

**Shephard &  
Moyes Ltd**

**PLAN  
DO  
REVIEW**

Yorkshire Sport Foundation

# **Active Dearne**

**Year 4 Report**

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## Summary

Active Dearne ran from January 2019 to December 2022. It employed community champions across 9 communities to take a place based approach to getting people moving more.

The four years have left a lasting legacy with community champions who will continue to encourage people to move more. They have developed as people and are more skilled and more confident. Active Dearne has left a physical legacy with sessions continuing around football, walking rugby and sequence dance. A community interest company has been set up by a champion to continue offering menopausal support and yoga to women across Doncaster. A champion has also trained as a Level 2 strength and conditioning coach and is now offering circuit training to people who would not normally use a gym. Around a quarter of participants have moved from being classed as inactive to active over the period of Active Dearne.

We know from our research across Active Dearne and wider work with Yorkshire Sport Foundation that very few people maintain a constant level of physical activity. Most people have periods where they are more or less active. Active Dearne has helped create lasting assets in the community that will be there to offer opportunities and encouragement for people to move more.

The key learning from the four years of Active Dearne is shared below.

### ***People attending sessions move more but value the mental wellbeing benefits***

Across the four years we have consistently found that people attend sessions and are more physically active. This includes being more active because the session provides an extra day for them to move more. It also includes people wanting to do more exercise to help make the session they attend easier and more fun.

However, people stay because of the mental wellbeing benefits it brings. People reference the opportunity to connect to other people, being made to feel welcome, not being judged and being included as reasons why they attend. People highlighted how regular sessions where they move more, with other people has substantial mental health benefits.

### ***Not everyone attends every week and not everything works all the time***

Our data shows that not everyone attends every week. There needs to be a critical mass of people attending, to help create a 'good game' or a 'good walk' but this will not always be the same group of people. People dip in and dip out of activities. We have found it is important to allow and accommodate this. Active Dearne has created opportunities where people want to attend but where, if life gets in the way, it is okay not to.

Not all sessions have worked for Active Dearne. Some sessions people will not attend and it is not always clear why. Active Dearne encountered some barriers to getting a wider range of sport and physical activity happening as when the activity was linked to Yorkshire Sport Foundation, it needed qualified coaches. In most cases a solution was found but it increased the costs of delivery.

## *Using unconventional approaches to recruitment helps reach people who can connect*

The recruitment process for Active Dearne did not focus on a person's CV but who they were as people and how they would connect to others. This allowed people the freedom to be themselves. The champions recruited in this way, all brought different strengths to the project and allowed Active Dearne to reach people who may not have applied or flourished if a more traditional recruitment approach was used.

## *Place based delivery needs place based management*

The key learning from Active Dearne is how important it is for the management to be based close to the 'on the ground' champions. This allows time for mentoring and support. It also ensures they have someone who can be alongside them championing their successes.

## *Community champions leave lasting assets*

People will be more active because of the work of Active Dearne, but the real legacy is in the community champions who are leaving assets in their community. They are more aware of how to make people active, but are also continuing to deliver opportunities for people to move more.

## Introduction

Active Dearne started delivery in January 2019. It was part of a larger portfolio of projects Sport England was supporting through the TIED Fund. TIED funding had two main objectives. It sought to reach inactive people but with a specific focus on working age people in employment and those that *often find it hard to build physical activity into their lives, or feel being active isn't for them*. The second objective of TIED was to use sport and physical activity to support wider local change in the community.

Alongside funding from Sport England, funding for Active Dearne was also provided by Doncaster Council, Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council and Barnsley Council. Active Dearne provided an opportunity for the three local authorities to work together on a joint project to tackle inactivity in the Dearne Valley.

Active Dearne was devised to have three clear elements to it:

- Community Champions – a network of community champions would be set up. These were entry level posts for people with community connection skills
- Commissioned partners – a resource that could be used to support local organisations to pilot activities or to support the community champions to set up new sessions
- Asset and partnership development – a programme of strategic work to bring organisations together. This helps raise the profile of sport and physical activity and also aims to tackle some of the systems change issues that contribute to inactivity

Funding was provided initially for one year to pilot the delivery model. This was extended in 2020 for a further two years. However, due to Covid-19 there was an opportunity to continue the deliver for a further 12 months and in total Active Dearne delivered for four years from January 2019 to December 2022.

Yorkshire Sport Foundation (YSF) commissioned Shephard & Moyes Ltd to undertake the evaluation of the work to support reflection and learning during the delivery. We have produced reports that have charted the project as it has developed, including delivery during Covid-19. This is the final evaluation for Active Dearne and reflects on the full four years of the delivery. It aims to share learning with other Active Partnerships or organisations looking to take a similar place based approach to tackling inactivity.

### Evaluation approach

Our approach to the evaluation is shown in Figure 1. Each year we followed a similar pattern of data collection that included:

- Data – we supported the collection of data that helps show the projects reach around demographics and activity levels. We also review the data collected around participation and progress on activity levels. This included supporting the collection of data specifically for the TIED funding
- Asset mapping – we supported the collection of data that helps understand how assets have changed in the community

- Participants – we spoke to the people who benefit from the project to understand what difference the project is making to them and how it fits more broadly with the work they have done
- Partners – we spoke to staff, partners and organisations involved in the delivery to understand how the project works and the difference it makes

TIED funding required all participants to complete a baseline, 3 month, 6 month and 12 month follow up. This was a substantial requirement placed on the community champions. Good quality data was collected, but not from all participants and not at every stage of the projects delivery (particularly during the various Covid-19 lockdowns). As such we know the project has reached greater numbers than presented in the report. However, the data can be used to provide valuable insights about taking a community led approach to tackling inactivity.

As part of our early work with Active Dearne we held evaluation framework sessions. The first took place during year 1 of the delivery and the second at the beginning of year 3 but during the Covid-19 lockdown. These sessions were designed to engage the community in understanding the wider outcomes they hoped the TIED fund would help them achieve. Alongside increasing physical activity the communities clearly highlighted how important mental health and family engagement was to their communities.

- Increased physical activity (TIED outcome)
- Improved wellbeing (TIED outcome)
- Increased self-efficacy (TIED outcome)
- Improving life in community (TIED outcome)
- Reduced social isolation (Active Dearne outcome)
- Improved family dynamics (Active Dearne outcome)
- Improved mental health (Active Dearne outcome)
- More community interaction (Active Dearne outcome)



Figure 1 - Evaluation approach

The remainder of this report contains the findings from our evaluation. It starts with more detail about Active Dearne, what it was set out to achieve and an overview of the key milestones that reflected its delivery. It then goes on to set out how the delivery worked in practice before considering the difference Active Dearne has made. We then consider some of the sustainable elements from Active Dearne before identifying the key learning for organisations looking to take a similar approach.

## About Active Dearne

In this section we set out the background to Active Dearne and highlight some of the challenges it was set up to address.

### About Active Dearne

#### *Background*

Active Dearne was set up to focus on communities along the Dearne Valley. The Dearne Valley covers a large area covering towns and villages that sit along the River Dearne. It sits on the edges of three local authority areas: Doncaster, Barnsley and Rotherham.

The project provided an opportunity for the three local authorities to work closely together, alongside Yorkshire Sport Foundation bringing together areas that were geographically close but often considered separately because of their relationship to their different local authorities.

As part of the funding nine areas were selected to be part of the Active Dearne project. Areas were selected in partnership with the local authority, they represented areas the local authority wanted to place a focus. This could be because the data indicated there were particular issues in the local area or it was an area that local councillors wanted to focus on.

The Dearne Valley and the villages and towns that it comprises is historically a mining area. With the closure of the mines the area struggled economically but also socially. Many of the music bands, football teams and social activities were linked to industry and as the industry declined so did some of the social opportunities. The Dearne Valley has since the late 1990s been an area of considerable focus, particularly around economic development, however across the areas of the Dearne Valley there continue to be<sup>1</sup>:

- High numbers of people considered long term sick or disabled. 13% of people in Thunscoe, 10% in Denaby and 7% in Wath fall into this category, well above the England and Wales average of 5%
- High numbers of people with no qualifications. 27.7% of people in Thurnsoce, 28% of people in Goldthorpe and 22% in Swinton fall into this category, above the England and Wales average of 15%

The original scope of Active Dearne had included an aspiration to contribute towards work in this area. Alongside tackling inactivity the intention had been to explore ways of using sport and physical activity to enhance the work opportunities for people across the Dearne. We explore later the factors that led to this shift away from this as an area of focus.

