

GM Walking and Wheeling Fund Impact Report 2024-25

Report produced by Salford CVS, on behalf of 10GM





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About the fund

- The GM Walking and Wheeling Fund, supported by the Greater Manchester Integrated Care Partnership, aims to improve the health and wellbeing of communities in Greater Manchester by encouraging people who are less active or inactive to walk or wheel regularly.
- The fund supported voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) organisations across Greater Manchester by providing small grants up to £2,000 and medium grants up to £5,000.
- GM Moving commissioned Salford CVS on behalf of 10GM to manage the fund with projects running from November 2024 to March 2025.



Aims of the fund

The GM Walking and Wheeling Fund 2024-25 aimed to improve the health and wellbeing of communities across Greater Manchester by supporting people who are less active to walk or wheel regularly. In addition to the above, medium grant recipients were also required to address one or more of the following objectives through their projects:

1. Recruit and train Walking and Wheeling Champions who will act as advocates encouraging their community to walk or wheel regularly.
2. Improve the health and wellbeing of communities, reduce social isolation, and increase community cohesion.
3. Build knowledge, capacity, and confidence of local walking and wheeling volunteers, champions, and advocates.
4. Work with communities to understand and overcome local barriers to walking and wheeling so that these can be embedded into daily routines.
5. Work with schools, faith centres, workplaces, and other community destinations to help them develop and implement plans that encourage active travel.
6. Make community-led environmental improvements which enable and encourage more walking and wheeling.

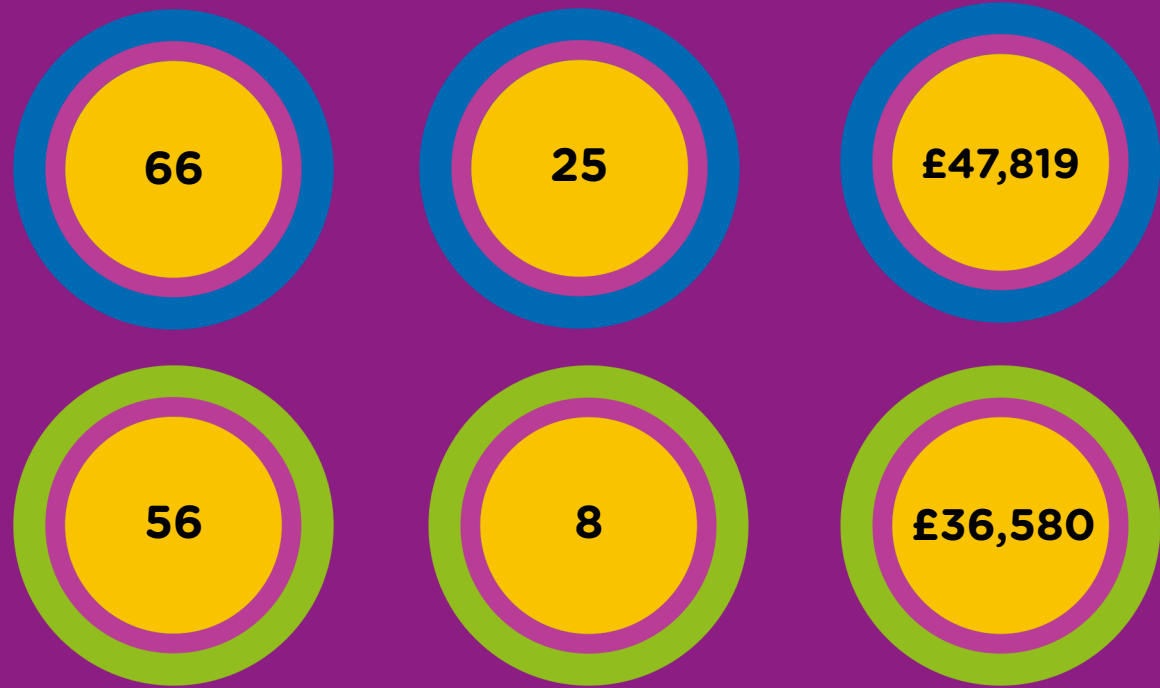
The fund was particularly interested in supporting organisations and projects that link into the wider health and care system in their area such as a local GP practice or family centre.



