

Yorkshire Sport Foundation

Priority Places

Short report

Introduction

Since 2016, Yorkshire Sport Foundation have been delivering a programme of work in communities. They have been using strength based approaches to help deepen understanding about inactivity and what can work to help get people moving more.

This short report shares some of the learning. More detail about the work can be found by contacting dan.wilson@yorkshiresport.org

The inactive to active journey

Our levels of physical activity are not static

The inactive to active journey is not static and it is not one way. People are constantly moving in and out of periods where they are more active and where they are less active. Transition points (family, job change, bereavement, injury, health scare etc) can be critical points in peoples lives where levels of activity can increase or decrease.

'I used to play sport like we all did, used to play netball, used to run, then I went to work away in Hotels, then it is that vicious cycle isn't it, when you work in hospitality, you are busy'

'I loved dancing but I stopped when I got pregnant'

'I got married and sort of stopped'

'I used to go to the gym, I used to go swimming and walking and I used to all kinds of classes like these. I did a women against size one of these. Then I was diagnosed with high blood pressure and it just sort of knocked everything'

But for many people, an injury starts the journey away from being active on a regular basis.

'I used to go to a gym...I got injured really really bad, so I didn't go to the gym for a month and when I tried to go back it hurt so I just never went back, I really enjoyed it when I used to go but I use that now as an excuse'

For some people life is difficult and hard and it is complex physically and emotionally to find the time to move more.

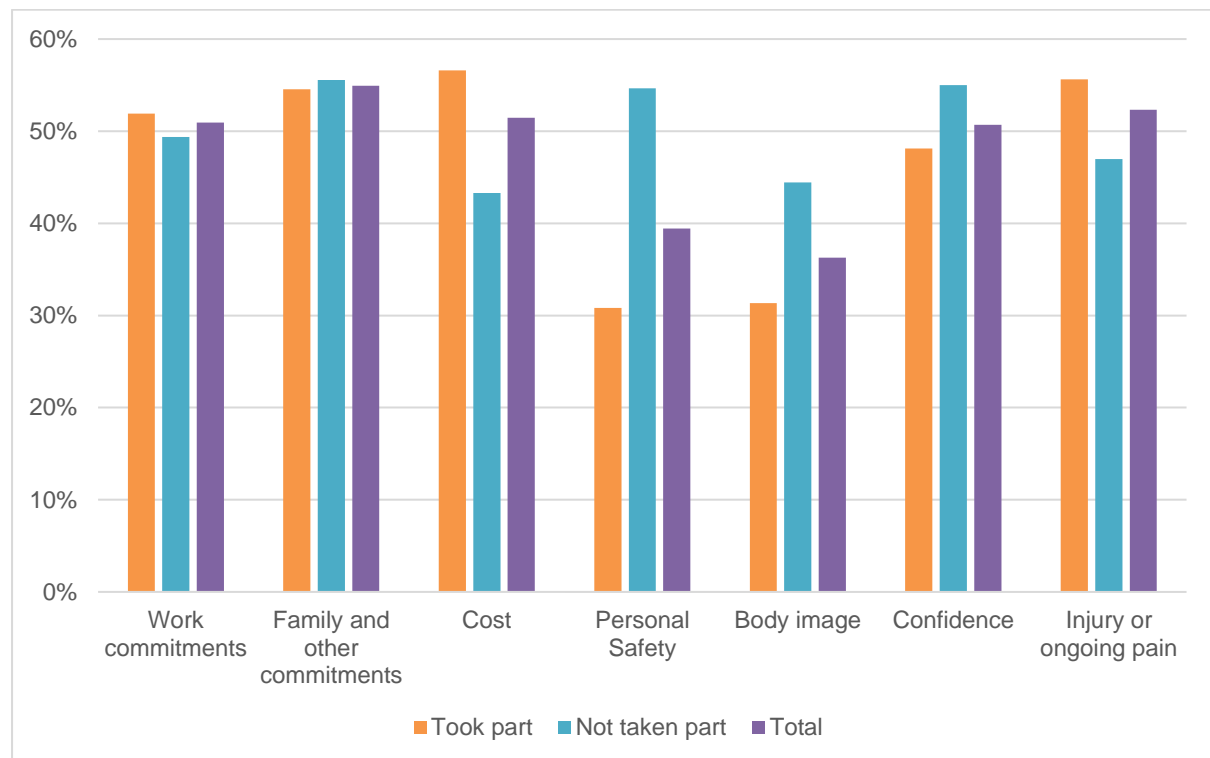
'You just get wrapped up in giving everybody else your time and you don't give yourself enough time, other things seem to take a priority'

