

GM Walking Fund Impact report



June 2023

Salford CVS, on behalf of 10GM

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About the fund

Between October - December 2022, the GM Walking Fund distributed small grants of up to £2,000 and medium grants of up to £5,000 to voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector organisations across Greater Manchester. The fund was managed by Salford CVS on behalf of 10GM. It was supported by GM Moving.

Small grants were awarded on a rolling basis. A panel, made up of representatives from Salford CVS and 10GM, met every two weeks from October-December 2022 to agree the awards. Medium grants were awarded in December 2022 by a panel made up of representatives from Salford CVS, 10GM, GM Moving and the Caribbean and African Health Network (CAHN).

All small and medium grant recipients were required to complete their projects by 31 March 2023.



Aims of the fund

The GM Walking Fund 2022-23 was designed to improve the health and wellbeing of communities, by encouraging people who are usually less active or inactive to walk or wheel regularly.

The fund was also keen to support organisations and projects that link into the health and care system – for example, a walk and talk group that works with their local GP practice or pharmacy to promote walks.

As well as encouraging people to be more active, medium grant recipients were also required to work towards at least one of the following priorities:

- Support people who are statistically more likely to be less active or inactive to engage with walking, for example people with disabilities, people from ethnic minority backgrounds, or people from lower socio-economic groups
- Recruit and train '[Walking Champions](#)' who will act as advocates for walking and encourage other people to walk regularly.
- Work with communities to understand key walking destinations / routes and local barriers and solutions to help get people walking.
- Work with communities to embed walking into daily routines.
- Encourage walking by making improvements to the local walking infrastructure or natural or built environment.



Grants: in numbers

Blue = small grants programme

Pink = medium grants programme

Grants awarded

29

£ Awarded

£51,391.20

Applications not able to be funded

41

10

£42,965.51

34

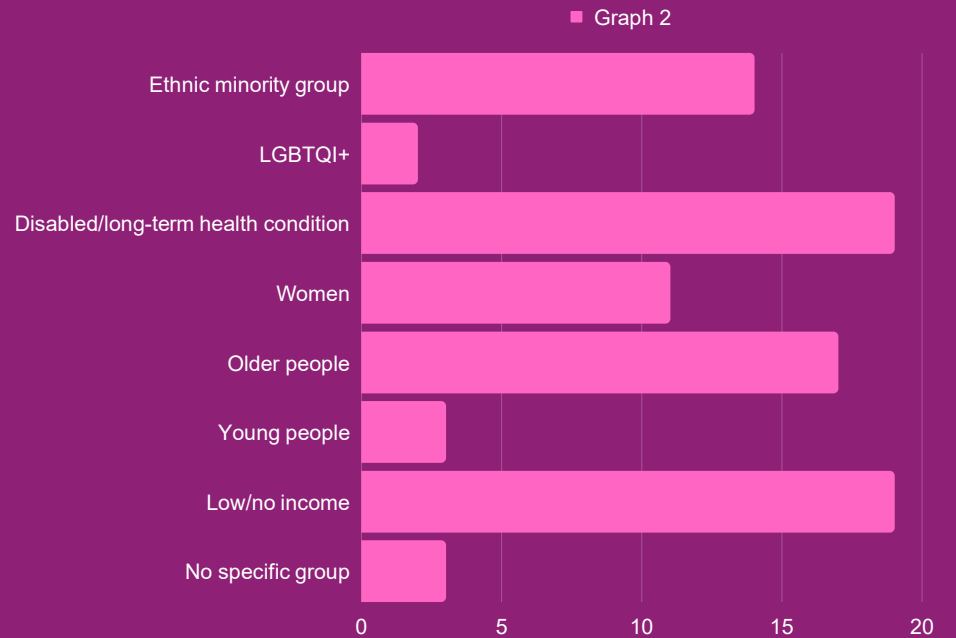
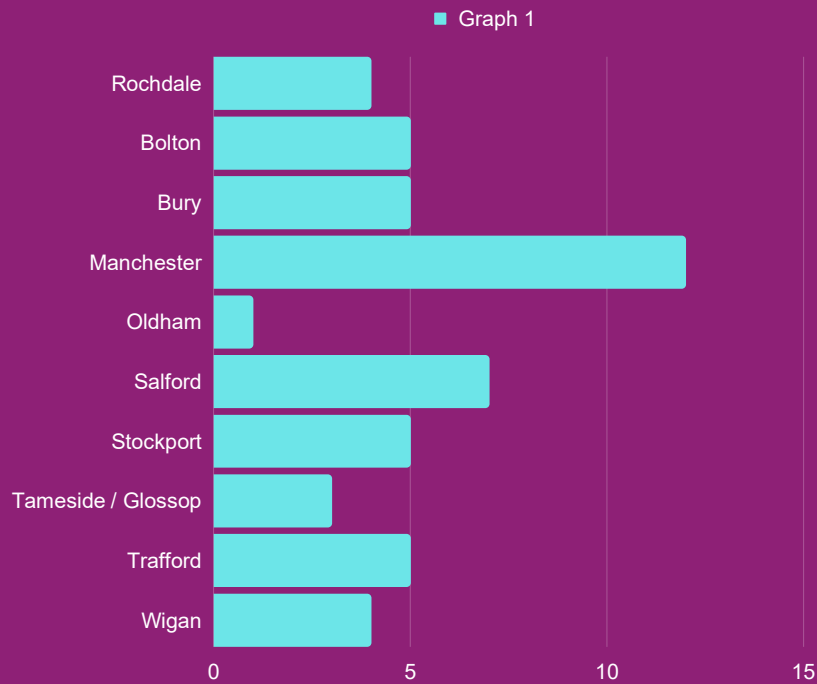
*By working closely with system partners such as the Together Fund, the Local Pilot and GM locality leads, we were able to secure alternative funding for four projects which we were not able to fund ourselves due to huge demand