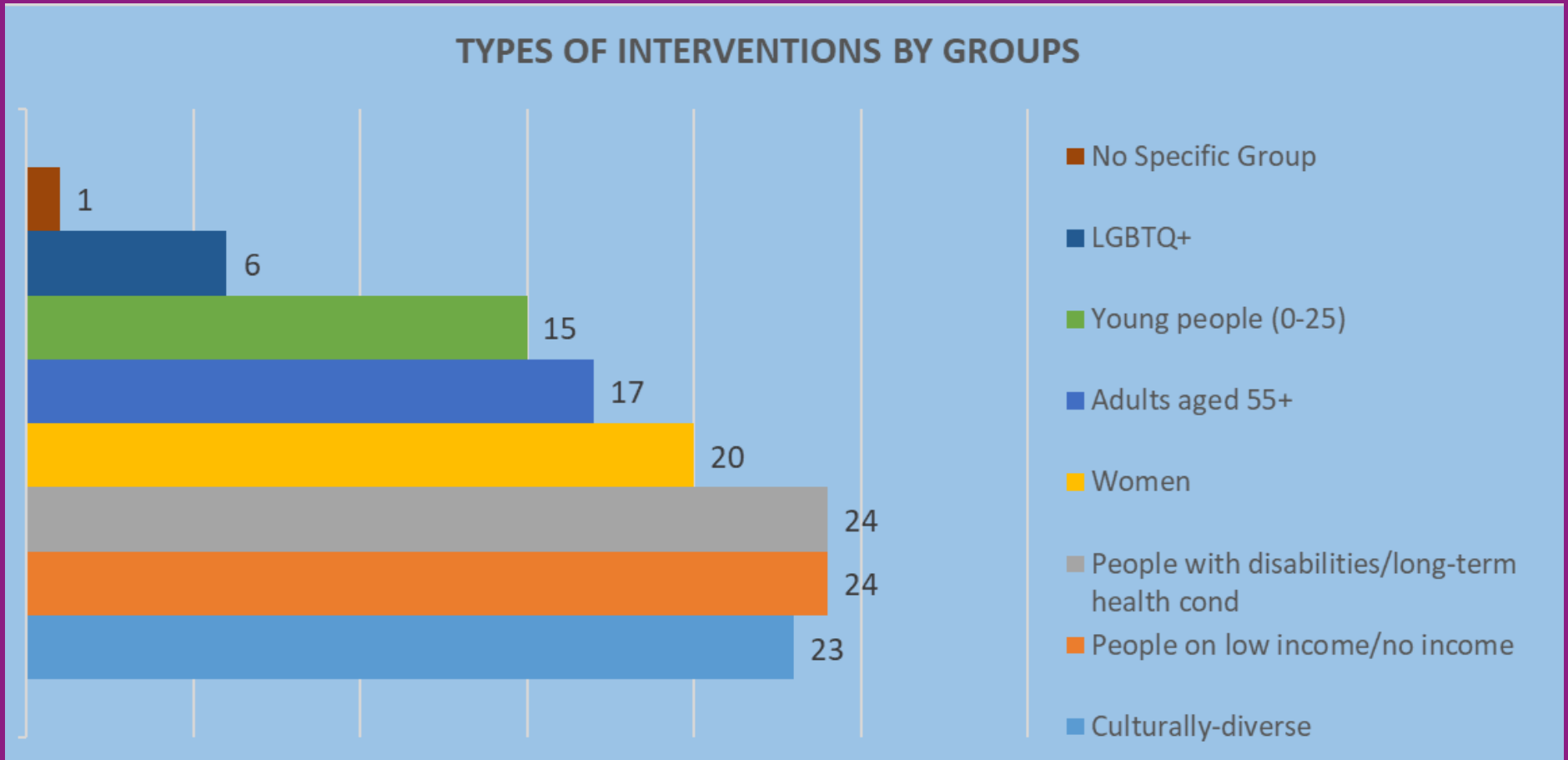
Grants: in numbers

Blue = Small grants programme
Green = Medium grants programme

Total applications Grants awarded £ Awarded



Project distribution



Impact: Small grants



1098

people actively engaged with walking and wheeling activities

291

walking
sessions
delivered

"I loved being outdoors, my baby always sleeps so well when being pushed and I got to connect with someone new and talk about myself."

