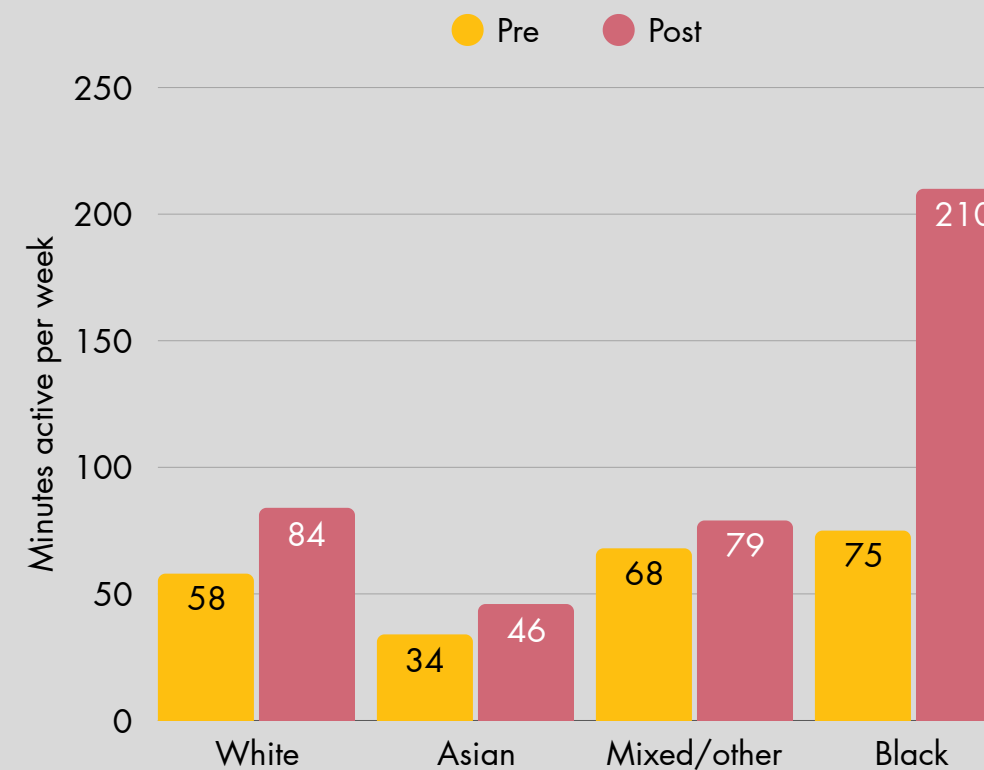
All ethnic groups saw an increase in the number of minutes they were active per week. **Black** participants saw the greatest increase, **75** minutes pre to **210** minutes post, however this is from a much smaller sample (**4 participants**) compared to the other ethnicities.

As a means of assessing the intensity of their activity, participants were asked "**Was the effort you put into the activity usually enough to raise your breathing rate?**" and "**Was the effort you put into the activity usually enough to make you sweat or out of breath?**"

Feedback from funded partners noted that some participants found these difficult or off-putting questions. However, the data shows **an increase in the percentage of participants taking part in physical activity that raised their breathing rate across all ethnicities**.

Asian participants showed the lowest percentage of those who said "yes" to their activity usually being enough to raise their breathing rate, just **17%** pre-intervention. Post-intervention this was **69%**.

Asian participants consistently had the lowest pre-intervention scores related to active minutes and intensity, highlighting the need for further interventions and further data collection.

97% of survey respondents agreed that

"I feel more positive about physical activity since taking part in these sessions"

"It's helped me be more confident and given me a sense of confidence and belonging."
            - Project Participant

"It has helped me be more active and up on my feet."
            - Project Participant

The survey asked participants how they felt as part of attending sessions.

From 235 responses:

- **70%** felt motivated to be active
- **68%** felt engaged in the sessions
- **65%** felt confident to be active
- **61%** felt listened to
- **56%** felt valued
- **55%** felt trusted
- **55%** said that their needs were understood
- **48%** said that they felt connected to the organisation running the sessions
- **2%** of respondents said they lacked the confidence to be active.

The survey asked participants how the sessions helped them continue to be physically active.

From 236 responses:

- **67%** of people said it gave them more confidence
- **66%** of people said it gave them a group of people to be active with
- **58%** of people said it made them aware of other activities they could take part in
- **56%** of people said it improved their mental health
- **55%** of people said it improved their physical health
- **1%** of people said it hasn't really helped