Regions and beneficiaries

Graph 1 represents the number of grants awarded across the ten boroughs of Greater Manchester. Graph 2 represents the number of grants awarded across beneficiary groups.*

*data from 27/39 funded projects



Impact: Small grants

The funded projects encouraged an impressive 499 people they hadn't worked with before to walk more often.*

*data from 18/29 funded projects

“It is a great help to me to get out and about. My mental health has been very low recently and my caring role is the main reason for this. The group makes me feel normal and allows me to get some fresh air, exercise, and chat to other carers.”

Beneficiary, Together Dementia Support



beneficiaries



sessions



new beneficiaries

Impact:

Medium grants

The funded projects delivered 188 sessions during the funding period (January - March 2023).*

*data from 9/10 funded projects

"The Breastfeeding Together walking group has given me not only the opportunity to get incredibly helpful breastfeeding advice, but also the confidence to get out and about with my baby, meet other parents and explore some of the beautiful local parks and nature reserves."

Beneficiary, Breastfeeding Together



beneficiaries



sessions



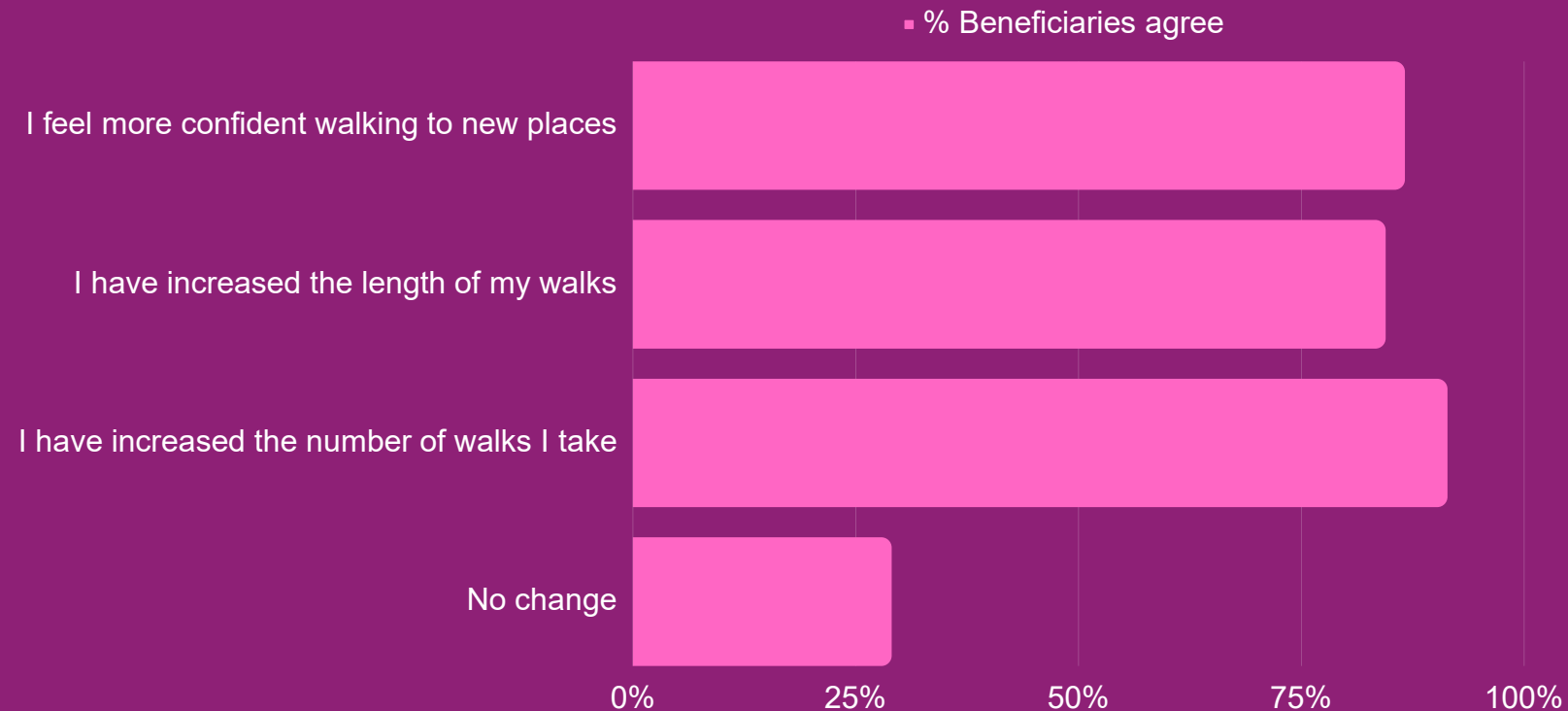
new beneficiaries

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 9/10 funded projects



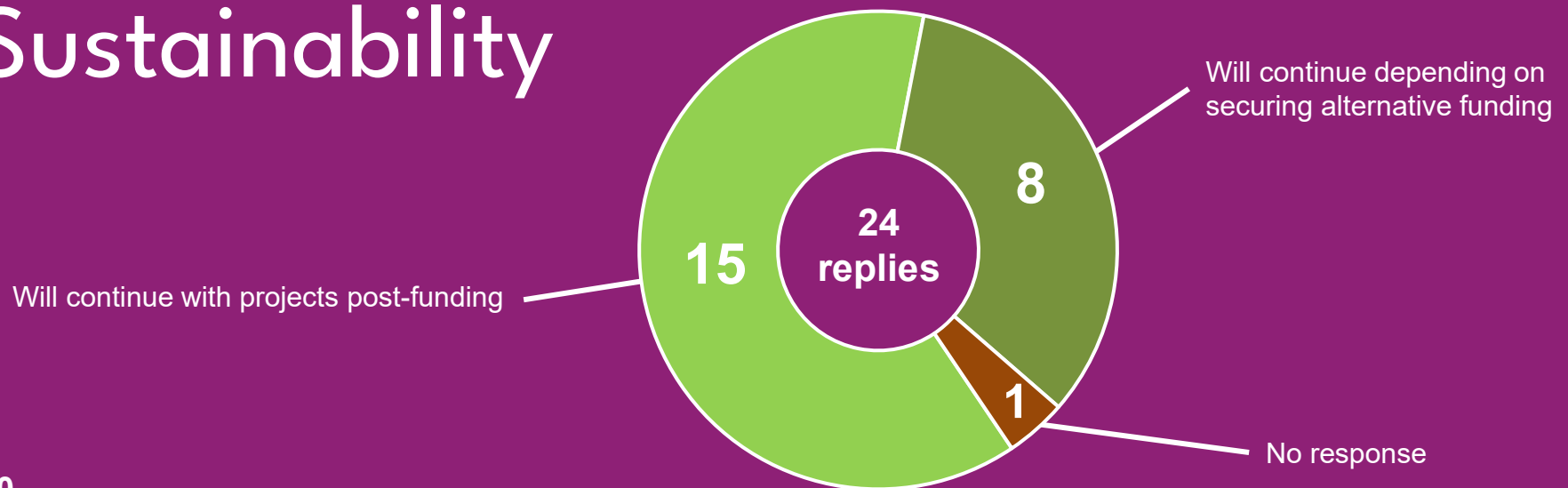
Links to health and care priorities

Monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) forms



- All projects who returned their MEL had clear links to our health and care priorities in that they worked to improve the physical, mental and social wellbeing of their group members
