



**SPORT
ENGLAND**

West Suffolk Moving Communities Place Case Study

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About Suffolk

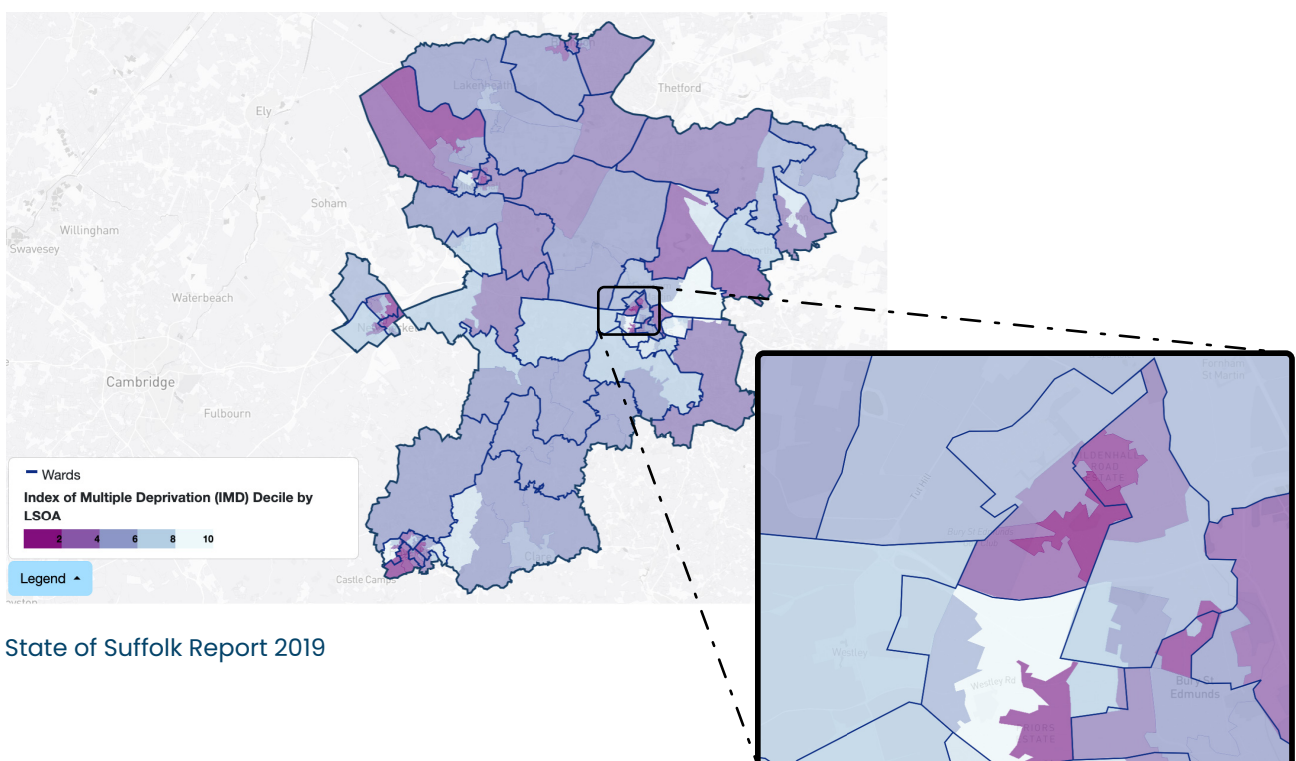
Suffolk, a two-tier county in the East of England, is governed by both county and district councils. It has an ageing population, which is expected to increase by 33% between 2019 and 2035, with fewer than half of those over the age of 75 active. Trends show that physical activity levels generally rise in line with socio-economic status.

West Suffolk Council have a Collaboration Agreement with Abbeycroft who is their

strategic leisure partner, as well as being the operator of their leisure sites.

About West Suffolk

To reduce physical inactivity, West Suffolk Council are using targeted interventions appropriate for each locality, for example those who are isolated, in social care or care homes, have mental health conditions, are ageing inactive or deconditioned, obese, etc.



Move More Outdoors (MMO)

Move More Outdoors and Fit Villages Overview

Move More Outdoors and Fit Villages were two initiatives piloted across Suffolk, by Abbeycroft and Active Suffolk respectively, to tackle inactivity within the region.

A key success of both initiatives was the collaboration between Active Suffolk and Abbeycroft. This is a demonstration of how an Active Partnership can work collaboratively with a strategic leisure provider and partner operator in a local place, being successful through not competing over the same resources but running programmes that add value, so the health and wellbeing of the whole local community is enhanced. This approach has both enabled the successful delivery of the pilots focusing on attracting different audiences and has been pivotal in securing funding for wider delivery.