#### *The delivery*

The TIED funding came in two stages. Year 1 was confirmed from the start, but funding for Years 2 and 3 was dependent on pilot work in the first year. As such Active Dearne identified four communities to pilot in year 1. These were:

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<sup>1</sup> Detailed data on the Wards involved in Active Dearne can be found in Appendix 1



- Denaby (Doncaster)
- Swinton (Rotherham)
- Goldthorpe (Barnsley)
- Thurnscoe (Barnsley)

In Year 2 the intention was to expand into a further five areas. These were:

- Mexborough (Doncaster)
- Conisborough (Doncaster)
- Wath (Rotherham)
- Hoover (Rotherham)
- Bolton Upon Dearne (Barnsley)

The original deliver plan involved a community champion working 10 hours a week in each of the communities. The intention was to employ local people who knew their community. They did not need any experience helping to get people moving more, but needed to be able to connect and engage with the wider community. They would be supported by a Development Manager from Yorkshire Sport Foundation who would take responsibility for working with the commissioned partners and making the wider connections with partners.

The table below summarises how the delivery evolved over the four years.

## Year 1

- Community champions in post for Denaby and Swinton. Single community champion employed for 20 hours a week to cover Thurnscoe and Goldthorpe. At the end of 2019 the community champion covering Thurnscoe and Goldthorpe left
- 5 commissioned partners to support the delivery
- Delivery staff for Active Dearne recognised the capacity of the Development Manager was stretched due to the support provided to the Community Champions

## Year 2

- Sport England confirmed extension of funding plans put in place to expand the number of community champions
- March 2020, first Covid-19 lockdown. Plans to expand put on hold and Swinton and Denaby community champions supported
- End of 2020, new community champions recruited for Hoover and Wath. Single 30 hour a week post created for Thurnscoe, Goldthorpe and Bolton upon Dearne
- Yorkshire Sport Foundation began exploring working with a local partner to provide direct line management support to community champions in Doncaster

## Year 3

- At the start of 2021 the initial Development Manager moved onto a new role. Year 4 was not yet confirmed and Yorkshire Sport Foundation decided to split the management of the project into a role supporting the community champions and a role undertaking the commissioning. The champions began to be supported more remotely
- Very limited commissioning took place
- Two new Community Champions recruited for Mexborough and Conisborough, line managed by Helping Hands

## Year 4

- Full time Development Manager in post to support the Champions. Management happening remotely
- Mexborough and Conisborough roles combined to create a single 20 hour a week role. Role line managed by Helping Hands
- Commissioning devolved to the Community Champions
- Full set of community champions in post until the project ended in December 2020

Covid-19 had a huge impact on the project delivery. This impact included:

- The practical impact on the model. Community champions could not be visible in their communities
- The impact on the community champions. The champions went from a very external community focused role to a desk based role

- The impact on the delivery. The stop, start nature of the Covid-19 lockdowns made it difficult to gain momentum, even when the opportunities arose. It was also challenging to engage those communities that were more vulnerable

Active Dearne was also affected by the decisions made by Yorkshire Sport Foundation about the management. It was understandable why the decision was made to not directly replace the Development Manager due to uncertainties about the future of funding, but as we show later, it resulted in a change of management style and the champions received less 'on the ground' support.

## The inactivity challenge

### *Sport for Development*

Active Dearne was set up to tackle inactivity but also to use sport as a tool for development. There is no single agreed definition across the third sector of what Sport for Development is or does. There are a wide number of definitions in use. Sport for Development is sometimes referred to as S4D and in some cases Sport for Change. What is common across the definitions is:

- **Intentionality** – there is an intention to use sport and physical activity to achieve more than an improvement in performance. This goes beyond the intrinsic value of being active and is specifically looking at achieving something more
- **Personal development** – there is a focus on outcomes that are about peoples personal and social development
- **Tool** – sport and physical activity become a tool that can be used to support people in their personal and social development

Sport for Development therefore encompasses as wide range of activities, approaches and organisations. It is a broad spectrum with a wide variety of different organisations able to clearly demonstrate how they deliver sport for development outcomes.

At one end of the spectrum are: *Organisations that focus on sport and physical activity and place a specific focus on personal development (sport and physical activity experts).*

At the other end of the spectrum are: *Organisations that focus on community or personal development and place a specific focus on using sport and physical activity as a tool (personal and community development experts).*

Active Dearne was focused on the latter category. The aim was to use people who were community experts to help them connect with people who were more expert in sport and physical activity.

### *Understanding inactivity*

Active Dearne is part of a wider piece of work under the banner of Priority Places. This work has presented a unique opportunity to speak to a wide range of people about their physical activity habits and the specific features of Active Dearne that have helped them think about moving more.

One of the key pieces of insight gained from this work is that people's levels of activity are rarely static. People will go through periods of their lives when they are more or less active. There can be a huge range of reasons for this. This can include transition points in their lives (for example starting a new job or having a family). It can also include changes in people's mental and physical health.

*'I came home about 2 years ago it just hit me I needed to do something for me and I threw myself into exercise six days week morning and night. But then I started caring for elderly relatives, my dad died last year.. I changed my working week.. I understand I need to give myself some time..to either give me space to do the jobs I have to do or give myself some time'*

*'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'*

*'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'*

Figure 2 helps show some of the barriers people in the Dearne Valley face to moving more.

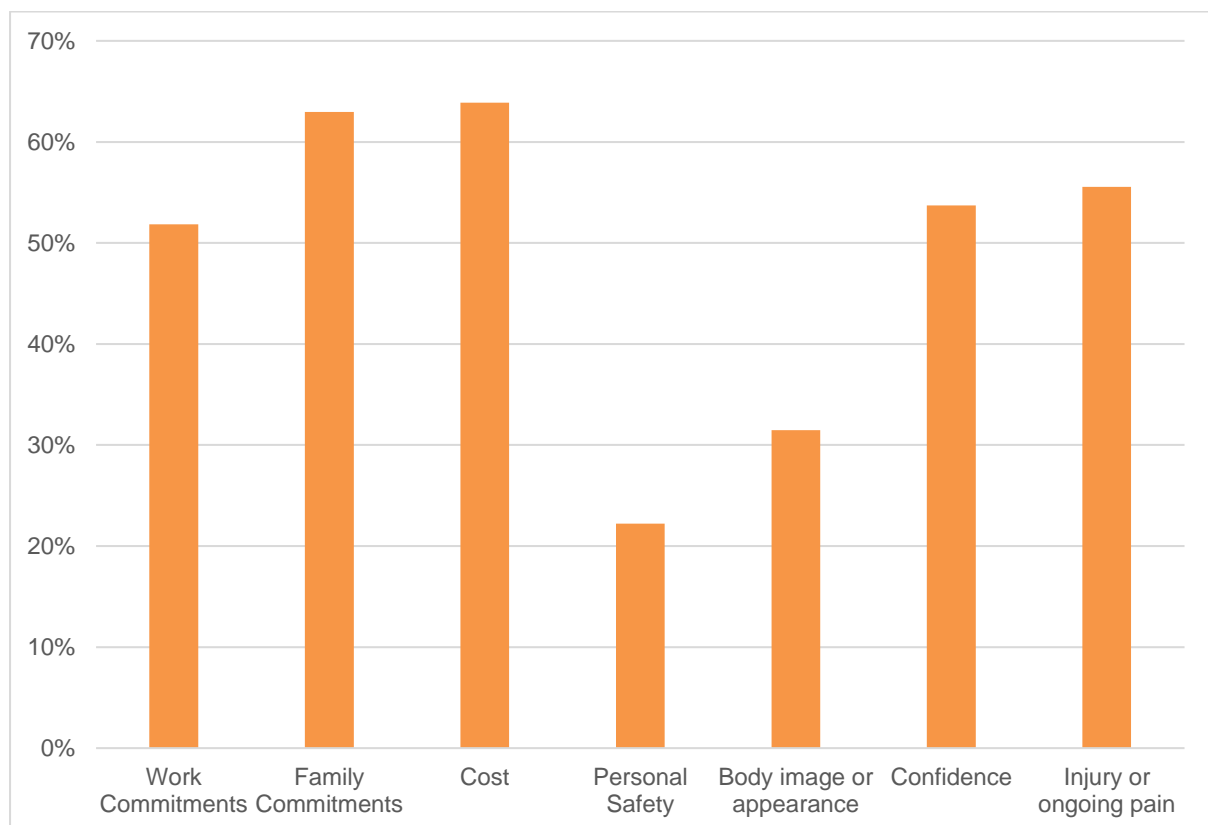


Figure 2 - Barriers people face to moving more

People will experience a range of different barriers, but the conversations and data from the work we have undertaken in Active Dearne continuously highlight the suitability of sessions for people. People perceive sessions are not for them and lack confidence, time or money to be able to access them.