The monitoring data captured participants' confidence in their ability to take part in physical activity, on a scale from 1 (being the least confident) to 10 (being the most confident).
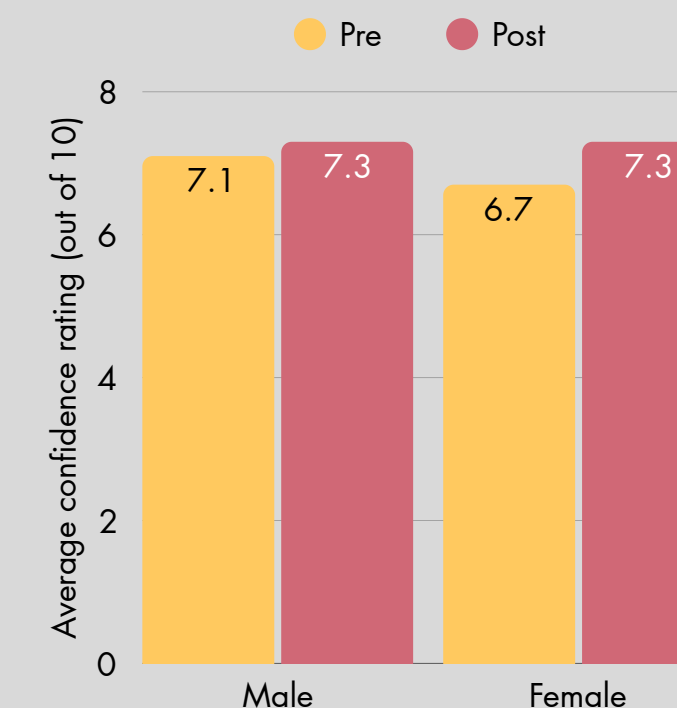
On average, there was a 0.5 increase in confidence (from 6.8 to 7.3) from the sample of all participants.

Participant group: Carers

Three projects reached **176 young carers**.

Andover Young Carers noted that the existing trusted relationships between young people and staff helped them to feel safe to try something new. **Off the Record** highlighted that the improved staff knowledge, and the relationships built with other organisations throughout the funded period will allow them to include more physical activity in their sessions, and have more physical activity conversations with young carers moving forward, sustaining some of the impact gained by the funding.

- Andover Young Carers: 101 participants
- East Hants District Council: 15 participants
- Off the Record: 60 participants

Dementia Friendly Hampshire reached 51 family carers, trialling walking, cycling, and gardening sessions for people with dementia and their carers.

Dementia Friendly Alton have now included a dance class for carers in their programming, to ensure that family carers can get some respite, whilst participating in physical activity together.

"One of our carers used to have a very physical outdoor job. He had to leave work early to care for his wife. He enjoys being outside, and finds getting involved with hard physical work, especially when he can plug himself into music, gives him some respite from his caring role and he really benefits from the opportunity to get stuck into projects within our garden. He has helped us create new lavender and herb beds in the walled garden, has cleared the weeds from the courtyard and is now relaying the path in the walled garden making it more accessible. He derives a great satisfaction in making a real difference within the garden."

Dementia Friendly Hampshire

"C has participated regularly in [the project] and shown great enthusiasm to learn new skills on each occasion, picking up skills quickly, particularly in ice skating. C has developed confidence quickly and embraced the opportunities whilst also having fun. C had not regularly had the opportunity to attend activities such as those provided and has limited opportunity due to family circumstances. The activities provided have given C a taste of various sporting/physical possibilities and encouraged a continued interest in some elements for physical activity in general, highlighting a particular ability with regards to fitness."

Off the Record

Participant group: Disabled people

Four funded projects worked with **156 disabled people**:
- Coda: 57
- EIEF: 24
- Love4Life: 41
- Yateley Industries: 34

In addition, **Autek CIC** worked with their staff – many with lived experience of disability and/or neurodivergence – and partner organisations to produce videos that will support accessibility for disabled and neurodivergent people.

Places Leisure Gosport employed an Inclusion Specialist and developed additions to their offers to support neurodiverse families to be active at the leisure centre.

EIEF found that, on average, their participants exercised less than once per week before they joined the funded sessions, but by the end of the project, this had risen to an average of 1.8 times a week. They also found that 58% of participants said that they didn't enjoy exercise at the start. By the end 100% agreed that they enjoyed exercise.

Love 4 Life's members identified that, although many of them enjoyed exercise, there was a lack of knowledge from the local workforce in how to best support learning disabled adults in a gym or exercise class. They have created instructional videos for the local workforce, and have launched a training programme to educate physical activity providers in how best to welcome and support them in gyms and physical activity settings.

"I saw pictures of others cycling and thought if they can, I can. My mum would be so proud."
      - Project Participant

"It's been scary to get back to the water, but I am pleased I did. It has shown me that I am strong and I can do more things if I give them a go."
      - Project Participant

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Participant group: Children & young people

7 of the funded partners supported **1,319 children and young people**:
- Andover Young Carers: 101
- Motiv8 South & Oarsome Chance: 80
- Off the Record: 60
- The Source: 51
- Stormbreak: 498
- Winchester Youth Counselling: 22
- Youth Options: 507

The number of young people with increased opportunity to participate in physical activity is much higher than the 1,319 recorded, as a further 7 projects included both adults and young people.

Data collection was particularly difficult for leisure centre-based projects, as their registration systems do not easily allow for this.

It was clear that those organisations which had or were able to build strong relationships with young people found greater participation, stronger engagement, and easier data collection.

Motiv8 and Oarsome Chance found that ~33% of their participants were neurodivergent. **Winchester Youth Counselling** found that 91% of their Walk and Talk clients were neurodivergent, a higher rate of prevalence than clients of traditional 1:1 counselling. **The Source** focused their project on supporting neurodivergent young people, and identified some specific challenges that neurodivergent young people face in a physical activity setting: sensory challenges, such as big group sizes and noisy environments; feeling anxious, for example when meeting new people, going to new places, or being unsure of the rules; a lack of self-confidence; previous negative experiences of sport and physical activity.