'To be fair I was told that I suffered with depression and it was really really bad, I couldn't get out of bed some days, so that had a massive impact on all of my life, everything that I did, some days like I said, I had 15 months off work, couldn't do anything didn't much leave the house or anything so didn't want to feel people saying, oh she's so happy go lucky....but deep down that depression crucified me, absolutely crucified me, I couldn't be bothered with anything'

Identity and habit are key protective factors that help people retain levels of physical activity but even this group are vulnerable to a loss of motivation.

'I've been jogging for quite a few years but since lockdown, which I put a lot of things down to lockdown, I've lost that motivation, I don't know if it is lockdown or it is the menopause, bit its an effort to go'

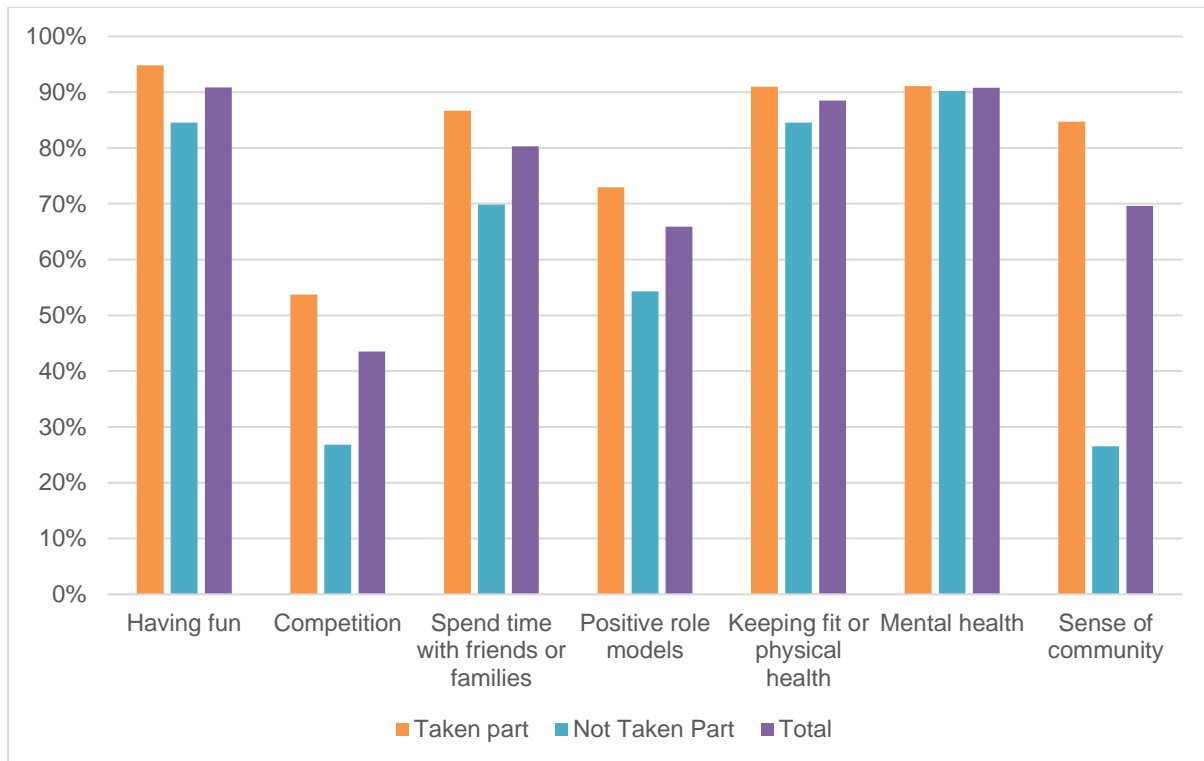
Barriers and motivators to be active are complex but family and work commitments, alongside injury, cost and confidence are key barriers.



