

Impact of our investment into community walking sessions in the West of England

Over the past 18 months as an organisation we have distributed £59,512 to several community groups across the local area to support walking projects from Sport England's Tackling Inequalities Fund. This fund was set up in April 2020 as part of a support package to help the sport and physical activity sector through the coronavirus pandemic.



TIF has supported 12 community partners to deliver walking sessions in a variety of forms across the West of England. When walking was the only option, these partners adjusted their delivery to meet the needs of the communities they support. The walking sessions have varied across organisations from 1 to 1 support to group walking sessions.

"The walking sessions allow me to feel comfortable sharing what is going on in my life, it's a safe space, helping me get out of the house, get active in green spaces which has had a big positive impact on my mental health."

"The sessions have given me a great opportunity to integrate into the community as well as develop friendships. I have gained the confidence to go out for walks with other people and not isolate myself. I have been able to develop English speaking skills in a relaxed environment."



Quotes from organisations and participants

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Getting out walking for many seems simple but for some to take that step is huge, the power of these walks is invaluable. Ensuring people have the support available to develop confidence to go outdoors encourages their integration into society & gives them confidence in other aspects of their lives. It takes time to build connections and trust. These sessions allow people to build confidence to get people who most need it out of the house & talking.

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The walking sessions have allowed us to build peoples confidence to leave the house and gain the physical and mental health benefits of walking. Different walking groups have been created for a range of abilities giving people socialisation which has brought some normality back into their lives. Many participants stated the sessions became their lifeline, allowing them to see people and walk when other services had moved online. The funding allowed us to extend the sessions over the winter months continuing to get people out the house. The 1:1 sessions allowed us to support people who weren't emotionally ready to join a group. People have grown in confidence, there has been a lot more laughter and smiles as well as an increase in physical fitness.

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Without the sessions I would have continued being isolated in my own home. When the pandemic hit I lost my confidence to leave the house. When I first started the sessions I was only able to walk to the end of my path, now I regularly go out on much longer walks. The mental health benefits this support has given me have been huge.



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The walking sessions were the starting point I really needed to build physical activity into my life. They have motivated me to continue my physical activity journey and inspire others to start theirs.

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For me the walking sessions are a form of therapy, I can open up about my experiences without the fear of judgement in setting that makes me feel relaxed and safe to do so.

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