- However, of those, seven projects also had explicit and demonstrable links to the health and care system (e.g. social prescribing, the NHS and other system partners working within health and care)

Sustainability



Benefits

Reported benefits the funding has made to organisations

- Increased / diversified offer to service users
- Ability to test new ideas / approaches
- Increased visibility of organisation
- Reputation building in the local community
- Increased membership of organisation
- Increased recruitment to other activities run by the organisation
- Increased volunteer and staff recruitment
- Upskilling volunteers / staff
- Improved physical, mental and / or social health benefits for staff and volunteers
- Improved links with other local partners / organisations

Reported benefits for participants

- Improved physical, mental and / or social wellbeing
- Anxiety and stress reduction
- Friendships made
- Peer support
- Reduced social isolation
- Increased confidence
- Increased optimism about life
- Improved connection with nature / environment / surroundings / local area
- Increased sense of community belonging
- Teamworking skills
- Increased sense of purpose
- Motivation to get involved in other activities
- Sense of pride from being part of a group
- Increased integration among people from different ethnic backgrounds
- Reduction in medication use
- Choosing to exercise more with children and families
- A safe space

Learning 1: Timing and location

The timing and location of walks was important, and there was no 'right' approach. It depends on the community and their preferences and requirements.

For example:

- Two groups fed back that weekend walks were less well attended than weekday walks. They said they would focus on delivering weekday rather than weekend walks in the future.
- One group received feedback from a beneficiary that the walks they had planned were not accessible enough due to the challenging terrain, lack of toilet facilities, and lack of choice about speed and distance. In response the groups amended their plans so the walks were delivered locally in urban areas with more facilities. They also started offering linear rather than circular walks so people had the option to walk part of the route.
- A group in Wigan found that having the same meeting place every week meant that members who lived further away were not able to take part. In future they would start the walks at different locations across the borough.

"We chose one venue to run the walking groups as many families we support told us they preferred the same time and venue each week so they could plan it into their weekly routine. Some mums did tell us they found the group difficult to access from the outskirts of the Borough. We encouraged families to travel to the group together and helped several families find the easiest ways to access the venue via public transport. In the future we would like to consider running more sessions in different areas to meet the needs of all local families."

Breastfeeding Together

Learning 2: Accessibility and inclusivity

People have very different life experiences and requirements when it comes to getting involved in a walking project. Groups that understand their community and consult them about what they want from a walking project are more likely to have a stronger impact.