Both **Motiv8** and **The Sourc**e, as well as other projects, highlighted the importance of staff training, a welcoming atmosphere, 1:1 time for neurodivergent or anxious participants, and small group sizes.

"I am more active now and realised I am better at sports than I thought I am."

        - Project Participant

"They listened to me and didn't judge."

        - Project Participant

Participant group: Health conditions

13 funded projects supported **more than 800 people living with a range of health conditions**: including 4 supporting people with mental illness and poor mental health; 3 supporting people with progressive conditions such as Alzheimer's, dementia, and Parkinson's.

- Alabaré
- Andover Mind & Valley Leisure
- Basingstoke & Alton Cardiac Rehab
- Dementia-friendly Alton
- Dementia Friendly Hampshire
- East Hants District Council
- Eastleigh Borough Council
- Havant Borough Council
- Horizon Leisure
- Living Well Practice
- RHL (Rushmoor Healthy Living)
- Solent Mind
- Winchester Youth Counselling

Participants reported health conditions such as hypertension, cardiovascular disease, and diabetes. 39% of the 595 over 16s who registered to take part in **Havant Borough Council**'s Get Up and Go sessions reported having two or more health conditions. 87% of the 127 people joining one of **RHL**'s classes reported having one or more health condition.

"My weight has reduced significantly, and I feel much healthier. Before, I relied on takeaway food and ready meals, but now I prepare and cook my own meals. I am also more physically active and eager to take on new challenges."
- Project Participant

"I love coming every week. I look forward [to Yoga]. I've lived in the UK for 10-years but I feel like I don't have any friends around me and this [Yoga] is the only place I feel comfortable enough to share."
- Project Participant

24 people signed up to **Basingstoke & Alton Cardiac Rehab Charity**'s project, with 50% completing a 20-week programme of physical activity at time of reporting. Of those who completed the 20-week cardiovascular disease prevention programme, 75% recorded an improved VO2 score.

It was difficult for participants with dementia to complete monitoring data, however **Dementia-friendly Alton** recorded data from a sample of participants. 68.8% of this sample recorded increased overall wellbeing over the project (using WEMWBS).

East Hants District Council found that through delivering their project, Active Parkinson's memberships relative to the district population have increased from 7.3% in April 2024 to 19.7% in March 2025, indicating that more people with Parkinson's are taking part in physical activity.

Horizon's Beat It project saw 86% of their participants reduce both systolic and diastolic blood pressure following a six-week activity and educational intervention. Participants indicated that the supportive environment, friendly staff, and balance of education and exercise allowed them to feel at ease, and empowered to take control of their own lifestyle changes to reduce blood pressure.

RHL noted that anxiety related to their health condition meant that most participants would not take part in exercise without specialist classes. 84% of responding participants said that taking part in the sessions allowed them to be more physically active, with 64% saying it had improved or helped them manage their physical health.

Winchester Youth Counselling found that the nature of longer-term open ended counselling means that the inclusion of walk and talk sessions can help many young people, particularly those who are neurodivergent, better engage in and see positive impacts from their counselling; but direct impacts from the walking itself are harder to measure. They used two tools: CORE (Clinical Outcomes in Routine Evaluation) and WEMWBS (Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale) to measure impact. All participants who had a start, intermediate, and end YP-CORE score showed no or positive change. When comparing first to most recent WEMWBS, all but one participant showed no or positive change – some clients were still active at time of data collection.

Section 3: Learning focus areas

Understand your local context and listen to your audience

As the funded organisation, when you take time to understand your local context, and listen to your audience, this means that you can build stronger relationships with participants, because they trust you, and see you responding to their needs. When participants have good relationships with staff, they attend more regularly, achieve better outcomes, and data collection is easier.

As the commissioner, if you can allow a long lead-in time for all funded projects to build on their understanding of the local context, and to undertake consultation activity, this can lead to stronger projects. See learning focus area: Energise Me and system learning for more.

Build bridges between deliverers and beneficiaries

As well as building relationships with the people you want to reach, you might need to build relationships with other organisations. Or you might need to help physical activity providers build relationships with individuals. Establishing yourself as a trusted partner can build bridges in a place, and increase activity options for people.

When commissioners have power or perceived power, they can use this to support organisations in a place to build connection with one another. See learning focus area: collaboration for more.

Build on the assets that exist in a place

Using the assets that already exist in a place can help local people to engage in and benefit from physical activity. And further adds to your understanding of the local context. This can also support longer-term sustainability or behaviour change, by supporting participants to use the assets in their local place.

Commissioners can support this by sharing insight and learning across the system, and by supporting funded organisations to build skills in asset-based community development. See other learning focus areas for more.

Tailor physical activity to meet people's needs

Tailoring the physical activity offer to meet people's needs, means that they feel understood, and can grow in confidence to be independently active. For some people, being with others they see as "like them" can help them build social networks which support behaviour change.

When commissioners encourage flexibility from funded partners in how they meet people's needs, and share learning and insight across the system, more projects will meet the needs of individuals, meaning people may be more likely to take up the physical activity opportunity.