Whilst the two initiatives target very different audiences, Moving Communities Place can be used to measure the performance of both programmes to demonstrate their value, support with planning future programme delivery, and validate the decision to further expand the funding.

The following sections of this report show the insights from the Move More Outdoors pilot in 2021 and the ten-week delivery of Fit Villages in 2023.

What is Move More Outdoors?

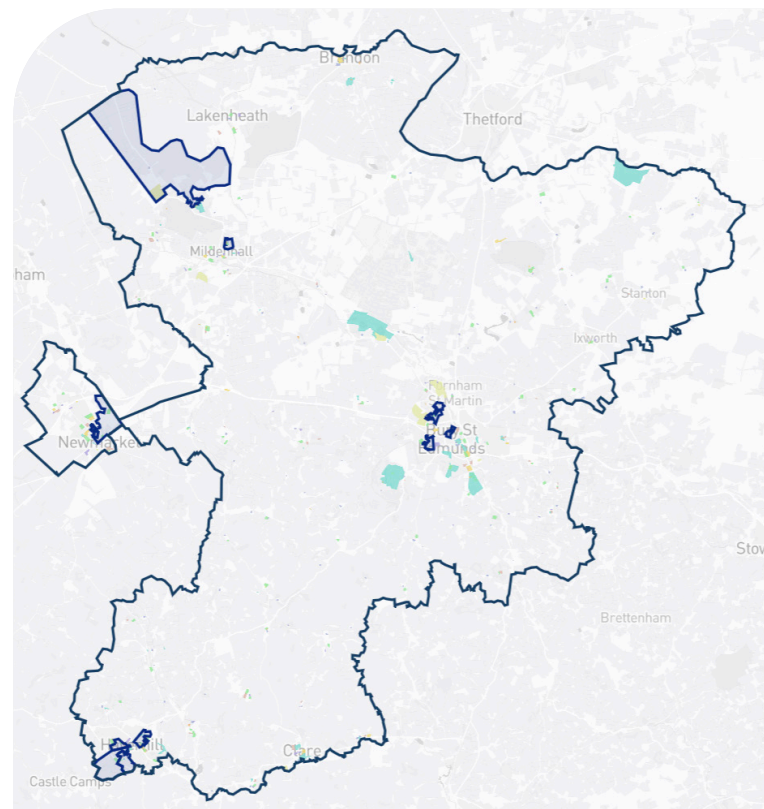
Move More Outdoors' is a free 31-week outdoor fitness programme run by Abbeycroft to reduce physical inactivity and inequality. It is delivered within the community space in the Howard estate of St Olaves, Abbeygate ward, which has been highlighted as having high levels of deprivation, as well as high inactivity levels. The initial pilot was funded by Suffolk County Council through the Public Mental Health Physical Activity Fund.

Why is it needed?

A Place based needs assessment was carried out, aimed at tackling inactivity within the region, high deprivation, and moderate to high levels of inactivity identified by the State of Suffolk Report 2019 and backed up by the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (2019). The St Olaves (Abbeygate) ward, alongside others, was one of the highlighted localities. The Howard Estate is within walking distance of the Bury Leisure Centre run by Abbeycroft, but many of those living there are not using it. By taking activity into the community and creating activity based on local needs and wants, the universal and targeted offer is available to more people, more locally, who have not engaged with the local centre.

Abbeycroft, with the support of the Families and Communities team at West Suffolk Council, worked alongside existing community leaders to create a menu of the type of activities they could offer to identify what the community wanted.

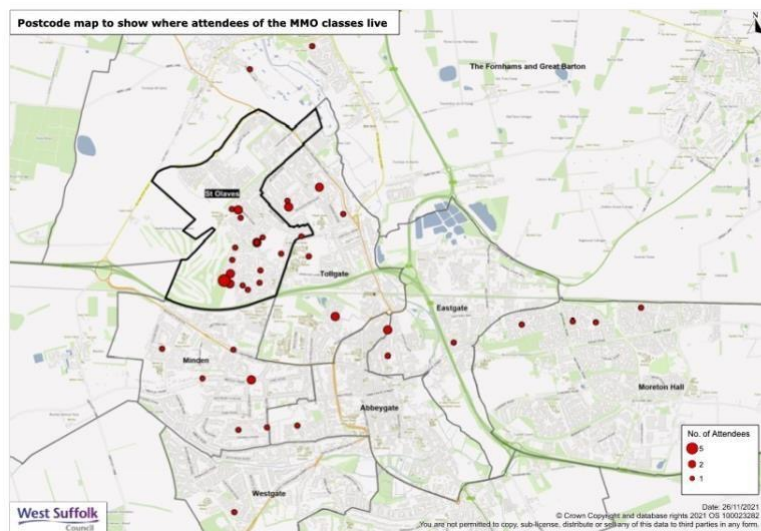
It was concluded, following a survey of local residents, that Basic Bootcamps and Community 'Health' Walks were what the community wanted.