*'[I am inactive] because being less mobile it's caused more health issues' Active Dearne resident*

*'[I am inactive] Because there is nothing for my age group or ability in my area' Active Dearne resident*

*'I have a disability and no transport so it is important for me to be local and during the day but I can't do football' Active Dearne resident.*

## Understanding Active Dearne

Active Dearne presented an opportunity for three local authorities to work closely together. Active Dearne was primarily focused on inactivity but was also looking to use the delivery as a tool to support people in wider areas of their lives. Year 1 acted as a pilot year with champions for four areas recruited. Covid-19 disrupted delivery in 2020 but all 9 areas were covered by a community champion by the end of 2021. Changes in management resulted in the champions receiving different levels of support at different times and in commissioning taking place in different ways.

Active Dearne has helped strengthen the wider understanding of the inactive to active journey. The key insights help highlight that physical activity levels are rarely static in people's lives and there are always periods where they do more or where they do less. People experience a wide range of barriers to being active, but a key issue is not thinking sessions will be suitable for them.

## Community champion

In this section we set out more detail on the community champion role that was the main focus of the Active Dearne delivery.

### Recruitment

One of the key successes of Active Dearne was the recruitment process used. The first posts were advertised in the local community and were supported by a short film. The later posts were advertised through social media again supported by a film.

The champions referenced how they had been encouraged to apply by people in the wider community.

*'People were coming up to me and saying this job was coming up and that you would be ideal for it...yeah what doing? Being a champion? Sport..but I am not a sporty person that's what I kept saying but you would be ideal absolutely ideal, I said okay I will think about it'*

*'It was a councillor for our area, she told me, I think I were looking for another job and she told me about this role'*

They were also attracted to the role because it provided them with an opportunity to make a difference to their community.

*'I just wanted to make a difference in my community and set some things up to make a difference to people's health and mental health'*

The interview process itself, also felt different as the focus was on who they were as people, rather than what they had in their CV.

*'I thought it was a strange interview because they didn't want to see my CV or anything, they just wanted to know about me as a person'*

*'When I went to that interview it was completely different it was about the stuff I was interested in which was community support, I didn't get the bad brain fog because I didn't have all these questions being thrown at me... I was just interviewed really well and that gave me the ability to show my best side'*

The recruitment led to a diverse, wide range of champions being recruited to the role. The champion for Hoover had a background in running and the champion for Wath had a passion for health and fitness. But for the other champions they had no experience getting people to move more, they had the skills and expertise to connect with communities. They also recognised they offered an alternative role model looking to get people moving more.

*'What drew me in, being a community champion, getting into the community and trying to make a difference and I thought yeah I can do that... looking at me, it wouldn't put them off, if someone were right fit and had a drilled body and somebody turns up to a session looking like me, leaning on a goal post, I'm not going to worry about it'*

## Getting started

The champions did not have a specific role when they first started. It was not clear what the day job of the champions would be, compared to other elements of the project, including the commissioned partners. For the champions who were recruited in 2019 there was no template for them to follow or clear guidance of what was expected from them

*‘But there was no job description, you know, just get out there and do what you can to get in people’*

*‘We were left to our own devices to see what we actually came up with, but Paul was always there to guide you know’*

*‘Basically [our role was] getting people around my area back into physical activity, people who are a bit vulnerable, isolated, do have people with mental health problems, we have some people who are just a bit run down and we go for a walk to get out.’*

*‘I think back in the early days it was a case of seeing what you can set up’*

By the end of Year 1 there was a clear template for the community champion delivery that was being refined. Part of the champions role was direct delivery but there was an increasing recognition of the role they were playing connecting into the commissioned partners.

However, Covid-19 changed the nature of the role again. The early focus for the new champions was engaging people on-line and then slowly to start delivering in the community or connecting to people in the community. The champions needed support, reassurance and guidance to help them start and deliver their role.

*‘I remember saying, I don’t feel like I am doing things right... it was something totally different to what I was used to’*

The one area where it proved to be impossible to get activity started was in Hoover. Prior to Covid-19 the local councillors were keen for this to be one of the areas prioritised by Active Dearne. However, when the champion was recruited, the area had a different focus for its priorities. This made it difficult for the champion to make connections. This challenge coincided with the change in management at YSF. The champion made the pragmatic decision to get some delivery happening at Manvers Lake, in partnership with the Wath champion. This represented a practical and pragmatic response by the champion to the challenges they faced trying to connect to partners in Hoover. However, in reality, with appropriate management support an alternative area could have been identified that would have allowed delivery to happen more in line with the outcomes and aspirations of Active Dearne.

## The delivery

Broadly speaking across Active Dearne there were two models of delivery for the community champions shown in Figure 3 and Figure 4. In one model they were involved in the direct delivery of the sessions, in the other they supported the sessions, encouraging people to attend and take part.





Figure 3 - Commissioned partners deliver



Figure 4 - Community champions deliver

In Year 1 of Active Deane the focus for the champions was on direct delivery (Figure 4). There was commissioned activity taking place, but the champions placed their focus on getting people they connected with to attend sessions they were running. These were mainly walking groups but it also included walking football, set up by the Swinton community champion.

*'We arranged to start off with some simple walking, so the first time we went walking, one of the ladies from my group which I know she came to support me... but gradually over the weeks word grew and I think the most we had on a walk was 18 to 20... oh we did have some fun along the way'*

As the champions were directly involved in the delivery of the walks, they could provide reassurance to people about what would be happening on the walks and what they would experience.

*'You don't have to talk about anything.. most of the time on the walk it's just normal conversation, but if you do want to chat you can just take me to one side'*

Prior to Covid-19 this was the main model of delivery and it acted as the template for the new community champions who joined at the end of year 2 and early in year 3.

However, this model had some clear practical challenges. Active Deane, needed to ensure it was delivering activities in line with all rules and regulations. The champions were not sporty and did not have sport qualifications. The support team at YSF identified the champions could not directly deliver unless they were appropriately qualified. This essentially limited the direct delivery to walking.



*'Part of the challenge is as we have gone on with the programme we realised we couldn't ask her to do anything unless she was qualified... we looked at doing rounders but we couldn't get her qualified to deliver it safely'*

*'Once it is attached to Active Dearne it needs to have a qualified deliverer'*

*'Well you need to have a coaching badge, you need insurance, we're going to charge you £10 per hour to go on a field'*

The original vision was, this gap would be filled by the commissioned partners. This was the model used in year 1. The champions and Development Manager were identifying gaps in the community, the commissioning could then help fill those gaps. During Year 2 and Year 3 very little commissioning took place. This reflected the lockdowns and change in management at YSF. To get partners involved needed more time than the YSF support team had available. Therefore commissioning didn't happen and the only delivery was what the champions could deliver directly or had the confidence to arrange themselves.

The most successful example of this was the menopause group that was set up in Connisborough. This provided an evening session for women to talk about the menopause and some of the barriers and challenges they face to being active as a result of it. Initially, the session did not involve any physical activity, but it evolved to include a yoga and meditation session.

In Year 4, a further change happened with the new Development Manager in post. The community champions were each allocated a budget to develop their own ideas for what the community needed. This model worked well with responsibility devolved to the champions, but support provided by the Development Manager. This led to:

- Sequence dance group starting in Denaby
- Wild swimming opportunity for the menopause group in Connisborough and Mexborough
- Health and fitness classes being piloted in Wath

Walking football and walking rugby were also taking place with some funded support through the commissioning pot.

## Connecting to people and the community

The key role of the champion was to connect to people in the community. All the champions made good use of social media as a way of connecting to people. But as they grew in confidence they also started up conversations with people at bus stops or as they were walking around the area.

*'I just did some posts on Facebook, then while I am walking around I'm talking to people;*

*'When I did finally start talking to people... it turned into where they were telling about what they were feeling and what they were going through and I was then talking to them about it'*

People connected to the champions because they wanted to talk or socialise with other people or they felt comfortable speaking to them about some of the issues and challenges

they are experiencing. Although the champions recognised the focus of their work was getting people moving more, they also recognised the first step to this was making a connection.

*'you get a few that come on that walk and then they come and meet up with after... they walk along for a bit and don't realise they are joining in'*

*'You've got to be a people person, a genuine one that people can trust and where that can build up gradually... it takes time to build trust and it is a slow process but at the end of it that process is worth it'*

*'I get people messaging me on Facebook as well, sometimes just for a chat. I've found I've been getting a lot of people that are suffering with their mental health, because I always post about mental health... that kind of draws people who want to talk to me'*

The champions also recognised the importance of connecting people into the wider activities happening in the community, so they would have more opportunities to engage with. The champions for Denaby and Swinton were hugely effective at this. Through conversations they would link people up to other sessions and activities happening in their community.

