



GM Walking and Wheeling Fund Impact Report 2025-26

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About the Fund

Greater Manchester Moving's Walking and Wheeling Fund aims to improve the health and wellbeing of communities across Greater Manchester by encouraging people who are less active or inactive to walk or wheel regularly. By wheeling, we mean using a wheelchair or mobility aid or pushing a pram.

The Fund offered two grant streams to voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) organisations across Greater Manchester. Small grants of up to £2,000 and medium grants of up to £7,000 were available, with the latter representing a £2,000 increase compared with previous grant rounds, where the maximum grant available was £5,000.

As well as supporting communities to increase the amount they walked, the fund aimed to increase awareness of and engagement with GM Walking, a hub of information and resources that supports people to increase their physical activity levels.

The funding was provided by the Greater Manchester Integrated Care Partnership. GM Moving then commissioned Salford CVS, on behalf of 10GM, to manage and distribute the fund.



Aims of the Fund

The aim of the GM Walking and Wheeling Fund is to encourage people who are less active or inactive to start walking or wheeling regularly. Based on data from Sport England's Active Lives Survey, certain groups are statistically less likely to be active*, and funding was therefore targeted towards these groups:

- People with a disability and / or long-term health condition
- People with low or no income
- Asian, Black and Chinese people (and particularly adults of Muslim faith)
- Women (and particularly pregnant women and those with a child or children under one year old)
- Adults aged 65 and over

*This data is from Sport England's Active Lives Adult Survey 2023-24 report.

Projects were also encouraged to demonstrate how their proposed activities would link to the wider health and care system in their area, to help achieve wider health outcomes.

The delivery period for this fund ran from November 2025 to May 2026.



Grants: in numbers

Blue

= Small grants programme

Green

= Medium grants programme

Total
applications



Grants
awarded



£
Awarded



There were 56 more applications to the medium grant compared with 2024 - 25, which is a 100% increase

There were 44 fewer applications to the small fund, which is a 66% decrease

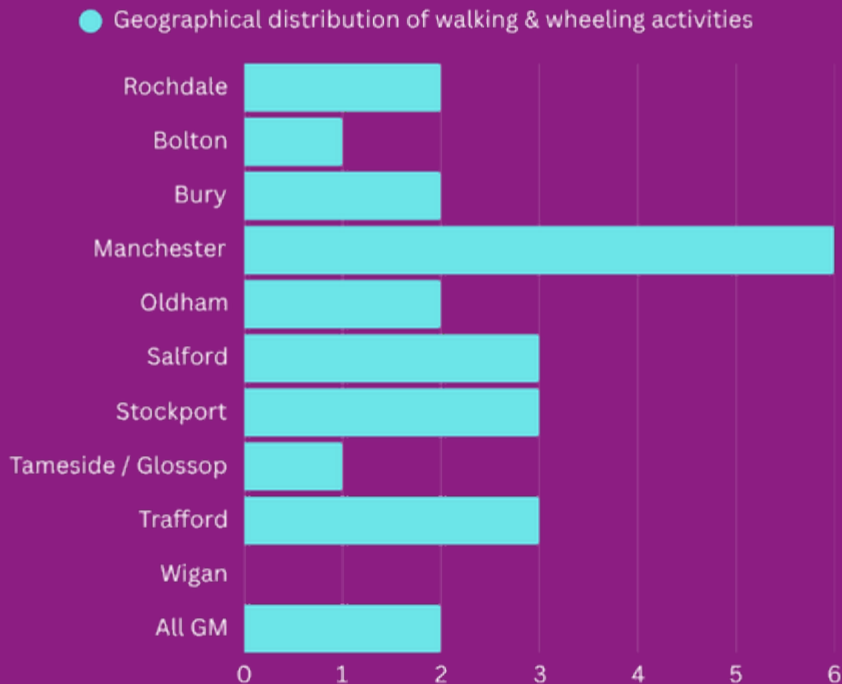
Overall, the fund received 22 more applications compared to 2024-25