Beneficiary, Emerald Lens

495

new participants who funded groups hadn't previously worked with

Impact: Medium grants



665

people actively engaged in walking and wheeling activities



145

walking
sessions
delivered



217

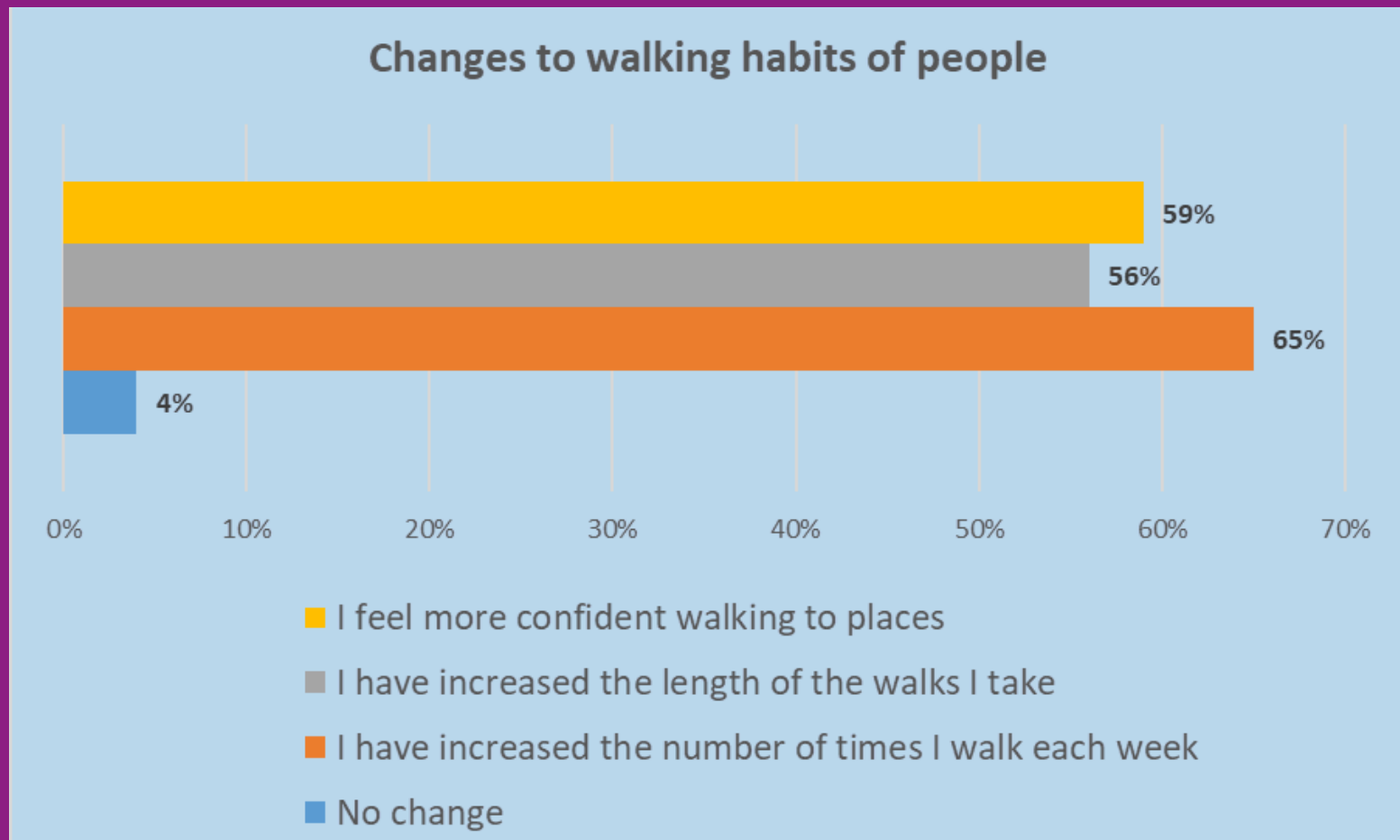
new participants who funded groups hadn't previously worked with