Understand your local context and listen to your audience

"They did not judge and were supportive. They listened to my limitations whilst suggesting some activities that might help with those particular issues which meant I felt important to then as an individual". [Survey respondent]

"We listened a lot to communities and responded … this is the gateway for building the trust …. Putting ourselves into the community is key so we can respond". [Project deliverer]

Build bridges between deliverers and beneficiaries

"It's a challenge when the many of the people we are trying to influence don't always have faith in us an organisation, so we have to work hard to rebuild trust and relations". [Project deliverer]

Build on the assets that exist in a place

"People neglect what's in their own place and they need the value placed on those assets; we help people get into these venues and they realise that things they were apprehensive about to think they should. We are passionate about our place and want to take people to the places they wouldn't usually go". [How and why focus group]

"I felt confident to give it a try. I liked that it was in the local community venue, and not a big gym". [Project participant]

Tailor physical activity to meet people's needs

"I have made friends as a result of the environment we are in. I like the fact that people would talk positively about their experiences which made me want to; we now go out for dinner A lot of people are on the same level and not intimidating". [Project participant]

"It's full of like minded people; I have enjoyed the knowledge and how it's been simplified".
"I have enjoyed the shared knowledge and how we are all coming together and sharing experiences". [Project participant]

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Collaborate early and with enthusiasm

When commissioners encourage and facilitate early collaboration, and funded partners engage in this with enthusiasm, it means funded partners can better respond to what is needed in place and who they can draw upon for support because early collaboration opportunities allow for relationships to grow and learning to be shared before work commences. When funded partners are open to learning from one another, and from their communities, they are able to act and adapt, which can bring communities closer to the activity.

Facilitate a space for collaboration (formally or informally)

When commissioners and funders, who have the connections and partnerships to link organisations together, facilitate effective collaboration, those organisations can share learning, build networks, and enhance their own work. This can happen formally, at organised networking events, or informally, via conversation and personal introductions. Organisations value the role that funders and commissioners can play in this process, particularly when it supports them to address capacity challenges.

Build relationships across organisations

Collaboration often occurs between individuals. When partnerships are built between multiple people, or at an organisational level, this can foster a longer-term and more sustainable impact. When cross-organisational collaboration is built on shared understanding, respect, and shared objectives, it can pave the way for participant signposting, shared resources, more inclusive provision, and can build capacity within the system.

Work with trusted institutions and people in a place

Where there are trusted institutions or people in a place, funded organisations can work with them, and lean on their networks and access to communities. These trusted institutions and people can help to design, promote, and deliver physical activity projects for communities who wouldn't otherwise engage. This might be a school, GP surgery, or trusted youth worker, for example.

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Collaborate early and with enthusiasm

"By networking with those other organisations, taking some emails, phone numbers and knowing what we could signpost young people to as well was really helpful" [Project deliverer]

Facilitate a space for collaboration (formally or informally)

"One of the most valuable elements of this journey has been the connections and relationships that I've developed with others. Learning from their projects has shaped my work now and in the future" [Project deliverer]

Build relationships across organisations

"[We reached] an understanding that we have the same goals but are coming at them from perhaps different angles, and it's been interesting to see how the councillors have gone, 'Oh, you know, that's one of our strategic aims as well.' There have been key individuals within the Council who have then set up other meetings" [Project deliverer]

Work with trusted institutions and people in a place

"Been into schools to discuss what the offer is at the leisure centre. Asked for feedback for them about what they would need to ensure it is a safe space for them – this came from feedback from schools that a lot of people don't know who the leisure centre are and what they do" [Project deliverer]

Tailor training and support to meet people's needs

As the funder or commissioner, providing training and development opportunities to funded partners can be a great way to help them build their skills and their networks, and to enhance partners' ability to promote and implement the projects that are being funded. A key challenge for funded partners attending workforce development opportunities is the cost and time of travel and attendance, and in some cases arranging cover. Taking time to understand the challenges and skills gaps that exist for funded partners, and ensuring that the training is tailored to meet the needs of the people and organisations attending is important in motivating people to attend. Peer-led training and support can also be effective.

Provide training that has real-world application

Training facilitated by programme commissioners, or booked by funded partners, is more effective when it has practical, real-world applications. When training is designed that supports participants to implement the learning in their real-world practice, it can help funded partners to develop innovative projects, improve operational efficiency, and motivate staff and participants.

Utilise training for networking

Funded organisations attending workforce development opportunities should make the most of the chance to network with other organisations, and share knowledge and experiences.

As the commissioner, you should allow time in the agenda for networking and peer-to-peer support, to enrich the learning experience, and build on collaboration. See learning focus area: collaboration for more.

Grow a culture of transparency and feedback

Transparency and honest feedback is important for funded partners to build better projects that meet the needs of the community and the funder, and allows commissioners to build better programmes and processes. A 'safe space' that fosters continuous improvement cycles, and allows people to discuss what works and what doesn't, without fear of negative consequences, starts with relationship building, and shared aims.