19 groups were funded in total, amounting to £84,808

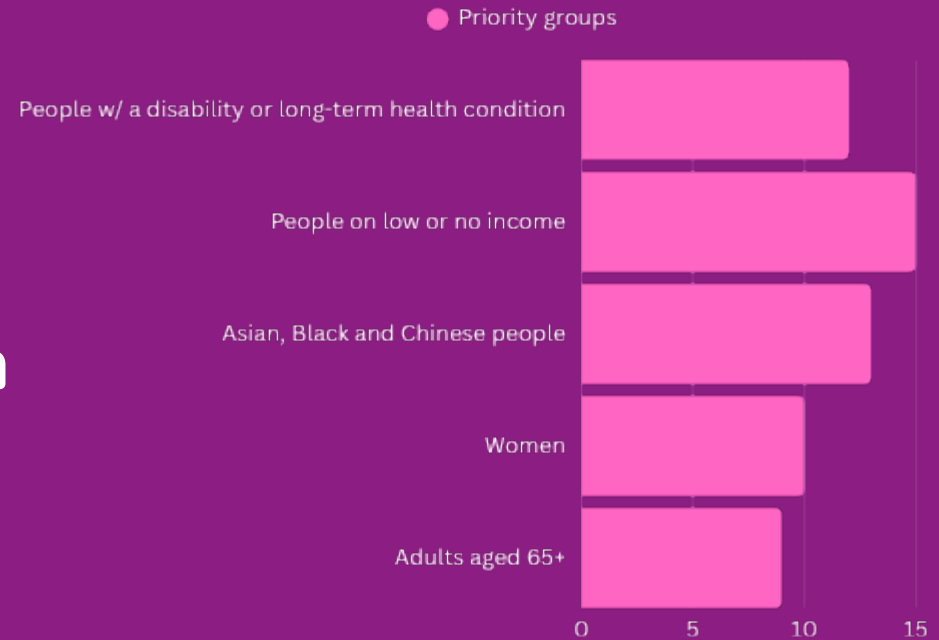
Project distribution

"I feel proud of myself because I
can walk further now."
Beneficiary, Bury People First

Geographical distribution



Priority groups



"We've been in (RHS) a few
times by ourselves now. I don't
know if I would have if I hadn't
come to this first."
Beneficiary, Recreate-U

Outputs: Small grants



Organisations funded:

Levenshulme Lovely Ladies
Alameen for Humanitarian Support
Walk for Health Stockport
Cedar Park and Hurst Community Group
Migrant Haven
Gentle Steps (formerly Whalley Range Women's Walking Group)
Make a Difference

"Before joining the walks, I stayed indoors most days. Now I have friends to walk with, and I feel more confident going out."

Beneficiary, Migrant Haven

The data above is based on 4/7 completed end of project reporting forms. The overall totals are likely to be higher once data from all funded projects has been received