*'Because they not only did they serve a purpose for us, by offering cups of tea and bacon sandwiches.... We were able to boost their numbers... and because we got familiar with the church people and everything we also did our Thursday group and moved from the library to the church... so that was another good thing that came out of the walking group'*

For the champions Covid-19 acted as a real disrupter. It was a huge challenge for the champions. They had been focused on connecting people with face to face and then immediately had to switch to a new way of working.

*'The low light was when covid struck... it was so frustrating, that were a low, a real low for me, being a people person and used to being out and about in the community I just felt like I had my wings clipped'*

However, Covid-19 also provided the champions with a different way of connecting and created some memorable engagement opportunities.

*'I set up an online Facebook competition where there was a £25 voucher for the winner but some of the videos were that good I ended up buying tubs of chocolates and more prizes. So basically everyone had to send in a video of them dancing. It had to be a new one and they had to be in home because it was lockdown, I had hundreds of videos and because I was posting them and people could see them they said 'this is what we needed'*

## Getting people moving more

The champions recognised the aim of their work was to get people moving more.

*'The characteristics [of a good community champion] are being able to talk to people in the community, being able to use your own initiative, do tasks been asked to do. Physical activity needs to be in the forefront of your mind, you have to want to get people active'*

The champions realised that direct conversations about getting people to move more were not what people necessarily wanted to hear. Instead the champions focused on sharing examples from their own experiences and using this as a way of introducing physical activity.

*'I don't have a lot of serious conversations, because I think a lot of people don't want to know when you talk serious but I use myself as example in conversations... people say to me, Angela you've got fibromyalgia, how do you do it. To me it's your mentality, I am in pain everyday but I don't zoom into it... so I said to her, I've got a purpose, I've got a job so I know I've got to get up in the morning...I choose not to dwell on it, to just get on with it'*

*'Show an interest in what they're saying, which you know you do in everyday conversation and try and slowly push them in the right direction'*

*'Where I used to be on heavy pain killers I am not on any pain killers now and it helps with mental health, losing weight, and just makes you feel more on the game.. your energised, it has been a lovely one, but having that understanding when you have achy joints and you don't feel motivated I totally get it'*

*'I try not to talk about physical activity because then they might back off, close up like a defense mechanism, whereas if you just talk to them about all sorts, drop in walking football some people go yeah I'll come, some people you never see, but some come'*

*'It is normal people doing normal things rather than having to join a club'*

They recognised the role they played encouraging people and finding the line between helping people recognise they can do more but also starting where they feel comfortable.

*'People always say I can't run and I say that's the point, if you could run there wouldn't be a point to this group'*

*'It's a fine line between putting people off and pushing them'*

*'Making it fun, yeah I think that is what you have to do'*

## Supporting and managing the champions

Supporting the champions has not been a straight forward process. In Year 1 and 2, the Development Manager was hands on with the champions, providing regular support and helping them throughout Covid-19. When the Development Manager moved to a new role, YSF experimented with different models of support. In reality, each of the approaches had challenges which are summarised in Figure 5.

Figure 5 - Issues and challenges with different line management options

Approach	Issues and challenges
<b>Development Manager locally based</b>	The champions felt supported. But a hands on role was hugely time consuming even when just four communities were being supported. However, the Development Manager acted as a mentor and supporter and helped the community champions develop skills and with their personal development.
<b>Remote management with</b>	Although the champions felt they could pick up the phone for help if they needed it, this was the period where the champions had least

Approach	Issues and challenges
<b>management role split between supporting community champions and wider work</b>	support. They were unclear about their role and what they should be doing. Support for the champions was more limited. Crucially this support differed greatly to what had previously been available through the locally based Development Manager.
<b>Management with another organisation</b>	In Doncaster, YSF piloted using another third sector organisation to support the champions. This created a number of challenges around who was responsible for the champions and ensuring work was completed. In addition, one champion remained an employee of YSF but was reporting to the third sector organisation. This created practical challenges about when and how to ask for holidays and expenses. Alongside this, the agreement between the organisations did not specify how the commissioning fund could be used by them or how expenses for the project would be reimbursed. In addition, the use of another organisation meant some of the sport and physical activity expertise was lost from the work and activities started that were not immediately linked to getting people moving more.
<b>Remote Development Manager</b>	With this role the champions were supported and were given the freedom and support to develop their own ideas and to implement activities for their community. The challenge for the community champions however, was the support was not local, this meant sessions that were delivered in the evening were not visited and the visibility of some of the excellent work being done by the champions was missed.

The champions reflected how the support provided by the Development Manager was key to them. They were all new to this area of work and they needed guidance on what they should be doing and the approach they were taking.

*'The role was so new to me, I still felt a bit lost at times, like oh god what do I do? I feel like I have been literally left to do something and I don't know what that thing is'*

*'We had Paul when I first started and it was completely different, we had weekly meetings, if we wanted to do anything we took it to Paul, I always saw that it was like we basically get the ideas out and Paul would take it forward and make the connections, he would sort of dot the i's and cross the t's... when Paul left, it was like where is our role, I didn't have the confidence sometimes... I've tried with meetings and they have started talking about funding and using acronyms and stuff and it is right over my head...there was a period in the middle where there wasn't help. I think I needed to have somebody like a Paul or when Paul left being a bit clearer about what we should actually be doing'*

*'A bit of a lowlight was in the middle somewhere, where I feel like I didn't really do anything, there was a little bit of confusion with managers... there was a point where we didn't really know where we were and we felt a bit like, oh god, what is going on?'*

*'We lost some momentum when Paul left because Paul was local and very focused on it, that said everybody did there best, but I think it became a role that Yorkshire sport perhaps*

*not struggled to find a home for but people were doing it in addition to their jobs and they weren't local'*

*'Paul would phone you twice a day, team meetings, visit you, come to the sessions then all of that stopped and you were on your own... but that is mainly because their base is like miles away you know, so they can't come down everyday, we were just left to do what we want'*

All of the champions have had experiences where people have not turned up and where there have been practical challenges with the delivery. As we show later, sessions would sometimes burn brightly but then circumstances would change and less people would attend activities. The champions needed support to help them manage this and to keep their confidence going.

*'When I've done walks and one person has turned up and I've been advertising it and telling people about it and people say they are going to come and they don't come'*

*'Covid came, as you know and sort of put a damper on things... but it went from 18 to 20 people down dribs and drabs for various reasons due to ill health, a decline in dementia, people moving away, more than one person actually lost.... And some took on the allotment so we lost a couple of people there'*

The shift in managers meant some of the champions also felt there was a lack of awareness about the skills and expertise they had or could develop. This represented a missed opportunity within YSF to be able to showcase what the champions were achieving in their role and how they were developing.

*'They didn't know anything about my work history they didn't have a clue about my qualifications or anything like that'*

It is important to note the champions always felt they had the support they needed and they could pick up the phone when they needed help and support. However, it is also important to acknowledge what changed until the new Development Manager was in post in Year 4 was the mentoring, support and personal development did not happen at the same pace or in the same way. The new Development Manager in Year 4 was not locally based and although the champions had the support and guidance they needed, the Development Manager was not able to attend their evening sessions, so the opportunity to *showcase and celebrate* what the champions were achieving was more limited.

## **Community champion hours**

Active Dearne ended up with a mix of models reflecting the number of hours the champions were working:

- In Rotherham there were three community champions working 10 hours per week. One covering Swinton, one Wath and one focusing on Manvers Lake
- In Barnsley there was a single community champion working 30 hours per week covering all three communities



- In Doncaster, one community champion covered Denaby on 10 hours per week, employed by YSF. One community champion covered Mexborough and Connisborough on 20 hours per week, employed by Helping Hands

For the champions with 10 hours per week, the number of hours was too small. It was not quite a big enough role to do everything they wanted to do. But it also meant they became isolated from YSF. The champions did not, generally, attend YSF away days because it would have been the bulk of their delivery that week.

*'I could have done so much more [on more hours]'*

However, those roles with the greater number of hours felt like there was insufficient actions to fill the time. This has led to a greater understanding that a role around 15 hours would balance these two needs within the role.

## Supporting the wider project

Active Dearne spanned three local authority areas and it presented an opportunity for the three areas to work closely together. To support this a steering group formed with a senior lead from each local authority area.

In Year 1 the steering group met regularly. However, as the managers of the project changed, the purpose and focus of the steering group drifted.

*'It could have had a bit more visibility and drive from various people, it comes from inconsistency of who is leading it'*

This led to a perception among the steering group the detail of the delivery was not being shared and the potential of the steering group to make links and check and challenge the delivery was being missed.