Tailor training and support to meet people's needs

"If there was to be training again, more catered opportunities linked to projects' specific needs could be considered". [Project deliverer]

Provide training that has real-world application

"Some ideas from the training I've attended filtered into the design of the project. Elements such as photo and mood board activities from the community engagement session workshop have shaped the plans for my project". [Project deliverer]

Utilise training for networking

"The space that the training opportunities have provided to work with other projects has been really beneficial. In some instances, this opportunity to meet with other projects has been more beneficial than the training itself". [Project deliverer]

"Loved them all [the learning events] mainly because of the networking. The substance of training was trying to get people on the same page but not the purpose [of the funded organisation] for investing half a day of time to training". [Project deliverer]

Grow a culture of transparency and feedback

"Creating a safe space for honest feedback allows organisations to understand the real impact of their interventions without fear of negative consequences". [Project deliverer]

Take a relational and values-led approach to funding

As the funder or commissioner, when you take a relational and values-led approach to awarding funding, this can lead to better quality applications (with fewer ineligible applicants), and challenges can be spotted sooner, because there is transparency between funder and funded partner. It can support the development of a system network to share learning. Having shared values and purpose between funder and funded partner can lead to strong relationships and shared learning.

Allow sufficient time for change

When sufficient time is built in to a funding programme, it allows for relationship building, and for funded projects to bring in additional capacity when needed. It allows for different phases to run sequentially, rather than concurrently (for example workforce development can happen prior to delivery of the funded project). More time also means that the development of a system network can happen organically, at the pace funded partners are ready for.

Funders and funded partners need to find a balance between flexibility in timescales, to respond to external factors, and consistency, to avoid knock-on impacts on other projects. Strong relationships and shared understanding can help with this.

Build relationships across organisations

As the funder or commissioner, when you build relationships with both strategic leads, and operational staff at an organisation, it can lead to a better understanding of the strengths and challenges experienced by that organisation. As a result, you can better tailor workforce development opportunities, ensure consistent messaging, and shared learning between different levels of the system.

See learning focus area: Collaboration for more.

Build capacity and capability to evaluate

Funders and commissioners should support their own staff, and staff at funded partner organisations to build their capacity and capability to undertake measurement, evaluation, and learning (MEL). This could be through workforce development, funding, or peer support. When we undertake how and why conversations as a part of MEL, we have a common language to understand an evaluative approach and develop deeper learning about what works. When funded partners prioritise their own MEL, it can build sustainability and support future funding bids, as well as improving delivery.

MEL should be proportionate and in place from the start. For funded partners who have strong capacity and capability to undertake MEL, it is good to be flexible, and avoid duplication or over-surveying participants. For funded partners who have less capacity, funders may need to be more prescriptive in the data they request.

Take a relational and values-led approach to funding

"We wanted to foster collaboration between applicants with a view…..the assumption that longer term, if we can create those connections, and it will have longer reaching benefits after the funded workforce development. If we're building capacity in the workforce, training skills, getting people to think differently about workforce, that's going to have longevity". [Programme Team]

Allow sufficient time for change

"It was almost an unintentional, unintended outcome from the very first [CPD] session - they're actually having a networking session at the end meant that people could ask questions and get answers to questions that weren't necessarily related to that topic". [Programme Team]

Build relationships across organisations

"I'd say that in general there was a lot of desire to attend the [workforce and collaboration] sessions ….There was an organisation who said that they don't need the workforce development opportunities. They're an expert in the field and that's why they've been selected for the funding. And so therefore they didn't need any workforce development". [Programme Team]

Build capacity and capability to evaluate

"[It was a] tricky thing for us to be able to get the information we want from the project. So even though we have repeatedly said don't tell us a list of what you've done, tell us what worked and why it worked, we still quite often get just a reported list…of we did this and 10 people came and then we did that. OK but why? Why did you do that? It's been really challenging". [Programme Team]

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Section 4: Recommendations

Recommendations: Funders and commissioners

For funders and commissioners, the key ingredients for investing in projects working to reduce health inequalities and/or increase access to and participation in physical activity are: **values**, **time**, **support**, and **flexibility**.

Values
Taking a values-led approach to funding means deciding *how* you want to work, and role-modelling this way of working. For example, if you want to be a relational funder, you need to build in the right time, support, and flexibility to build relationships and projects that meet the needs of the organisations and the participants. If transparency is an important value to you, you can role model this in communications with applicants and funded projects: be clear in your criteria, let people know when things change or go wrong, and what you have learned from this.

Time
In order to build relationships, build capability and capacity in the workforce, co-design robust projects, and allow for place and audience understanding, funding programmes need to run for longer than 12 months. We recommend a minimum of 3 to 6 months after award notification, to enable a minimum of 12 months of delivery.

Funders and commissioners need to have quick and simple processes for application, and for awarding the funding.

Support
Funders and commissioners should facilitate networking and collaboration opportunities, prior to and during the funding cycle. This helps avoid duplication, encourages relationship building, and lays the foundations for a system network to share learning.

Funders and commissioners should also build workforce development opportunities into the funding cycle. These should be tailored and practical, based on insight from the applying organisations. Funders should be explicit about the time and cost implications for funded partners attending these opportunities, and should be prepared to cover the true cost of attendance through award budgets. Some organisations will need support to understand and build an award budget that includes attendance at workforce development events.

Flexibility
Funders and commissioners should recognise that organisations operating in a place, particularly those who have taken the time to build strong relationships with their participants, are the experts in their own work. They should be trusted to choose, and adapt, their projects to best meet the needs of their participants.