Outputs: Medium grants



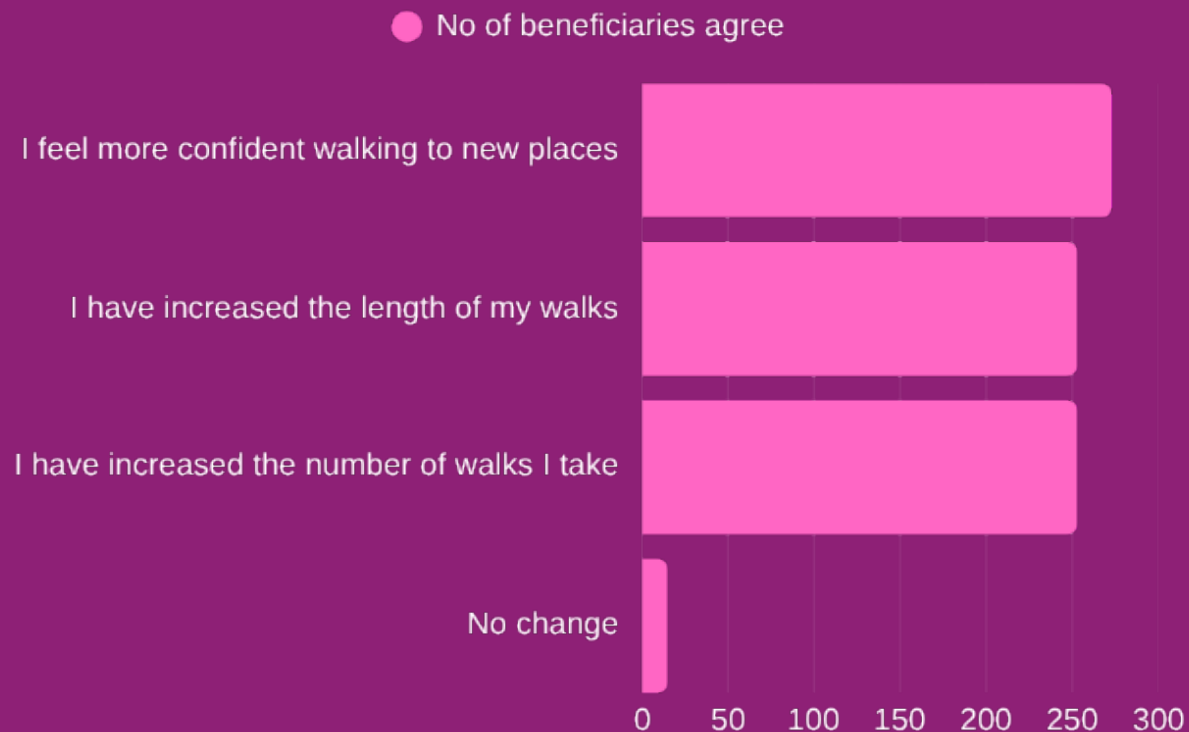
Organisations funded:

Angels of Hope for Women
Inspire Support Sports Empower Ltd (ISSE)
Speakeasy
Afrocats
Yaran Northwest
Bury Society for Blind and Partially Sighted People (Bury Blind Society)
Lifestyle Strides CIC
Bury People First
Recreate-U CIC
Rochdale AFC Community Trust
George House Trust
Pursuing Individual Excellence (PIE)

Impact: Medium grants

Funded groups conducted surveys with beneficiaries at the end of the project to assess any changes to people's walking habits.* Beneficiaries were asked whether they agree or disagree with the following statements...

*data from 11/12 end of project reporting forms





Outcomes for participants

The difference the funding made for individuals:

- New knowledge on local routes and green spaces
- Improved physical health
- Improved mental health
- Weight loss from walking
- Better control of diabetes
- Increased activity in local community
- Increased fitness, stamina, and energy levels
- Increased motivation
- Reduced stress
- Stronger sense of belonging within the local community
- Reduced feelings of isolation and feeling less lonely
- Increased confidence generally and going outside alone
- Greater engagement with nature
- Development of new friendships



Outcomes for organisations

The difference the funding made for groups:

- Strengthened and increased community engagement
- Developed new relationships with local residents
- Strengthened community partnerships
- Professional development of staff skills in delivering community-based health and wellbeing projects
- Increase in the number of people organisations can support
- Enhanced organisations' reputations as trusted grassroots organisations
- Increased referrals from health and community professionals
- Increased partnerships with other organisations
- Expansion of organisations' health and wellbeing work
- Increased training opportunities for staff and volunteers
- Built trust with local residents and strengthened organisations' ability to deliver culturally appropriate health projects
- Increased the time available for university placement students to attend sessions
- Increased volunteer opportunities
- Staff recruitment to coordinate and deliver walking programmes
- Physical benefits for staff who usually have a sedentary role

Links to health and care systems

The most common way funded organisations linked in with the health and care networks was through social prescribing referrals, support workers and community health programmes.

- Recreate U received referrals from their local social prescribing programme, Wellbeing Matters.
- Angels of Hope received referrals from Manchester Parks.
- Yaran Northwest reported that they will continue to work with their referral partners including family support services to engage people in walking activities.

“People were enthused to escape the confines of the city centre to explore new places, to see Manchester and the surrounding areas from a different angle, whilst reducing isolation, increasing social interactivity and confident.”