'Activities are not suited for what we need... so that put you off and there is the cost of going, the time, you know it's quite a complex picture, really in terms of all the kinds of barriers that stop you... then going through perimenopause and all your gynecological problems and you know and all that sort of stuff kicks in as well'

'Anxiety about taking up a new activity is a barrier for me'

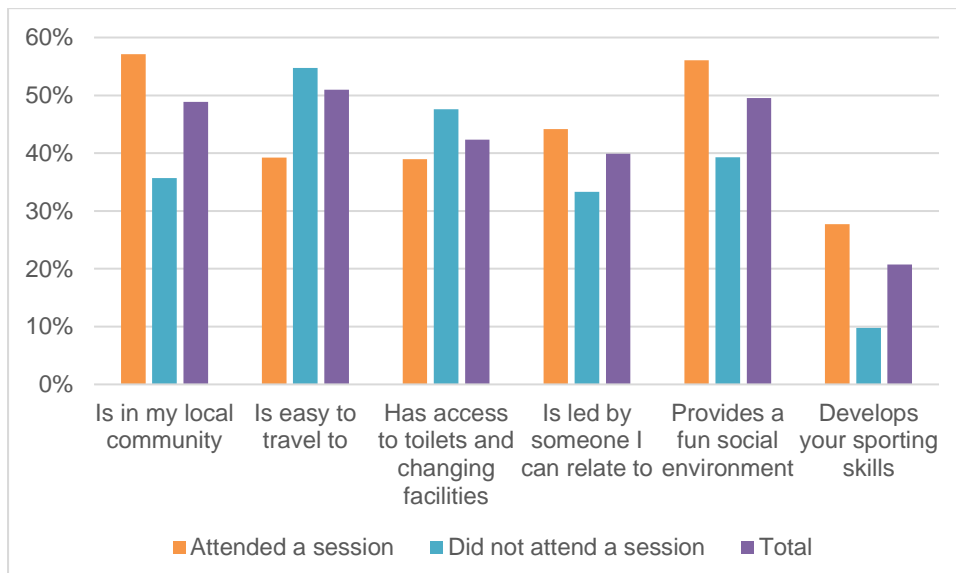
Motivators are having fun and, for those already engaged in a Priority Places activity, the sense of community it creates.



'To be active you need motivators, you need like minded people to push you'

'I'm motivated by places to gather and meet people. I find this really helps with my mental health'

People identified the importance of local opportunities and a fun and social environment as being very important when deciding to take part in an activity.



The model

The models being deployed by YSF aimed to build on this working and address some of the known barriers to being active. The aim was to explore combinations of delivery that include:

- Community development worker – dedicated person with experience of the local community who can activate organisations and/or individuals to consider incorporating physical activity. This would help overcome some of the barriers people face to being active by raising awareness, providing motivation and ensuring there were activities in the local community that met peoples needs
- Commissioned partners – wider group of delivery partners or organisations interested in developing a physical activity offer including those developing their workforce to be able to offer more opportunities. This would help pilot activity to understand if there was an unmet need. It would also allow the costs of activities to be covered (e.g. room hire, insurance, instructor costs)
- Asset and partnership development – strategic work aiming to bring organisations together to tackle some of the systems change issues needed around sport and physical activity. Working to ensure movement is part of the conversation happening at the hyper local level through to local and regional decision makers

The difference the approach makes

We have found across the Priority Places work that creating fun, social, opportunities for people to be active with each other, leads to people increasing their physical activity levels and a huge wider range of impacts, particularly around mental health. Physical activity levels are not static, but while the opportunity is available, people will use it to move more. As we have also set out, it is not always straight forward getting these fun and social opportunities to be active started or to get people to engage with them.