Values

Time

Support

Flexibility

Recommendations: Funded partners

For organisations working to increase access to and participation in physical activity, or to reduce health inequalities through physical activity, the key ingredients are: **listening and responding**, **collaboration**, **getting the right offer**, and **place-based working**.

Listening and responding
For funded partners, one of the most important things you can do is take the time to listen to, and act on, the voices of your participants. There are many ways to do this, and it isn't 'one size fits all.'

It is also important to listen to and involve your delivery staff in shaping project plans and funding bids - this helps ensure that they are realistically deliverable, and that you have buy-in at all levels of your organisation.

Collaboration
Building partnerships and collaborations in your place, and across the system, helps to share learning, understand your place, and improve the experience of participants. This is aided when organisations engage with enthusiasm and curiosity, and when time is taken to develop a shared understanding.

Getting the right offer
When funded organisations listen and respond to their participants, they can build an offer that is tailored to meet their needs. Many participants like to be able to try new activities, a variety of activities, and build a social network with people "like them" - but this isn't true for everyone.

It can be tempting to want to provide something for everyone, but it's okay to be specific in who your offer is for. This also allows you to build an inclusive or adaptive offer that meets people's needs.

Place-based working
Funded organisations working in a place should identify the assets that exist in that place: the people, organisations, and places that can help you to design, promote, and deliver physical activity projects for communities. Try to identify who the 'gate-openers' are, and who will help you to reach the right audiences.

Listening and responding

Collaboration

Getting the right offer

Place-based working

Recommendations: Evaluation

For both funders and commissioners, and funded partners, some key principles to ensure your monitoring, evaluation, and learning is as useful as possible are: that is is **co-designed**, **proportionate**, **balanced**, and that it take**s time**.

Co-designed
When funders and commissioners are designing the monitoring and evaluation processes for a programme, good practice is to co-design these processes with funded partners. This can ensure it is achievable and realistic. Even better, is if you can co-design monitoring and evaluation processes with participants, especially where it is important to have considerations of their own lived experiences.

It is also helpful to design the monitoring questions and process in collaboration with any evaluation partners, particularly if they will be undertaking the analysis. This helps ensure we're using clear and understandable language.

Proportionate
Monitoring requirements should be proportionate to the value of the investment, and to the capacity and capability of the funded partner. Where possible, if organisations have an existing pre- and post-intervention monitoring process, funders and commissioners should accept this.

Monitoring data should be easy to collect and for participants to understand why it's being collected.

Balanced
Monitoring and evaluation should balance quantitative data and qualitative data. Data that tells us about project reach is not the same as data that tells us about project impact, and insight that tells us how and why things led to success. Don't be afraid to experiment with new approaches, and challenge the norm.

Time
Funders and funded partners should recognise that strong monitoring and evaluation requires time. Time to build relationships, time to undertake the data collection, and time to analyse the data.

It is also important to recognise different types of impact, and that we will not see evidence of sustained behaviour change or system changes quickly.

Co-designed

Proportionate

Balanced

Time

Stories of change

Stories of Change - the pathway to physical activity

This Story of Change illustrates the six key steps that represent the pathways to reducing physical inactivity. This story is a composite representation of the projects evaluated and provides a framework that could be used for future collaborative work.

1

TRUST

Developing Trust with stakeholders and community is crucial

Is crucial because..

If you don't have a relationship, the rapport and then ultimately the trust, you cannot show that you are thinking about the underlying cause...that connection is crucial.

IMPACT

and then building a Relational Environment that is Safe and Accepting, but consistency in the approach was key. This is impactful becasue...

You are able to make lots of mistakes and have a laugh because no one judges you

and bringing out those who work in the gym to meet the targeted population and get to know them is so important if they want to go and do they've not got to walk in and do it with people they've never seen before

2

Being Authentic in Your Actions is Important

Having established trust, it doesn't end there.. there needs to be consistency in what we do and stand for..

When you say you're going to do something, actually doing it, live it out, show them. It is a massive part of that trust

This is closely related but key in building the environment as it creates acceptance, resilience, and self-worth..

I never felt intimidated, stupid, or unfit. I was encouraged week after week and they helped me discover my sense of self-worth by changing my perception on life.

3

Understanding Context and Specific Needs in the Community supports this work

in building on this trust and authenticity this enables us to delve deeper into understanding the needs of the community - trust is a precursor to all of this....

We have found that the people we are working with lack confidence and can find it difficult to talk and mix with other people, especially in close proximity and playing as a team. This has meant that a lot more work has had to be done developing trust, confidence and communication skills

4 A sustainable vision is key when building relationships

To keep momentum and to reach our aim of tackling physical inactivity we must consider what these projects mean long term for people.

It's no secret, projects that go on for longer tend to have more impact. You're kind of changing their habitual lifestyle over a longer period of time. And so actually, when you get to the end of it, it's self-sustaining.

And then, when people can see that there is a vision for what this could be, this can lead to so many additional benefits like social and holistic sustainability and enhanced physical health..

Since starting the group, we have been out socially for evening drinks, as well as summer sea swimming. Yeah, it impacted on my mental and physical side a lot but the social part is equally a big deal.