George House Trust



Quotes from beneficiaries

"Before joining the group, I hardly walked unless it was for work. Now I walk every evening after Maghrib prayer with friends from the group." **ISSE**

"The walks helped me discover places I didn't know existed and made me feel part of the community." **Migrant Haven**

"I didn't use to go out much, but now I come every time. I like walking with my friends."

Bury People First

"If someone said do you want to go for a walk I'd have said no, but I've really enjoyed today."

Recreate-U CIC

"The walks helped me get out of the house more often and feel connected to other mothers in my community."

Yaran Northwest

"Love the walks – they're nice and get me out of the house to touch grass."

PIE

"I have osteoporosis and my doctor said I need to walk. I didn't want to because I knew it would be hard but I made myself come. And now I'm so glad I did because this is just what I need." **Afrocats**

"Walking with other people makes the experience rich. Sharing stories as we walk is therapeutic. Before you know it, you have made more steps than ever before." **George House Trust**



Videos

Click on the images to find a link to the videos or click the play button

Rochdale AFC Community Trust

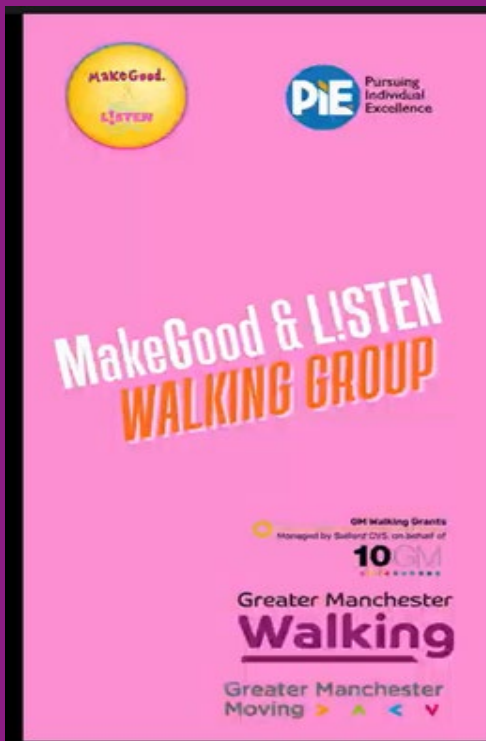
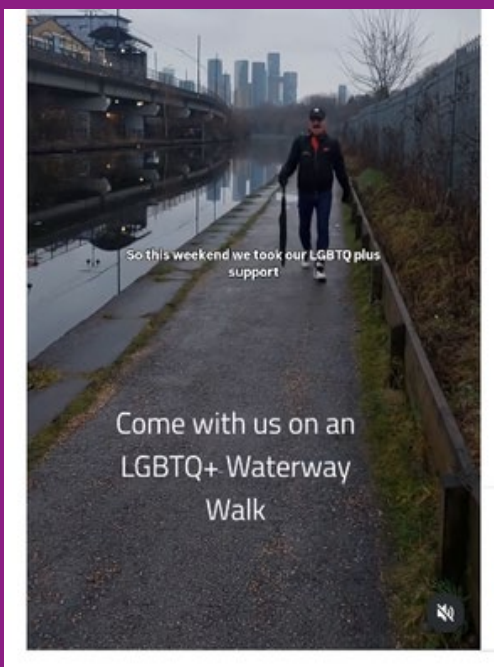