Community based sessions that create opportunities for people to be active in a group will:

- Help get people more active and help improve their confidence to try new things

71%¹ of people engaged through the Priority Places sessions felt their levels of physical activity had changed as a result of taking part in the activities. 89% also agreed or strongly agreed they were more active as a result of taking part in these activities.

'I became more motivated as there were like minded people like me'

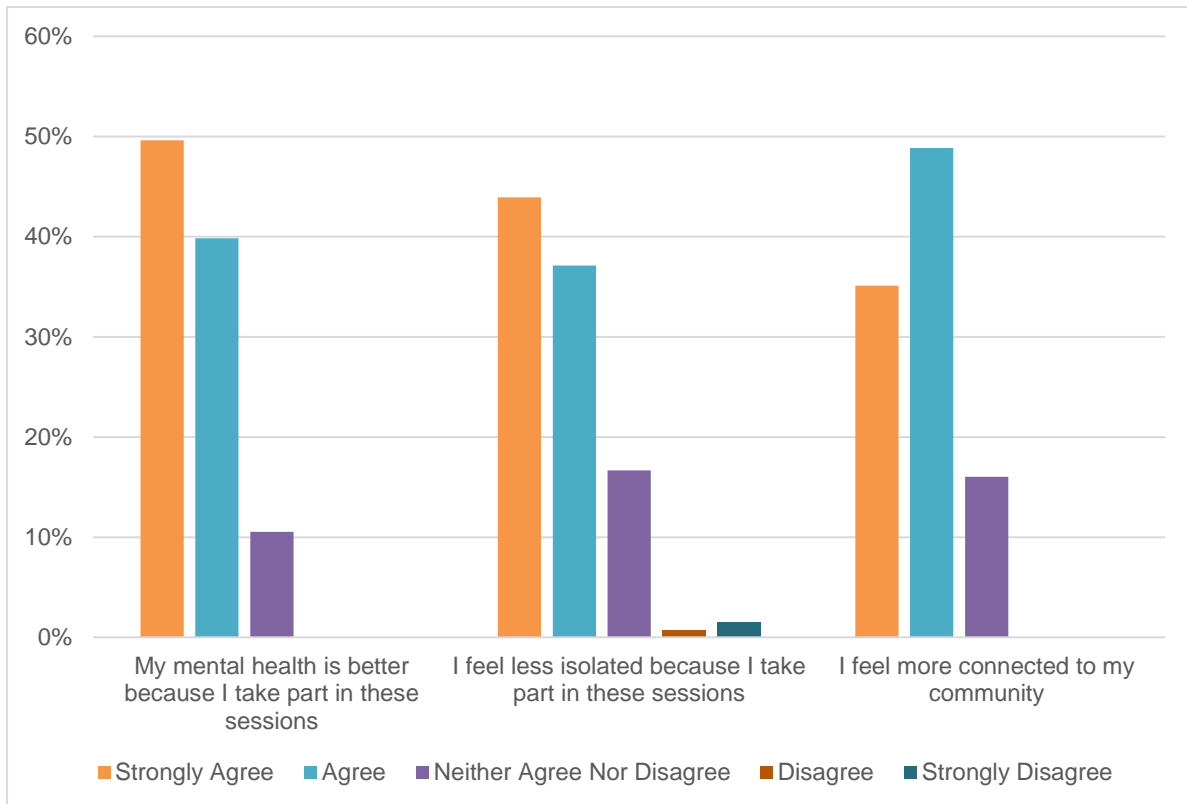
'I'm motivated to do more exercise'

'I would normally exercise Monday to Friday, but by playing Walking Rugby on a Saturday has increased my exercise routine but also changed my style of exercise, introducing a more Rugby style exercise'

¹ 136 people responded to the survey

'I've re-joined the gym and attending classes including Zumba and Yoga'

- Improve peoples mental health and social connections



'I'm getting a nice circle of friends...I know these from joining the group and I am glad I did because they are lovely people who rally and support'