*'There was a shyness about the nuts and bolts'*

As we discuss in more detail later, Active Dearne was a large project. It included a large number of staff, a large geographical area and it was aiming to not just get people active but also to use sport as a development tool.

*'I think we took on too much, probably too ambitious in some areas, not enough staff time covering a large geography'*

Perhaps the most important insight for all partners, however, was that management of place based projects benefits from also being place based. This was in place during the first two years of delivery but when the Development Manager left, it was replaced by more remote support.

*'The good thing about Active Dearne is it probably highlighted some of these issues for YSF and partners'*

*'Were YSF the right organisation to lead, I am struggling to think of an alternative, but with hindsight they were too detached, place based working from a regional base didn't work'*

**Understanding the Community Champion role**

The community champions were the main focus of Active Dearne. They were recruited using different tools and techniques that allowed them to reach people comfortable with connecting with the community, but not necessarily with a sport and physical activity background. The recruitment process allowed Active Dearne to recruit people good at connecting with others in the community and who developed the skills to introduce people to moving more.

The champions undertook direct delivery of sessions. In some cases where a qualified instructor was needed they worked with commissioned partners to help deliver this. Managing the champions proved to be a challenge for YSF. They needed place based support but as a regional organisation this was difficult for YSF to provide.

## The difference it makes

In this section we set out the difference that Active Dearne has made. We have included some top line data that helps illustrate the consistent message that has appeared throughout Active Dearne and as part of the wider work undertaken through Priority Places. This shows that when people are given local opportunities to move more with other people in their community there are a range of positive benefits. This includes people being more active, or less sedentary but it also includes improvements to mental wellbeing and reduction in social isolation and loneliness. The groups have also provided people with the opportunity to receive support through difficult periods in their lives including bereavements and divorce. We have also included some insight and reflection on the sustainability of Active Dearne.

A full breakdown of data is provided in Appendix 1.

## Reach

Demographic information for the project was collected as part of the requirements for the TIED funding. This was a substantial 'ask' from participants, so we are aware there was substantial under-reporting. However, the demographic data, shown in Figure 6, shows:

- There was a reasonably even split between males and females. In most activities females are easier to engage than males, but the activities provided by Active Dearne helped reach this group
- Well over 70% of participants were working age, this reflects the priority group for this funding and reflects how the activities on offer helped to reach this group
- 29% had a long term physical or mental health condition
- 64% of those reached were in work or were looking for work

This data helps show how effective the community champions and Active Dearne delivery was at reaching working age people.

Figure 6 - Demographics of Active Dearne participants

Area		Total Number	Percent
Demographics	Total Number	445	
	Male	183	41%
	Female	260	58%
	16-24	58	13%
	25-34	87	20%
	35-54	164	37%
	55-74	105	24%
	75+	15	3%
	White British	430	97%
	White Other	2	0%
Have a long term physical or mental health condition	Black	1	0%
	Prefer not to say	6	1%
	Yes	129	29%
	No	192	43%



Area		Total Number	Percent
Impact on ability to do normal activities	Prefer not to say	28	6%
	Yes	42	9%
	No	84	19%
	Prefer not to say	10	2%
Type of condition	Long term pain	20	4%
	Mental Health	15	3%
	Mobility	13	3%
	Breathing	9	2%
Employment status	Not looking for work	26	6%
	Retired	77	17%
	School or college	29	7%
	Unemployed	75	17%
	University	5	1%
	Full time work	145	33%
	Part time work	61	14%

Projects were also aiming to reach inactive people. Overall 42% of participants could be classed as inactive. As is shown by the detailed data in Appendix 1, in year 1, a larger percentage of participants were classed as inactive, this shows the project reached more inactive people at the start of delivery and fewer in active people as the project progressed. Part of the reason for this is the small number of new participants in later years, with many participants choosing to remain engaged over a longer period.

Figure 7 - Baseline levels of physical activity

		Total Number	Percent
Inactive	Less than 30 mins	189	42%
Medium	Between 30 minutes and 150 minutes	96	22%
Active	More than 150	160	36%
Subset of Inactive	0 minutes per week	126	28%

Consistently across Active Dearne participants have highlighted how important trust is, when they are thinking of attending a session and the role of word of mouth in encouraging them to attend sessions. Overall 89% of people connect with the project as a result of some form of word of mouth:

- 32% from a friend or family member
- 40% from social media
- 17% from the Community Champion

The champions also collected data on attendance at their sessions, shown in Figure 8. This helps show how different types of activity will reach different numbers and with different levels of engagement and participation. No activity achieves a consistent participation with the same people attending each week but walking groups tend to have a core group of consistent attendees. Larger sessions such as the menopause group, walking football and walking rugby have more irregular attendance. Feedback from participants highlighted how

useful they found it, to not have to commit every week but to know they were welcomed whenever they turned up.

Figure 8 - Attendance data at sessions

Session	Number of participants	Number of sessions	Average number of sessions attended	Average people per session	Comments
Walking Football	30	10	4.66	14	Most weeks good numbers of over 15 - people drop in and out and don't come every week
Brionis Project Yoga	42	20	4.19	8.8	Varied numbers each week - no consistency
Menopause group	62	19	3.54	11.5	Varied people per session but consistent numbers of around 10
Kelly Evening Walk St Andrews Square	4	28	20.75	2.96	Small group of consistent attendees
Kelly Salvation Army walk	6	23	19	4.96	Small group of consistent attendees
Phoenix park walk	5	25	12.8	2.56	Small number to start with then participation tailed off
Kelly Self-help group	5	26	17.8	3.42	Numbers tailed off towards the end
St Andrews Square	2	19	1		Most weeks just one person
Monday health walk	20	52	13.6	4.73	Really varied participation by people and sessions attended - attendance seemed to drop off after Easter
Walk to Run	5	122	41.8	1.72	3 people attended lots of the sessions and 2 just a couple - so small group of committed attendees
Walking Rugby	40	39	18.85	18.85	Good consistent numbers each week

## Impact

### Improvements to physical health

Figure 9 shows the data that Active Dearne collected through the Short Active Lives survey to track how physical activity changes over time. This data helps to show that close to 60% of participants increased the number of minutes they were active and nearly a quarter moved from inactive to active.

Figure 9 - Short Active Lives Data

	Number	Percentage
<b>Total number of responses</b>	64	
<b>Number who have increased their overall minutes of physical activity</b>	38	59%
<b>Number who have moved from inactive to active</b>	15	23%

This impact was illustrated in our own feedback from participants. Both the data and the feedback helps illustrate that people are not just more active, but they have more knowledge about how to be active and also how to help others be more active, shown in Figure 10.

Figure 10 - Data on self-reported levels of physical activity

	Number	Percentage
<b>More active because they take part in these sessions</b>	47	87%
<b>If I wanted to be more active I would know what to do</b>	49	91%
<b>If I wanted to help others to be active either formally or informally I would know what to do</b>	46	95%

This improvement in levels of physical activity was also reported to us through interviews with participants, who consistently highlighted how the sessions made them want to be more active.

*'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'*

*'I have just started dancing and I have lost half a stone and feel a hell of a lot better'*

*'I'm walking now more than before'*

*'I'm motivated to do more exercise'*

*'I have added additional stretching exercises to my morning routine that we do at the rugby meets'*

*'Through the rugby club...I've not played for the last couple of years due to injuries, I was watching one of the games while I was walking the dog and one of the lads mentioned it, I thought it was for proper older boys but there are quite a few younger ones, good way of getting your fitness back...it fills a bit of a void on a Saturday, keeps me involved in rugby, found it sharpens the handling skills up a bit'*

*'I've re-joined the gym and attending classes e.g. Zumba and Yoga'*

*'Its fun and I enjoy it and I am loosing some weight and spending some time outside... been stuck in side for two years with covid getting some fresh air and exercise'*

*'I've got a better resting heart beat than I have ever had....you've stopped smoking and its helped you with that as well... its just nice isn't it'*

## Spotlight on.....walking sports

We have spoken to many of the participants of the walking football and walking rugby sessions. These sessions have been successful in Active Dearne because they have:

- Given people the opportunity to get back doing a sport they have loved but needed to stop because age or injury had forced them out
- Provided a non-judgemental environment. It is not the skill that matters but taking part in the session
- Created a welcoming environment where people do not take themselves too seriously and they can have a joke and mess about
- Established in a way that means people don't need to commit to attending every week. They can dip in and out if other commitments take a priority
- Provided support and encouragement to people so they can take part or attend regardless of their fitness or skill level

*'I really love rugby and you see a lot about walking football so went on internet and found wath on there... came down last week, all the lads have been brilliant, made me feel really welcome and from not picking a rugby ball up for about 20 years to starting again I am absolutely loving it. I went home last week had a massive grin on my face and I have been buzzing all week'*

*'Bringing everybody together, bringing different disabilities, it just the diversity... the age and the camaraderie.. football I would say is only 50% of it, the other percent is the camaraderie the banter, you know just escaping, escaping the pandemic, escaping stress for an hour'*

*'Walking Rugby has opened so many opportunities to once again play a game that I love and to meet so many lovely people. My physical and mental health are so much better doing something that I love'*

## Improvements to mental wellbeing

Across the four years of evaluating Active Dearne we have consistently found, for those that take part in an activity, it is the impact on their overall wellbeing they value the most. Figure 11 helps show that over 90% of participants feel their mental health has improved because they have taken part in an Active Dearne activity.