Lifestyle Strides CIC



PIE Pursuing Individual Excellence

George House Trust



Angels of Hope for Women



Blogs



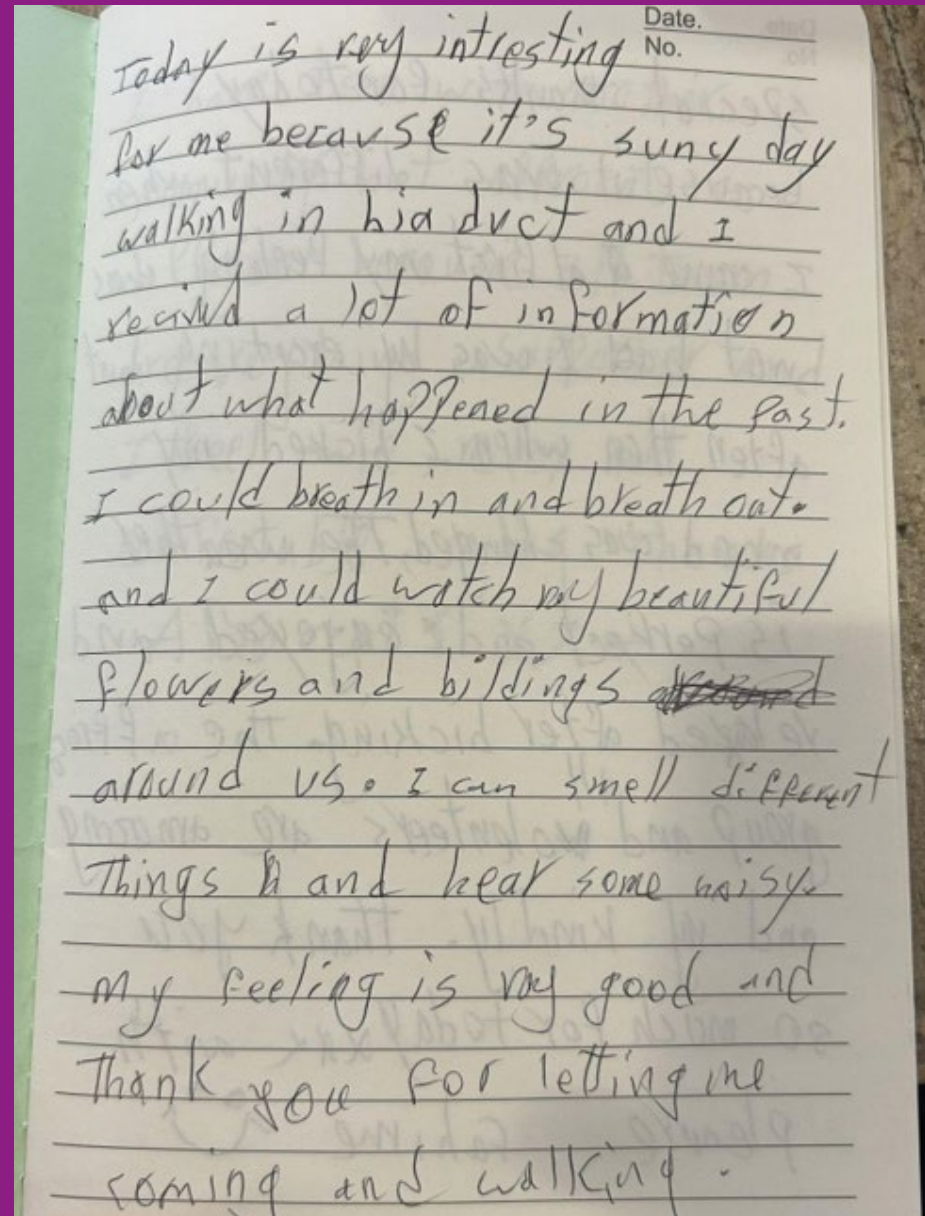
[Blog by Ganga Samarwickrama Salford CVS, Grants Administrator](#)



[Blog by Angels of Hope for Women](#)



[Blog by Migrant Haven](#)



Extract from a beneficiary from Afrocats

Case study: Yaran Northwest

Background

One participant is an Iranian mother living in Manchester who joined the First Steps Wellbeing project during a period of significant stress and uncertainty. She was extremely worried about family members living in Iran and found herself spending most of her time at home following distressing news from the region. She reported feeling anxious, isolated, and lacking motivation to leave the house except when necessary.

What happened

After being introduced to the project through Yaran Northwest, she began attending the weekly walking sessions. Initially, she was quiet and unsure about joining group activities, but she gradually became more comfortable through the support of the bilingual walk leaders and other women attending the sessions. Over time, she attended regularly and began walking outside of the organised sessions.