5 Distributing leadership and providing education for the community is valuable

To make further progress, there is an opportunity for building capacity in the community and distributing leadership to people so they can take control beyond solely relying on project core delivery…

Supporting parents by giving them the skills to ride safely with their children and for young people to have a good understanding of road safety and awareness to cement good habits from a young age.

However, these are only small glimpses in this story. Here we can imagine the potential for enhancing sustainable pathways by providing more opportunities for people to lead and develop…

I want to show them that I am there, not just hiding behind a desk. This is what cements our community together. You have to keep the network going visible.

In order to sustain this relational approach, physical activity provision needs to be underpinned by role models and people visible in the community.
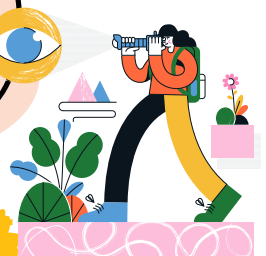
6 Having visible role models helps

I didn't realise that we could take more responsibility. I used to teach Tai Chi in South Africa and I would love to lead some thing like that here!

This Story of Change illustrates how the programme encouraged funded partners to effectively collaborate and explore relationships with key stakeholders. This presents three common steps and how these actions have impacted on creating an effective collaborative environment based on shared values and shared ideas.

1

VALUES

Understanding How Values might Align is the Start of the Journey

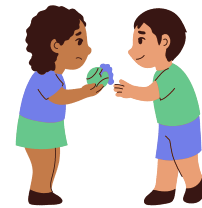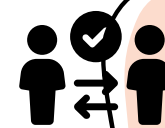After we got introduced, we realised how our values align closely with their's, and together we think we can help young people develop key skills by accessing the green spaces we work within. Moving forwards this piece of work will be a priority.

IMPACT

This mutual understanding leads quite naturally to the next step of the journey….

2

Collaborate with Key Stakeholders in the Community supports this process

Working with community anchors such as GP surgeries and schools allowed us to access people who trust these organisations [supported by Energise ME].

Connecting with Community Pillars

IMPACT

Only then you can start working together and make this collaboration visible in the community by….

We started having conversations with local councillors about the provisions that already exist but that are not necessarily being accessed. So, there are these external gyms that are a great idea but aren't really being used because people don't know how to use them or are embarrassed about using them. We soon realised that we have the same goals but are coming at them from perhaps different angles,

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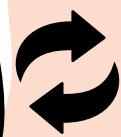
Another impact here is that 'change' is easier to implement, for example…

Becoming More Inclusive

We started working with a local leisure centre and identified the barriers and made the environment more welcoming and comfortable for young people to engage (e.g., they promoted relationships). We brought PT's out to meet the young people, so that they did not feel scared to go and participate.

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I had a parent meeting the other week. We have had issues with the Year 5 girls and friendship groups linked to social media. The parents asked me, "And what are you doing in school about this?" I was able to direct them to the Energise Me Funded Organisation. The parents calmly replied, "That is great, yes please".

Community Stakeholders to start Understanding their Role

IMPACT

Why is this? The relationships, the collaborations, the understanding of mutual values allows for…

IMPACT

The journey continues and cycles back (as we build more collaborations and work with other community stakeholders), but to do this….

3

Sustainability is Best Built on Trust

Trust built during the project now allows us to recommend other activities to participants, knowing they'll be welcomed elsewhere.

MORE

There is more here that these ongoing collaborations encourage…

vision

Sharing of Visions to Empower Projects

And

Because we have been able to invest, we have been able to meet with other groups that are part of the funding stream, which opened new opportunities for us to engage and start new conversations. For example, working together with other projects to understand how we capture outcomes and impacts.

Becoming More Inclusive

We are not delivery experts so it's important that we link with partners who do have the knowledge. We are hoping that when we do commission, we are very supportive and that we create these contracts together to give greater capacity to those community anchors and organisations.

This journey suggests that collaboration is cyclic and built upon shared values and understanding. It is never ending, and collaborations will become stronger and deeper, and consequently having more impact as relationships develop.

Stories of Change - Workforce Development

This Story of Change illustrates the three key steps that represent the pathways to workforce development. This story is a composite representation of the projects evaluated and provides a framework that could be used for future collaborative work.

This journey starts with organisations valuing the learning journey even before considering increasing capacity.

1 **Developing trust between the workforce of the individual projects is vital.**

And trust has got to be developed. What are our mechanisms for supporting staff? What are our training programmes? How do we get the feedback from that? This is going to have an impact on our funding and how we write our funding bids and how we do those sorts oft things and communicate that.

IMPACT

This will help to create a safe and open environment

It's so, so important that organisations understand that because it is about this safe space. They should be able to say what doesn't work without feeling threatened.

IMPACT

Here the workforce can express what went well and what did not, without being judged or that this might negatively impact on them. This creates enhanced self-awareness and confidence

This training has given me more confidence to deliver different provisions to different people and audiences that I would not have targeted beforehand.

Key to promoting this self-awareness further was the ability to have time to reflect, with projects voicing the benefits. The second step of the journey focuses on how…

2 **Reflective processes promote organisational learning and important for learning**

Part of our engagement with this programme has been the creative space. I wish that that reflective space was built [in] with other funders. Those are often target driven. But the way this programme [Energise Me support] has been set up was different, this programme has really focused on honesty and trust and reflecting and learning and being open about that learning process.