Figure 11 - Self-reported improvements to wellbeing

	Number	Percentage
<b>Mental health has improved</b>	49	91%
<b>Feel less isolated because I take part in these sessions</b>	45	83%

I feel more connected to my community	44	81%
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This was continuously fed back to us through our interviews with participants on the projects. They highlighted how the sessions had helped them connect to other people, to have fun and to have a break from the stresses and strains of everyday life.

*'A lot of people have isolated themselves, so it is how much of a difference it makes even being out an hour around people, you can see the mood lift, you can see them change and I feel like it gives them some motivation as well.. I've got a walk today so I am going to get up and do it, you can see it makes a difference'*

*'The camaraderie amongst lads and lassies it has been so good and so enjoyable'*

*'I'm my mams carer so I don't have much time for myself but I manage to get here once a week'*

*'Getting out and the banter, interacting outside as I don't really talk to many people.. its helping with my mental health a bit and getting out to speaking to different people... keep coming because I am enjoying it... I used to go to the gym before lockdown, if I get fitter it might motivate me to go to the gym'*

*'That guy over there is from Dinnington Rugby Club he came down because he is wanting to set something up over there, well that's what he wanted, but now he just keeps coming and playing'*

*'It's good natured, there is no malice at all'*

*'Meeting new people, competitive edge to it, gets you out on a Monday night'*

*'We have a couple of lads who have learning disabilities and we get them involved they score a goal.... Everyone is involved its just a massive family'*

*'There is no obligation every week, you can just dip in and dip out as you want to'*

*'I love it and it is good for you...I live on my own and it gets me out and about'*

*'Meeting up with like minded people, spending time being active and then having some social time afterwards eg going to clubhouse for a drink and a chat'*

*I have got a family member to join who thoroughly enjoys the meeting, helping them to get fitter and hopefully lose a little weight.*

*'I've made new friends.my confidence and mental health have improved vastly'*

*'I have met some great people, who I am now friends with'*

## Spotlight on.....being with like minded people

The community champion for Connisborough identified a need for women going through the menopause to come together and talk about their experiences and get support from

each other. Through Active Dearne they could get a venue and activities to support the group. The focus of the group was initially to talk about their experiences of the menopause. But it quickly expanded to include a regular yoga and meditation session. The group also had the opportunity to go wild swimming as part of the project.

The group provided the women with:

- A non-judgemental space where they could talk openly and honestly about what they were going through
- The opportunity to vent and to share with others the frustrations and pressures they felt in their lives
- A time that was just for them, where they could have a break from their myriad of responsibilities
- An opportunity to be introduced to tools and techniques for managing the menopause, including the opportunity to be more active through yoga and to be introduced to meditation

*'It is an educational session, she will say when you are getting old when you are maturing, you are bending over thinking about your tail bone, and your pelvis and your bum, your posture because I don't have one I am sitting there all day like this'*

*'The benefit is to calm that body down to get rid of that fog when you feel that foggy headed'*

## Legacy

A key question for all physical activity projects that are time limited is 'what happens next?'. There is a strong aspiration in all projects to create the conditions where physical activity will continue in participants, regardless of whether the session continues or not. However, we know from our research in both Priority Places and across Active Dearne people are constantly moving in and out of periods where they are more or less active. Physical activity levels are constantly shifting.

Although we think it is important to understand how active people are, it is equally important to understand if the conditions have been created in people to maintain levels of physical activity. It is also important to consider what assets have been built and developed in communities that will provide a lasting benefit and will be there to support people when they enter a period of more inactivity.

## Community Champions

There is no doubt the community champions, in different ways, are leaving a lasting legacy through their personal development. They are more confident in themselves, in talking about physical activity and introducing the idea of moving more to people. All of them will continue to do this in their future paths.

For those who have had the opportunity to spend time over the four years with the champions watching their personal development and growth is a hugely positive area.

*'The Champions for us have been a positive and seeing their personal development'*



Each of the champions have in their own way developed. They are all more aware of how important moving more is and the importance for all people to get moving and more confident to help other people to get moving, even if it is outside of a formal role.

*'I were never geared towards being physically active in my own mind and gradually as time went on I realised the importance'*

*'I want to try and take people out on a few runs it will probably help my mental health get better as well as there's, fitness comes second in my eyes'*

*'I myself was benefiting from it [the walking] I could feel the difference in my body'*

They have started recognising their own strengths and skills and this has allowed their confidence to grow.

*'I'd given up work because of it, Active Dearne saved my life.....it's just gone from strength to strength, this is the first time in 10 years I have been motivated to get out of bed... I just feel so motivated to do what I do, the feedback I get, the impact I have on people's lives, after feeling so much of a failure and like I would never work again... its been really good, it is amazing'*

*'Its been good it has helped me develop as a person, it has been a great team to work with everybody at Active Dearne and Yorkshire Sport Foundation, everyones been really good, it has opened my eyes to see what people are and what different people are wanting to get out of a little bit of activity, different age, ability we got them all, some just need to know what is out there and that it's for them'*

*'I've learned quite a few things about myself, I think I am quite a strong person to be honest'*

*'I never really had much confidence, and I didn't really, I never realised that just by being me that's what people liked and accepted and it took a certain person and mentor [Paul] to make me actually realise why people valued me...I think I always knew I were a good person... but when people say to you, you know, Angela you are an absolute star and you think wow all these years, that has never been acknowledged and then all of a sudden in the space of 12 months you've got all these different people saying it... it's because I'm now in a crowd, in a circle of like minded people'*

*'I've become more active and interested in health and wellbeing... my confidence I think, working for Active Dearne was the first time I'd had a team and been involved in team meetings and it felt like I was back in a an actual work environment'*

*'I feel relaxed and able to talk to people, in shop or the side of the road, I will just talk to people say how are you doing, whereas before I weren't confident and I think conversations lead to other conversations'*

They have also become more connected to their community and are more aware of the wide range of opportunities there are for people across the Dearne valley.

*'[I'm aware of] just how much work other people in the community as well... they are there listening to people, advising them and stuff'*

*'I am definitely more knowledgeable, and in spotting things as well.. spotting when someone doesn't seem right and knowing where I can pass them on or where it is something where I can see they just need to have a little chat... or if they do need to get some professional help'*

*'[When we started we were] trying to get adults on working age of low to no income doing 30 minutes of exercise.... I thought have you got the right person... its grown from that, it is not so much getting people active as signposting, because if covid its been signposting and being a hub for people, I get people in the supermarket talking to people whatever.... Like Angela has been doing strictly dancing, so I will say to them why don't you go down to Mexborough and do the ballroom dancing and if they say I've got no one to dance with, I'll come down with you'*

*'There are some really good people in out community and you don't realise how much they are doing'*

## Physical legacy

Alongside the legacy in people in the community more confident in themselves and more confident to get people moving, the champions have also created activities that will continue long after Active Dearne has ended. This includes:

- Becoming FA Level 1 trained so they can run the walking football. Setting up a committee to support the walking football session and collecting subs to continue paying for the pitch hire. They have also established a second session that is more traditional football for those who want to play at a faster pace but with the same inclusive ethos
- Becoming a qualified strength and conditioning trainer so they can offer circuit training sessions for people who are less confident using gyms
- Setting up a social enterprise and securing pots of funding to offer a structured 12 week programme to women across Doncaster so they feel supported through the menopause. This includes offering yoga and meditation as part of the offer, including an online component to
- Ensuring the walking rugby is well integrated into Wath Rugby Club so it continues to be a regular session on offer there
- Taking up roles with Well Doncaster to continue offering the opportunity for people to connect to services and to offer them opportunities for walking
- Sequence Dance group continuing in Denaby with some support from Active Dearne but also some participant contribution

This legacy reflects how Active Dearne has given the champions the opportunity to believe in themselves and their skills. It has then given them some of the tools they needed to make the next step in their career and lives.