Impact

She reported feeling more confident leaving the house, enjoyed meeting other women facing similar challenges, and found that the walks gave her a positive routine during a difficult period.

She said: "The walks helped me stop thinking about my worries all the time. Being with other women and walking together made me feel less alone and gave me a reason to get out each week."

By the end of the project, she reported walking more often, feeling more connected to her local community, and having greater confidence in continuing regular walks independently.



Sustainability and future plans

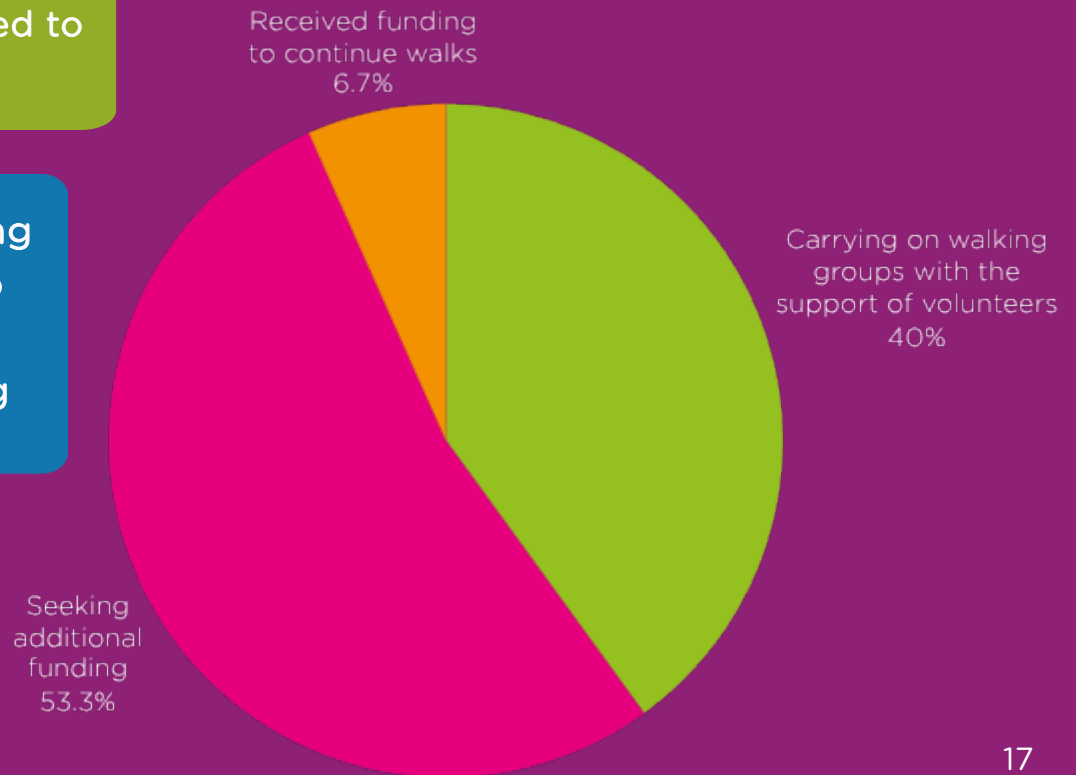
We asked grant recipients about their plans for the project beyond the lifetime of the grant. All organisations who responded said they would like to do more organised walks in the future. Those who are continuing walks are doing this with the support of volunteers, walking champions and through the use of peer support groups.

Levenshulme Lovely Ladies has received funding through the Neighbourhood Sports Fund to continue their walks.

“The learning from this project will be used to strengthen future walking initiatives”

“We saw this work as a pilot to initiating exercise and mobility and are keen to explore this.....and we’d use this intel. when co-designing any future walking projects”

“We plan to restart the sessions as soon as we are able to source further funding. Stakeholders and community connectors have asked when we will be restarting them”



Learning 1: The social element of walking projects

- Social connection and providing a shared walking activity really helped increase participation and encouraged long-term participation.
- Several organisations mentioned how important the social element of the walk was for beneficiaries. Having an opportunity to meet new people, make friends and to feel part of a community and reduce feelings of isolation was a major factor when it came to engaging people.