'Yes, I've built a better relationship with the community, It's a space were a feel safe and can express myself'

'I think it is really good for us our emotional, physical and mental wellbeing and I think it is really important that he mixes with other people'

'It's been a massive one for the social aspect. I think that as well as obviously the benefits health wise and being active, I think, the social side of it from when I've spoken to people that's been the biggest... banter between blokes having a kick about'

'Blowing away the cobwebs. You temporarily forget any issues that might be bothering you. Despite the aches and pains afterwards you feel that bit fitter and more capable to cope with life in general'

Sessions will not always have consistent attendance. We have found:

- Sports (walking sports and other sports) tend to have a consistent group of people that will come each week. There is some drop in and drop out but generally speaking they get good consistent numbers once a core group is established (the core group is needed as without sufficient numbers the sport is less fun and can't withstand the intermittent attendance)
- Walking groups numbers will vary. But a core group can come together. This core group may change over time.
- Groups that are about wellbeing and wider health will have varying numbers as health and wellbeing can get in the way of attendance
- Some groups will start brightly but then engagement will fade away. This is often the case if a new sport or activity is being introduced to an area and a core group is not fully established
- Other groups take time for the numbers to build and then to gain a consistent number
- All groups have some weeks where more people attend and some weeks where fewer attend. Very rarely are people able to attend every week

Our insight from Priority Places is that where communities are empowered through training, support or confidence building, they will continue to offer a range of activities in their local community. This includes:

- Community Champions – the Community Champion role will end in all areas (in some places it has become a more senior Development Officer role). But the Champions were employed because they were local people with a local connection. This remains but they have now been equipped with skills and knowledge about how to get people moving more and the confidence to have those conversations with people. They have also seen with their own eyes what happens when connections are created in their community. They will continue to promote and encourage people to be active and to connect them, regardless of if they have a formal role
- Developing organisations – in Burngreave a wide range of organisations have received support. This has included financial support, but also support on how to be CIC's and charities. This investment in their infrastructure ensures they have the skills and capacity to continue and to seek funding from other sources (recognising cost as a barrier does not go away)
- Creating a market – Priority Places funded sessions so deliverers had the opportunity to 'test' if something would work. This allowed the deliverers to start small and build up numbers that were then sustained
- Creating a network – although it has not happened in all communities, the Priority Places work has helped connect organisations together, they know each other, what each other are doing and there is the potential to signpost people to each other or to work together on local projects

Checklist

Priority Places has experienced elements that have worked and elements that have not. Learning from what doesn't work is as important as from what does. This open approach to learning in Priority Places suggests being able to answer the following questions is key to successfully work in a place based way to engage the community and to get them moving more:

- Is there already a vibrant community and third sector to work with? If not, are you allowing enough time to reach into the community and find the people who can be local champions?
- Are there places within easy reach of the community that can be hired to allow activities to take place? If not, what work can you join to help create them or what creative alternatives can you consider to get people to sessions (for example, could Community Transport provide a solution)?
- How supportive are local partners including people in the local authority, social prescribers, other third sector organisations to get people moving more? What are the gaps in knowledge, experience or time you need to fill to get them to value getting people to move more?
- What else is happening in the area? How will your work link in and connect to it? Are there any resource constraints that might make it difficult for partners to work with you?
- Are all partners using a consistent language about getting people to move more?
- Are all partners confident in bringing conversations about moving more into their communities? If not what additional support do they need to do that?
- What happens if someone leaves or moves on? What systems are in place for tracking relationships or making sure key relationships are transferred?
- Who is going to be the consistent visible presence in the community? What is their connection to the place? What legacy will they leave by working in that community?
- Who is providing the on the ground management to people working in communities?
- Who is providing the sport and physical activity expertise into the community? Who is sharing aspiration and ideas as well as practical information on the rules and regulations?
- What small pots of money can be created to help draw people together who are already working in their community to move more? Do you know what funding might be available in the local community and how people can access it?