“The sessions were held in different parks, which provided a great opportunity to explore the beautiful green spaces right on our doorstep. I hadn't realised such lovely parks were so close by. This has been motivation to explore.”

Beneficiary, NACRO Outdoor Learning

Impact: Medium grants

- Funded groups conducted surveys with beneficiaries at the end of the project, to assess any changes to people's walking habits.
- This survey was completed by 231 people.
- Beneficiaries were asked whether they agree or disagree with the following statements, or whether there had been no change to their habits



Outcomes

The difference the projects made for participants:

- Better physical health
- Improved mental wellbeing
- Increased confidence
- Reduced isolation
- Strengthened social connections
- Felt empowered
- Started to admire nature
- Increased motivation to change behaviour
- Sense of belonging and ownership
- Improved friendships
- Improved mood
- A sense of calm and relaxation
- Felt more connected
- Got to know local walking area.
- Better sleep patterns



Outcomes

The difference the funding made for groups:

- Helped to raise awareness of the group within the local community
- Obtained wider visibility among locals
- Provided an opportunity to serve more people in the community
- New beneficiaries joined the activities
- Recruited new volunteers/walk leaders
- Walking sessions became one of their popular and core activities
- Staff were able to develop their skills
- Strengthened links with local healthcare services, community groups, etc.
- Boosted organisational confidence
- Recruited walking and wheeling champions



Quotes from beneficiaries

“Fantastic service, would be nice if they were longer, ideal for people with learning disabilities.”

Wheels for All

“Walking with the group outdoors helps with my mental health and helps getting exercise.”

Back on Track

“I live locally and hadn’t been to this park before. It was so nice to chat with other new mums and to feel like my worries are the same. I felt less alone. I’d never have gone out on my own”

Emerald Lens

“I feel I have lost some weight doing the walking.”

GMSAW

“I would normally be sat at home, thinking I should do something and feeling down. But instead I am at this beautiful place on this lovely day, I am going to take lots of pictures with my phone so I can look at them when I am feeling low and remember today.”

Greater Together Manchester

“Through the Stepping Up programme I learned so many things: how to plan walks, identify trees, check safety, navigation skills, and so much more.”

NACRO Outdoor Learning, Manchester

“I’ve never really liked walking before, but these walks were different. I joined the walks three times and I didn’t feel bored or left out. It was fun being with others and I felt good after. I’ve even asked my friends if they want to go walking with me now.”

Yuvanis Foundation

“We love our sessions. I struggle with meeting people and travel, but this is on my doorstep, not in a massive place, and Emmy is just so amazing and puts you at ease! We love it; my son has made some amazing friends.”

Empathy Holistic Buddies

“I am new to the area and didn’t know where to go. I have found a route I’m comfortable with following the walking group and try to walk 2-3 times a week. It has helped me feel better about myself, and it’s nice to get some fresh air”

Bolton Together Children and Families Consortium

“I’ve made so many new friends through this group. It’s not just about walking; it’s about building relationships and feeling part of something.”

Apex Health and Wellbeing

Spotlight on: The Inspirational Women



Case studies

Aisha, a 39-year-old single mother from Nigeria, had been battling low self-esteem and isolation after leaving an abusive relationship. When she joined the walking group organised by The Inspirational Women, she was hesitant at first. However, the consistent routine and the warm, welcoming environment helped her reconnect with herself.

“The walking sessions gave me a reason to get out of bed. It became my weekly therapy. Talking to other women who had been through similar things made me feel seen and heard.”