Migrant Haven reported that people who were previously isolated began building friendships, exchanging contact details and arranging walks outside organised sessions

- Creating welcoming, supportive and enjoyable walks which included time for group conversations, refreshments and breaks and a communication method outside of the group e.g. mainly WhatsApp was very important and participants really valued this and attended walking sessions more because of it.

Bury People First found that participants were motivated by seeing friends and feeling part of something. New relationships became a key motivator for ongoing participation



Learning 2: Accessibility and inclusivity

- When working with people with low confidence, disabilities, language barriers, caring responsibilities, poor mental health or no experience of being active and walking regularly it is vital that activities help remove barriers and create safe and inclusive spaces to ensure participants feel comfortable. This helps engage those communities hardest to reach.
- Having staff and volunteers with lived experience of your participants helps people feel comfortable joining in and builds that sense of community.

Afrocats reported for some women, concerns about personal safety meant they did not feel comfortable walking alone in parks or unfamiliar areas.

“I’m scared to do this on my own, that’s why this group is good for me. I feel safe in the group”

- Providing separate men’s and women’s walking groups
- Bilingual walk leaders
- Free sessions in local areas
- Offering different length walks and different groups for different abilities
- Using volunteers during sessions
- Removing practical barriers such as transport, providing weather appropriate clothes

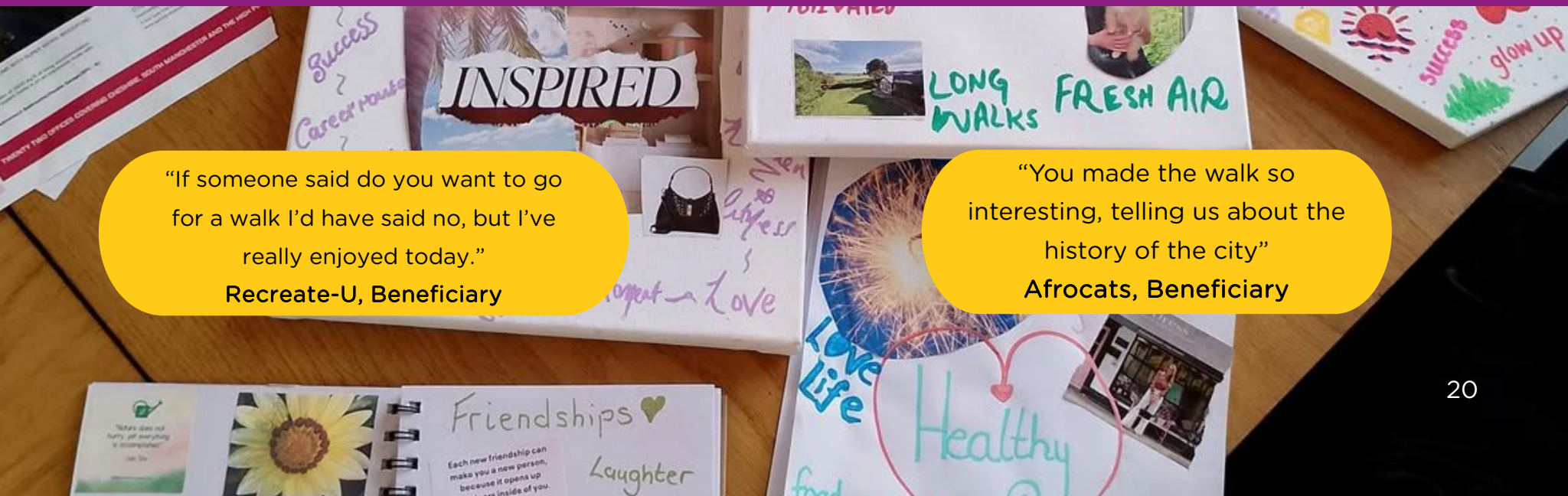


“The sessions have been brilliant, I felt my disability was understood and no one treated me like a baby”

Beneficiary, Bury People First

Learning 3: Providing a 'hook'