*'I am going to get some classes up and running, I am now qualified, we know people want the classes at that time, they were enjoying what we are going, I have put a bid together... I am excited about it and I want to get it up and running... the bid I have put together is like CrossFit but for people that are maybe older... we will adapt it for anybody'*



*'It will be continuing, it is a legacy for Active Dearne as it has spring boarded me into doing what I am doing'*

*'Not an awful lot will change for me, just the fact I will no longer be under the banner of Active Dearne and Yorkshire Sport Foundation'*

*'We usually get us busy and have like 25/26 people and sometimes we'll just scrape by with 14 but we collect the money and any money just goes into the kitty and I like bought new ball with it, so I think we have two balls coming, I think we have £100 in the kitty just adding it up through the year, we are gonna keep that and if it really winds down we can keep the session going. I asked for a meeting last week and I said look the contracts finishing, walking football is going to carry on, nothings going to change its just I'm not going to be paid to go but we are still going to do it and what do you want to do with the kitty... we want some new balls so I ordered some balls, we already had bibs'*

One of the champions also plans to keep the Active Dearne Facebook pages active and to use them as a tool for signposting people to opportunities or sharing information about what is happening in the local community.

### **Not everything works and not everything lasts**

The champions have all developed as people and will continue to talk to people about moving more. There will also be a series of sessions and activities that continue thanks to the ongoing work of the champions in new roles or as part of new ventures.

A key reflection from all the champions, however, is nothing works for everyone all of the time. There is no magic formula that means a session or activity will be hugely successful. All the champions have tried things that haven't worked or have had activities that worked for a while before people drifted away.

As the champions have developed, they have recognised this is often due to people not being ready to engage. There may be wider issues in their lives which need to be worked through first. The biggest lesson shared by the champions is to not take this personally.

*'Don't take anything personally, people not turning up, sessions not working, people coming once and not coming again, don't take it personally, it might not be the right time for them'*

*'Be patient and don't feel let down if people don't start coming straight away and be a bit braver. I would stick to this walk and think it's not working, it's not working and then all I did was change the name... just keep trying and see what works'*

*'If there is something going off in their head there is nothing you can do'*

### **Strengthening connections**

The final area where there has been a lasting legacy is in the three local authorities working together. They identified how Active Dearne had given them a reason to work more closely together.

*'It was really good for the three Local Authorities to work together, it brought strength and confidence to work together'*

*'It strengthened the South Yorkshire family'*

All the leads from the Local Authority are hugely experienced in community approaches to getting people active and are part of wider conversations to embed and share their learning and practice.

From a practical point of view, Active Dearne provided the Local Authority leads with a good understanding of what not to do when supporting a project. Both Barnsley and Rotherham have taken this learning into the steering groups they are using to support their Active Through Football projects. This means finding the role they have in supporting the project and making sure they get the detail on what is happening

*'Understanding your part to play in the project and when to and when not to be involved'*

*'I've reinforced it so many times about being open and honest about the situation so we can add value to help them help the project'*

#### **Understanding the difference Active Dearne has made**

Active Dearne has reached a wide range of people who are working age. Engaging them in opportunities to move more has increased their levels of physical activity but it has also improved their mental wellbeing and their social connections. It is able to do this by providing non-judgemental sessions where people feel able to have fun.

Active Dearne is leaving a legacy in the community champions and their skills and knowledge. They are more aware of how to start conversations about moving more and how to signpost people to other opportunities. There is also a practical legacy with sessions continuing and new community interest companies established.

## Learning for others

In this section we set out the key learning from Active Dearne, that others planning similar projects may find beneficial.

### *Broad scope, large area, entry level roles*

Active Dearne was ambitious. It covered a large geographical area and hoped to get people active but also use sport as a tool for development using people on entry level positions at 10 hours a week.

It became clear during Year 1, the support the champions needed exceeded the capacity of a single Development Manager. But before practical changes to the project could be made Covid-19 swept the country and Active Dearne, alongside all other projects entered a phase of lockdown, re-opening, lockdown. This was then coupled by a change of manager and the arrangements put in place as a holding position, while decisions were made on extending the funding, did not meet the needs of the project.

Ultimately entry level positions need on-site management and mentoring. This is as much to celebrate successes and to identify areas of personal development as it is to solve problems or to keep confidence high. It is important in any community work for those who are in more senior positions to be visible and present. To attend sessions and visit activities, to help and support but also to celebrate when delivery is working well and making a genuine difference to peoples lives. This needs to be something that happens regularly, so that people see it as a regular part of their delivery, not something they need to do something special for.

Management of entry level positions, like the community champions is as much about coaching and mentoring as any other type of management. The champions recruited for Active Dearne were skilled, kind, thoughtful and keen to make a difference in their community. What they sometimes lacked was the confidence and knowledge of how they take an idea and make it happen. This meant they needed different amounts of support at different times.

A further important insight gained from this work is the size of the role. 30 hours, even when spread across three communities was too large a role, it was difficult for a person new to this area of work to know what to do within the role. However, 10 hours was too quickly filled and meant the champions could become isolated from the wider organisation because they didn't have enough time for away days and whole staff meetings.

### *Not everything works and proactive change is needed*

Throughout Active Dearne there have been times when activities, areas and approaches have not worked. This includes 'on the ground' activities but also includes the areas people were working in, the support a champion needed and the strategic support an area has in place.

A key reflection from Active Dearne is the need to proactively change things when they are not working. This means refreshing activities as they become more or less popular. But also working closely with partners if an area is no longer interested in the support on offer.

Partners also identified how important it was to review an area – if there is a lot of professional support in place, does it need more?

Another key insight is to ensure expertise is in place to get people moving more. Without the right support and direction, the passion of the community champion will become the focus – this is often brilliant and leads to interesting things happening, but without additional support there will not be a priority to move more.

### ***Balancing direct delivery and commissioned activities***

YSF brought many strengths to Active Dearne. But YSF found that as soon as they put their name to something there had to be some qualified delivery as part of it, which put some limitations on the community champions. In hindsight, getting the champions to undertake a multi-sport qualification would have allowed more activities to be offered to people in the community.

Throughout Active Dearne there has been a combination of direct delivery by community champions and delivery by commissioned partners. This has often helped navigate the need for expertise in delivery. But often without the community champions direct involvement activities struggled to get engagement. In the final year of Active Dearne the structure worked well where community champions worked alongside commissioned activities.

### ***Measuring the right things***

Active Dearne focused on measuring whether people had become more active. In reality this narrowed the view of what it achieved.

People are continuously moving into and out of periods of moving more. Active Dearne helped people recognise this was important because of its benefits to mental and physical health. Although they may enter periods of inactivity they are more likely to return to being active because they have the skills and knowledge they need.

## Appendix 1 – Detailed data

Figure 12 - Ward level data for Active Dearne communities

Indicator	Denaby and Conisbrough	Goldthorpe and Bolton Upon Dearne	Thurnscoe	Swinton	Mexborough	Hoobers	Wath	England and Wales
<b>Ward name</b>	Denaby and Conisbrough	Dearne South	Dearne North	Swinton	Mexborough	Hoobers	Wath	n/a
<b>Local Authority area</b>	Doncaster	Barnsley	Barnsley	Rotherham	Doncaster	Rotherham	Rotherham	n/a
<b>Population (16 to 64)</b>	8,802	7,853	6,873	7,008	9,710	9,082	7,655	n/a
<b>Economically Active</b>	69.4%	72.6%	65.7%	74.9%	70.9%	77.6%	74.9%	76.8%
<b>Long term sick or disabled</b>	10.3%	9.8%	13.4%	6.8%	9.3%	6.4%	7.1%	4.9%
<b>Looking after home or family</b>	6.9%	5.8%	7.5%	5.1%	6.5%	4.7%	5.2%	4.6%
<b>No qualifications</b>	31.1%	27.5%	33.6%	21.5%	27.7%	20.5%	20.1%	15%

Figure 13 – Inactivity and prescription drug use in the areas<sup>2</sup>

Indicator	Barnsley	Doncaster	Rotherham	England
<b>Inactive: less than 30 minutes per week</b>	31.2%	34.3%	34.8%	25.1%
<b>Percentage of inactive who have done no activity in the last 28 days</b>	59.1%	51.0%	67.0%	57.9%
<b>Number of people in receipt of at least one anti-depressant prescription in 2017/18 (percentage of population)</b>	44,522 (29.3%)	50,844 (26.5%)	41,013 (25.4%)	n/a
<b>Number of people in receipt of a prescription in March 2018</b>	26,629 (17.5%)	33,254 (17.3%)	28,133 (17.5%)	n/a

<sup>2</sup> Data sources: Physical Activity Data: Sport England Active Lives Survey; Prescription Drug Use Data: CCG-level data from PHE's analysis of NHSBSA data for the Prescribed Medicines Review