For Aisha, walking wasn't just physical exercise: it was a path back to emotional healing and community.

The Inspirational Women

One Deaf adult, who has additional needs, limited life skills, and no family or social support, initially joined the Manchester Deaf Centre (MDC) walking group as a withdrawn and quiet observer, relying heavily on a Deaf-specialist support worker. They rarely participated in conversations or activities. However, through consistent encouragement from MDC staff and peer support within the group, particularly during relaxed coffee mornings and walks, the individual gradually built trust and began communicating more. This has led to a significant transformation, and they are now an active and engaged walking member of the group, showing increased curiosity, improved communication, and greater independence.

Manchester Deaf Centre

Case studies

SM, 45-year-old British Bangladeshi male, joined Syngesis after having suffered a heart attack the year before. SM cautiously began rebuilding his fitness with short, regular walks through Syngesis. He hadn't felt confident enough for longer walks on his own, but that changed when he joined a Syngesis group walk at Hollingworth Lake. For the first time, he attended a longer walk by himself, focusing solely on his health. SM described the day as "fantastic," enjoying the scenery and connecting with other participants. This experience helped him regain confidence and safely reintroduce regular physical activity. He's now committed to continuing regular walks and plans to become a Syngesis Walking Champion to inspire others.

Syngesis

Claire T, a 78-year-old living alone with multiple health issues and a history of falls, has found immense benefit in a walking group. Despite relying on a walking stick and initially struggling with balance, she's seen significant improvements in her strength and stability. The group provides a vital sense of safety and support, a feeling she missed after her formal falls team contact ended. Claire values the camaraderie and accountability, noting that friends check in if she's absent, making her feel truly cared for. She's been attending for a year and plans to continue indefinitely, appreciating the ability to walk at her own pace while being part of a larger, supportive community.

Withington Assist

Sustainability and future plans

All grant recipients reported that their projects have been a huge success and that they'd like to continue their walking and wheeling sessions.

They plan to do this by:

- applying for alternative sources of funding
- building up leadership capacity by upskilling walk participants to play a role in delivering the sessions themselves
- recruiting additional new volunteers to help support the walking and wheeling activities

Yes, we have plans to continue bigger walks further afield at the weekends come summer so we're really looking forward to this as a group
Royal British Legion

We are preparing new applications to local health funds, Active Travel schemes, and Sport England's Together Fund to secure additional resources
Creating Future Lives

Learning 1: How groups encouraged inactive or less active people to take part

- Provided the comfort and reassurance needed to walk
- Offered different walking locations
- Developed core walking groups
- Had briefings before the walks
- Introduced step counts
- Formed walking groups via WhatsApp
- Shared messages through social media and texts
- Encouraged conversations among people
- Shared interesting facts about the surroundings
- Offered customised walks as needed
- Offered flexible times
- Provided cold and wet weather gear such as winter jackets, walking poles, wellies, gloves etc.
- Offered refreshments during or after the walks
- Promotion using posters and social media
- Introduced a buddy system (new walkers paired with regular walkers or volunteers)



I used to feel like I was always at home. Now I get out, I meet people, and I feel better.”
(BSL translation to English)
Manchester Deaf Centre

Learning 2: Accessibility and inclusivity

People have very different abilities, experiences and requirements when it comes to walking. Projects that understand and accommodate these differences are more likely to have a stronger impact. For example:

- Groups considered individual mobility levels and health needs when creating routes, which helped with attendance rates as beneficiaries felt confident in their abilities and were engaged in the walks.
- Most groups chose local venues that were easily accessible by their community.
- Car pooling was arranged if walks were outside the local area. Also, public transport information and routes to walk start points were shared with participants before sessions.
- Some groups developed posters in different languages to cater to different communities.
- Some groups utilised BSL interpreters when conducting sessions for disabled participants.
- One group teamed up with a local SEND school café to provide refreshments at a set price.
- Depending on the community, some groups ran gender-specific walks and made changes to walks around religious holidays. For example, during Ramadan, walks were shorter and the dates of walks changed enabling everyone to be able to attend.
- One group initially started with young people but eventually expanded these to family walks to help overcome barriers to attending for the young people they wished to engage.