- The GM Walking and Wheeling Fund aims to encourage people who are inactive or not very active to start walking or wheeling regularly, however trying to encourage people who haven't walked before or aren't interested in walking can be difficult. Many groups reported that combining their walk with other activities or entertainment helped to engage people and in many cases people even forgot they were out walking. Several funded groups gave walks a purpose, this included additional activities such as visiting parks, museums, community venues, doing a litter pick, completing heritage trails etc. See below for two examples.
- Recreate-U delivered nature themed activities including birdwatching, plant spotting, photography, vision boards, gratitude jars etc.
- Afrocats incorporated sensory and mindful elements including storytelling sessions, themed discussions and outdoor drawing.



"If someone said do you want to go for a walk I'd have said no, but I've really enjoyed today."

Recreate-U, Beneficiary

"You made the walk so interesting, telling us about the history of the city"

Afrocats, Beneficiary

Learning 4: Barriers to walking

Poor weather

Solutions: Provide weather appropriate clothes, offer flexible programming, include indoor elements whether that is refreshments inside or offering walks inside.

Health and mobility issues

Solutions: Accessible routes, offer different walking speeds, vary distances, offer rest stops, wheelchair and pram friendly routes, travel buddies and easy read materials.

Low confidence and poor mental health

Solutions: Combine walking with other activities including themed walks, nature-based activities, heritage walks and fun walking challenges.

Limited motivation and / or negative views of exercise

Solutions: Consider the social element of projects, incorporate games, games or other 'hooks', offer breaks, consider how you describe the project when promoting.

Transport and access

Solutions: Deliver walks in local areas to beneficiaries, provide support with transport e.g. bus tickets, offer a buddy support system for travel

“Walking with other people makes the experience rich. Sharing stories as we walk is therapeutic”

George House Trust



Recommendations for future funding

Grant size - change from £5,000 to £7,000 for medium grants

Offering grants of up to £7,000 helped organisations to make a bigger impact on beneficiary walking habits and confidence (according to an analysis of data submitted in end of project reporting forms in 2024-25 & 2025-26) therefore we would recommend keeping the maximum grant size at £7,000.

How to reach priority groups

In order to reach specific communities you need to fund VCSE organisations who have strong connections with these communities. By continuing to fund a mixture of small grassroots organisations and large organisations with strong links in communities you are ensuring the funding is engaging the right people. Applicants also need to consider how they will engage communities who are difficult to engage in walking, this includes removing barriers or having an alternative 'hook' to their walk.

The importance of social connection

Nearly all groups that completed an end of project reporting form highlighted the importance of social connection when it came to engaging beneficiaries and encouraging long term attendance. For future funds organisations could be encouraged to explain how they will develop and nurture the social element of their walking and wheeling projects.

Health and Care connections

The majority of organisations whose projects connected with the wider health and care system worked with social prescribing programmes. For future funds consider delivering a networking meeting for all funded groups to connect with the social prescribing programmes in their borough and / or other health and care network connections.



Feedback on the grants process

In the end of project reporting form we gave organisations the opportunity to tell us what they found useful about the grants process, what they thought could have been improved and asked whether they would apply to the fund again.

Positive feedback

- It was helpful to have a word count as it helped keep answers focused.
- The application process was clear and proportionate to the size of the grant and the guidance helped organisations understand the priorities of the fund.
- Being able to apply for funding to cover all elements of the project including evaluation and core costs was useful, as this is often hard to fund.
- Straightforward reporting requirements.

“I think the process of applying for this grant was really straightforward and the support from GM Moving and Salford CVS was amazing. The regular contact from both organisations was great.”

Out of all the end of project reporting forms returned all 13 organisations that answered the question said they would apply to the GM Walking and Wheeling Fund in the future.

“We really want to restart the sessions as people are asking us about them”

Recreate-U CIC

In terms of what groups felt could be improved

- Additional guidance on how to report unexpected changes to delivery and the impact of these.
- Networking event at the beginning of the project to provide an opportunity to meet other funded projects.
- More examples and support on the different tools and methods available to measure the outcome of projects for small community organisations.



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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