(percentage of population)				
Percentage of people on anti-depressant medication for at least 12 months in March 2018	61.2%	62%	61%	n/a
Rank for anti-depressant prescriptions across all CCGs	22	14	20	n/a
Number of people in receipt of at least one opioid prescription in 2017/18 (percentage of population)	35,234 (23.1%)	40,36 (21%)	32,669 (20.2%)	n/a
Number of people in receipt of a prescription in March 2018 (percentage of population)	18,384 (12%)	20,532 (10.7)	15,953 (9.8%)	n/a
Percentage of people on opioid medication for at least 12 months	60.2%	61%	56%	n/a
Rank for opioid prescriptions across all CCGs	2	1	20	n/a

Figure 14 - Participant Demographics

Area		Year 1 (pre-Covid)		Year 2 (Covid Year 1)		Year 3 (Covid Year 2)		Total	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Demographics	Total Number	258		105		82		445	
	Male	98	38%	38	36%	47	57%	183	41%
	Female	158	62%	67	64%	35	43%	260	58%
	16-24	33	13%	22	21%	3	4%	58	13%
	25-34	57	23%	21	20%	9	11%	87	20%
	35-54	82	33%	45	43%	37	45%	164	37%
	55-74	60	24%	16	15%	29	35%	105	24%
	75+	13	5%	1	1%	1	1%	15	3%
	White British	255	99%	97	94%	78	95%	430	97%
	White Other	0	0%	2	2%	0	0%	2	0%
	Black	1	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	0%
	Prefer not to say	2	1%	4	4%	0	0%	6	1%
Have a long term physical or mental health condition	Yes	76	44%	28	28%	25	30%	129	29%
	No	76	44%	64	64%	52	63%	192	43%
	Prefer not to say	20	12%	8	8%	0	0%	28	6%
Impact on ability to do normal activities	Yes	9	5%	23	23%	10	12%	42	9%
	No	5	3%	64	64%	15	18%	84	19%
	Prefer not to say	2	1%	8	8%	0	0%	10	2%

Area		Year 1 (pre-Covid)		Year 2 (Covid Year 1)		Year 3 (Covid Year 2)		Total	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Type of condition	Long term pain	4	2%	9	9%	7	9%	20	4%
	Mental Health	3	2%	7	7%	5	6%	15	3%
	Mobility	2	1%	8	8%	3	4%	13	3%
	Breathing	4	2%	n/a	0%	5	6%	9	2%
Employee status	Not looking for work	18	7%	7	8%	1	1%	26	6%
	Retired	56	22%	8	9%	13	16%	77	17%
	School or college	24	10%	5	5%	0	0%	29	7%
	Unemployed	58	23%	12	13%	5	6%	75	17%
	University	1	0%	2	2%	2	2%	5	1%
	Full time work	61	24%	46	51%	38	46%	145	33%
	Part time work	32	13%	11	12%	18	22%	61	14%

Figure 15 - Baseline physical activity levels

		Year 1 (pre-Covid)		Year 2 (Covid Year 1)		Year 3 (Covid Year 2)		Total	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total responses		258		102		82		442	
Walking in last 7 days	Yes	164	64%	87	85%	75	91%	326	74%
	No	94	36%	15	15%	7	9%	116	26%
How many days	1	72	44%	8	8%	3	4%	83	19%
	2	13	8%	9	9%	8	10%	30	7%
	3	28	17%	13	14%	11	13%	52	12%
	4	5	3%	12	13%	6	7%	23	5%
	5	6	4%	8	8%	16	20%	30	7%
	6	2	1%	5	5%	2	2%	9	2%
	7	39	24%	33	35%	29	35%	101	23%
Cycling in last 7 days	Yes	16	6%	6	7%	13	16%	35	8%
	No	240	94%	86	93%	64	78%	390	88%
How many days	1	10	63%	3	60%	4	5%	17	4%
	2	1	6%	1	20%	3	4%	5	1%
	3	1	6%	1	20%	1	1%	3	1%
	4	1	6%		0%	0	0%	1	0%
	5		0%		0%	2	2%	2	0%
	6		0%		0%	2	2%	2	0%
	7	2	13%		0%	1	1%	3	1%
Sport Fitness Activity	Yes	38	15%	43	44%	30	37%	111	25%
	No	220	85%	54	56%	50	61%	324	73%
	1	23	61%	18	42%	10	12%	51	12%



		Year 1 (pre-Covid)		Year 2 (Covid Year 1)		Year 3 (Covid Year 2)		Total	
		Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
How many days	2	3	8%	8	19%	7	9%	18	4%
	3	4	11%	10	23%	4	5%	18	4%
	4	2	5%	11	26%	3	4%	16	4%
	5	1	3%	3	7%	3	4%	7	2%
	6		0%	8	19%	1	1%	9	2%
	7	4	11%	3	7%	3	4%	10	2%

Figure 16 - Overall levels of physical activity

		Year 1 (pre-Covid)		Year 2 (Covid Year 1)		Year 3 (Covid Year 2)		Total	
		Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Inactive	Less than 30 mins	158	61%	24	23%	7	9%	189	42%
Medium	Between 30 minutes and 150 minutes	56	22%	22	21%	18	22%	96	22%
Active	More than 150	44	17%	59	56%	57	70%	160	36%
Subset of Inactive	0 minutes per week	98	38%	22	21%	6	7%	126	28%

Figure 17 - Baseline levels of wellbeing

		Year 1 (pre-Covid)		Year 2 (Covid Year 1)		Year 3 (Covid Year 2)		Total	
		Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Satisfaction	Low (0 to 5)	82	32%	37	36%	14	18%	133	31%
	Medium (6 to 7)	35	14%	17	17%	22	29%	74	17%
	High (8 to 10)	138	54%	49	48%	41	53%	228	52%
Happy	Low (0 to 5)	82	32%	33	32%	15	19%	130	30%
	Medium (6 to 7)	39	15%	24	23%	16	21%	79	18%
	High (8 to 10)	134	53%	46	45%	46	60%	226	52%
Worthwhile	Not worthwhile (0 to 5)	78	31%	29	28%	9	12%	116	27%

		Year 1 (pre-Covid)		Year 2 (Covid Year 1)		Year 3 (Covid Year 2)		Total	
		Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
	Medium (6 to 7)	32	13%	18	17%	18	23%	68	16%
	Completely worthwhile (8 to 10)	145	57%	56	54%	49	64%	250	57%

Figure 18 - Individual development and trust

		Year 1 (pre-Covid)		Year 2 (Covid Year 1)		Year 3 (Covid Year 2)		Total	
		Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
<b>I think people in my local area can be trusted</b>	Strongly Agree	38	23%	8	10%				
						2	4%	48	17%
	Agree	61	38%	32	39%	27	60%	120	42%
	Neither	45	28%	28	34%	7	16%	80	28%
	Disagree	11	7%	8	10%	8	18%	27	9%
	Strongly Disagree	7	4%	6	7%	1	2%	14	5%
<b>I can achieve most of the goals I set myself</b>	Strongly Agree	50	19%	25	25%				
						24	32%	99	23%
	Agree	131	51%	43	42%	35	46%	209	48%
	Neither	57	22%	19	19%	7	9%	83	19%
	Disagree	9	4%	14	14%	7	9%	30	7%
	Strongly Disagree	10	4%	1	1%	3	4%	14	3%

Figure 19 - Impact of Active Dearne on physical activity levels

	Number	Percentage
<b>Total number of responses</b>	64	

	Number	Percentage
Number who have started walking (compared to baseline)	11	17%
Number who have started cycling (compared to baseline)	3	5%
Number who have started sport and fitness (compared to baseline)	15	23%
Number who have started a new activity	24	38%
Number who have increased amount of walking days (compared to baseline)	33	51%
Number who have increased amount of walking minute (compared to baseline)	35	55%
Number who have increased amount of sport and fitness minutes (compared to baseline)	21	33%
Number who have increased their overall minutes of physical activity	38	59%
Number who have moved from inactive to active	15	23%

Figure 20 - Impact of Active Dearne on Wellbeing

		Number	Percentage
<b>Total number of responses</b>		64	
<b>Satisfaction</b>	Improved	13	20%
	Stayed the same	32	50%
	Worsened	19	30%
<b>Happy</b>	Improved	22	34%
	Stayed the same	19	30%
	Worsened	23	36%
<b>Worthwhile</b>	Improved	23	36%
	Stayed the same	18	28%
	Worsened	23	36%
<b>Ability to reach goals</b>	Improved	17	27%
	Stayed the same	25	39%
	Worsened	18	28%