IMPACT

The workforce will learn to be more critical in their reflections and that allows them to formalise their learning more accurately.

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Stories of Change - Workforce Development

[In response to How and Why training]… sometimes you do these things and think that way but you don't tend to actually write them down or you don't tend to formalise them and this is what I like about the how and why stuff, it allows you to link it to actual outcomes or potential processes.

IMPACT

Some of the formalised actions included the 'How and Why', which up-skilled the workforce as it was transferable, applicable and practical.

It gave us tools to reach different people and audiences…

We could use this in different settings, very practical.

IMPACT

The individual focus on developing staff enhances the development of staff and volunteers as they feel valued by the organisation.

The journey finishes with focusing on how this value driven approach can be sustained and a crucial part is to…

Equipping volunteers and staff with the relevant theory to underpin practice and the opportunity to network with others, kind of reassures me that what we're doing is good. Hearing this from external partners. This all allows for better retention and recruitment of staff because they know that the organisation values them.

3 Providing networking opportunities can stimulate learning between each the workforce.

These networking opportunities have been great…we have developed a great link with 'Another Project [anonymised]' and moving forwards we have discussed the possibility of working together on a collaborative piece of work to get more people physically active.

This network creates a 'Community of Practice', which enhances the capacity and sustainability of projects workforce development, where deep learning, through reflection and 'How and Why' conversations can be shared.

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This Story of Change illustrates five key steps that represent how Energise Me can learn from the principles they implemented to effectively work with the organisations and promote physical activity across places.
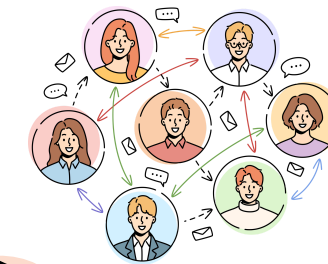
The start of the journey signals the underlying approach:

1

Being authentic with your actions is important for building relationships.

Building the relationship is important, as it [working with those organisations] is not transactional, it's relational. It's about working in partnership, then you can have those authentic conversation around what is needed. If you have got this [authentic relationship], it suddenly becomes something that has impact and that we can follow up with actions. For example, struggles with recruitment and short-term funding – we started to become a lot more understanding about it and worked with them.

To be effective in this and to create networks that are dynamic and sharing information, the next part of the journey led to Energise ME…

2

Understanding what valuable learning looks like is important for partners to buy in.

People give you the information, and you go away and try and facilitate based on their needs. And then we set this up and because it is what they suggested, we get some great attendance. For example, the people that we had at the collaboration events were the bid writers, those that bring in the money, and the business development managers, both wanted to know how to write those bids effectively and we were just happy to facilitate.

IMPACT

Targeted and individualised support for funded partners

This could encourage more.....

because questions became more specific, more targeted in relation to what is needed, and specific detail can be discussed

But this should involve all key stakeholders invested in delivery of the funded partners

The focus on the individual needs of the organisations and the community of practice approach enabled the building of an effective…

Network to promote sharing of expertise with each other

And then you start linking those partnerships. And they learn from each other rather than us knowing everything because we don't know everything. But I think that was kind of our role throughout. For example, bringing bid-writers and project leads together. You know, you need to have the person with the expertise to bring the money in, but you also need the project lead who has to deliver it. So, both need to understand how the funding and the delivery works together, which is seldom the case.

The journey continues with outlining the fundamental principle that makes this effective network of learning occur.

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Stories of Change - Energise Me and wider system learning

However, this is underpinned by the willingness from Energise ME to adopt...

As a facilitating organisation we focus on specific values, and that has been quite an important part of the relationships that we create. If we cannot have corporate values, we just fall apart. That is the same for the network.

3 **Having a value driven approach is important as a corporate identity**

IMPACT

4 **A life-long learning approach supports this journey**

If we do not understand our learning, we would actually be doing our community as a disservice if we continue as grant funders to operate in this way. We need to be shaped by our learning.

As part of this learning journey with Energise Me, funded partners are being ...

Pushed to reflect, which often means to embrace discomfort

We've got one in particular who historically, I wouldn't say we had a bad relationship, but we just haven't ever found the right way to work together. I don't know if there've been competing priorities or different ways of working or just not understanding each other, but we've never quite figured it out. And I would say that they've emerged from this as one of our absolute strongest partners. They have embraced the evaluation process.

5 **Organisations embracing themselves allows them to celebrate their impact**

The final part of this learning journey is to...

That purpose can create discomfort sometimes too, both in our partner organisations and internally. We often ask, why are we doing it like that? We are genuinely asking, tell us why we're doing it like that. We want to understand. So, there's something about the relationship being important in building that trusting relationship first so that when I'm asking those questions, they understand my intention.

This learning journey illuminates how Energise Me has adopted attributes that are part of the core values of learning such as reflection and 'serving' the organisations they support. As part of this, they have embraced the challenges and celebrate the success, knowing that learning is a continuous life-long process.

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Thank you to all stakeholders involved in this evaluation.

To make contact about this evaluation, please contact: drkevharris@gmail.com.

Energise Me

FHA

Hampshire County Council