For example:

- Groups working with people with physical health problems found it helpful to offer subgroups within walking sessions so people had options about how far and how fast they walked.
- Groups working with people with mental health issues, people who are neurodivergent, and / or people with lived experience of issues like domestic violence or racism, found that it was really important to plan walks in a careful and sensitive way, for example by avoiding highly populated areas or walking in the dark. They also found that regular communication and one-to-one support helped ease beneficiaries' anxieties about engaging in walks.
- Many groups found that offering to cover the cost of public transport and / or providing warm clothing or walking equipment helped enable people on low or no income to take part.
- One group fed back that working with a physiotherapist helped them feel confident supporting people with complex health issues. This also meant staff had additional capacity to offer people health and fitness advice, providing added value beyond the walks themselves.

"The funding allowed us to assign an additional fully qualified physiotherapist to the Timperley Trundle team, which in turn meant we could cater to a larger group of walkers. Having another healthcare professional as part of the group has also meant that we were able to attract and cater for those with complex health issues, making the group more accessible. We have been able to deliver short educational sessions at the end of the walk on certain health conditions that may affect the Trundlers. Extra staff resource also led us to create a benchmarking system which meant trundlers were tested for their fitness, strength, flexibility and balance."

Timperley Sports Club

Learning 3: Beneficiary engagement

Groups used a range of approaches to encourage people to walk more often over the winter months, including themed challenges, a warm drink at the end of a walking session, and opportunities to socialise and make friends. Incentives were seen as particularly important for engaging people who are normally less active in walking opportunities.

- Most groups found that providing opportunities for people to socialise and make new friends were really important and helped keep people engaged week-on-week.
- Beneficiaries often commented that being offered a warm drink or snack at the end of a session was really motivating during the colder months.
- One group found that basing the project around a virtual walking challenge, a 200-mile 'Walk to Wales,' helped motivate people who are more sedentary to take part.
- Learning and development opportunities like map reading workshops and volunteering opportunities helped motivate people to get involved.

"The 'Walk to Wales' theme actively encouraged members who would not otherwise have taken part, to join this activity. It also attracted new volunteers who enjoy walking, to join the group, bonding with the other members whilst walking."

Breastfeeding Together

"Members enjoyed the regular routine, meeting up together as a group of friends at the same location at the same time. It was also an outlet for members who are not in employment, reducing isolation and loneliness."

The Friendship Circle

Learning 4: Delivery challenges

- Bad weather - attendance was lower when it was wet and cold outside and engagement picked up as the weather improved. Offering a hot drink in a warm space after a walk, and rearranging walks if absolutely necessary, helped encourage people to keep attending.
- Walking capability varied - as more people joined walking groups, people's fitness levels started to vary considerably. Having different options for the walks that varied by length, terrain and speed helped everyone feel included.
- Travel disruption - one group had to be flexible with where and when they held sessions due to the train strikes.
- Some groups found that recruitment took longer than expected. More lead-in time to organise projects and recruit walkers would have been helpful for them.

"At first it was hard trying to get more people to engage in the group, but we managed to combat this by getting more information to the local people. We explained that there will be free tea/coffee and biscuits and toilet facilities. If it was raining or very cold we also had the indoor walk."

Bolton Dean and Derby Cricket and Social Club



Reflections on fund design

Rolling application and decision-making process (small grants programme). A rolling process was more labour-intensive for the Grants Team and the panel, however this did increase the accessibility of the funding for some groups who were able to reapply when their initial bid was unsuccessful.

Project extensions. A number of groups struggled to recruit beneficiaries as quickly as they had planned. A longer funding period with more time for groups to deliver their projects (ideally 6 months) could help reduce the number of extension requests.

Beneficiary groups. Groups were asked in the application form whether they specifically aimed to work with people from ethnic minority backgrounds through the project. Collecting more granular data about the ethnic background of the intended beneficiaries could help ensure that funding is distributed equitably across communities.



This report was prepared for GM Moving by Salford CVS.

For more information about the GM Walking Fund, or the contents of this report, please contact the Grants Team at Salford CVS.

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