Learning 3: Recognising cultural differences

Many groups acknowledged there are cultural and socioeconomic reasons why people might not walk regularly. People also have different levels of education about the benefits of walking.

- One group mentioned that the women engaged with their walks were hesitant to take some routes as they would be recognised by their local community. So, the group adjusted the routes and timing of the walks to suit them.
- Greater Manchester South Asian Women Out of Hours group offered women-only walks. These female-only sessions supported the women to walk more often, and they have since incorporated more walking into daily routines, such as taking children to school on foot rather than using the car.
- Some groups organised walks to local mosques, so many people in the community joined in, which also had wider benefits for community cohesion.
- During Ramadan, Hyde Young People's Enterprise adapted the boys' and girls' sessions so the walks finished in time for sunset, allowing participants to break their fast together with food back at their hub.



“Walking with others who understand my background makes me feel seen. I’ve made new friends, and I smile more.”
The Inspirational Women

Learning 4: Barriers to walking



Weather disruption (autumn/winter months)

Solutions: Offered indoor activities; provided suitable clothing and other equipment; conducted online learning sessions.

Health and mobility Issues

Solutions: Support from staff and more experienced walkers; offered short, accessible walks with regular breaks.

Initial low confidence and hesitation

Solutions: Communicated through various channels; implemented buddy systems; offered flexible timing and routes; offered same-sex walking groups; communicated that walks would be at a comfortable pace for everyone.

Staff availability

Solutions: Created rota system; trained staff; encouraged volunteers to lead the walks.

Issues with scheduling

Solutions: Offered flexible timing; rescheduled walks when required (especially during Ramadan).

Most groups mentioned that having a longer

implementation period would help them to overcome many of these barriers.

Additional activities as a 'hook' for walking

As well as walking activities, many groups also reported engaging participants in additional activities to act as a 'hook' and keep them engaged throughout the programme of walks. These included:

- Community gardening
- Arts and crafts
- Dancing and singing
- Exploring local history and wildlife
- Winter candle making



Feedback on grants process

We asked funded groups to provide feedback on the grant process. Of the 30 groups that responded, all 30 would apply to the fund again.

Other positive feedback included:

- “Easy to follow application form, and helpful feedback notes”.
- “Really clear instructions and guidance and great communication with the team”.
- “The guidance was clear and useful”.
- “Fairly straightforward”.
- “The process was smooth, transparent, and processed timely”.
- “The guidance provided is simple to follow and the team at Salford CVS (and GM Moving) were approachable and supportive throughout”.

It was lovely that some of the team came to visit the walkers!

We also appreciated the co-ordinator attending one of our walks, observing and meeting our staff, volunteers and participants, in order to understand our work and our participants.

In terms of what groups felt could be improved:

- To have the application and reporting materials available in plain English and/or British Sign Language (BSL) (especially for groups working with d/Deaf people).
- Having a longer project delivery period.
- “The size of the grant, the amount of admin/processing time is quite high”.
- “Starting the grant in winter is bit tricky”.

Meet the Funder session and networking

As part of the grants process, we held two Meet the Funder events and one end-of-project reporting session.

The Meet the Funder sessions were delivered by Salford CVS and GM Moving to give groups an opportunity to find out more about the aims and priorities of the fund. We delivered two sessions, one in the daytime (2.00pm-3.00pm) and one in the evening (6.00pm-7.00pm). In total, 18 people attended the sessions.

We also invited groups to share their contact details with one another, so they could share their experiences and learning and find solutions to common challenges. Eight project contacts consented to share their details.



Meet the Funder session feedback:

"Really comprehensive session!"

"Really great, practical session - thank you so much"

"Thank you very much Ashley and Carole, that was a really helpful session"

This report was prepared for GM Moving by Salford CVS. For more information about the GM Walking and Wheeling Fund, or the contents of this report, please visit the website or email the team.

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