- = top 30% most deprived areas

What are the key aims of Move More Outdoors?

- Engage those who are inactive at the outset
- Attract participants from the target community
- Engage those from low socio-economic groups
- Have a positive impact on mental health (feelings of isolation) and increase wellbeing (via the Short Warwick Edinburgh Wellbeing Scale)
- Increase level of activity and high levels of retention by creating a sustainable model for the future in that community



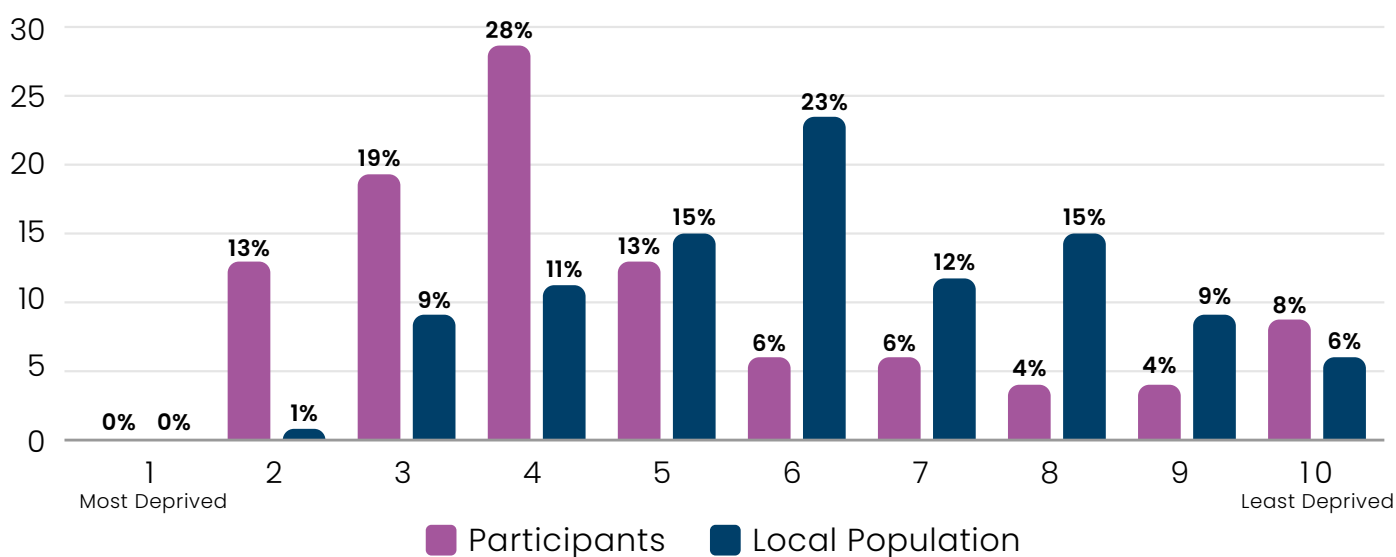
How is data collected?

When an individual registers to the programme, information including age, gender and postcode is collected. At each session, attendance is collected via a register and uploaded monthly to the Moving Communities Place platform, providing breakdowns such as age, gender and deprivation.

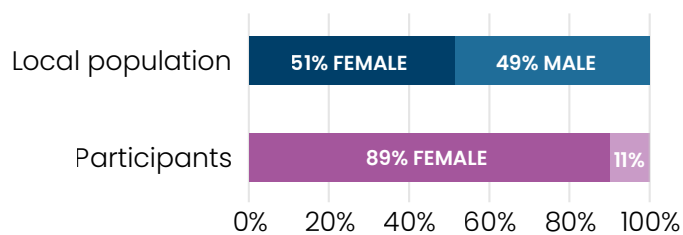
What were the results from the pilot?

In the pilot, 60% of participants came from IMD groups 1-4, far higher than the local West Suffolk population of 22%, showing that the programme attracted participants from the target community.

PARTICIPANT BREAKDOWN BY DEPRIVATION (IMD)

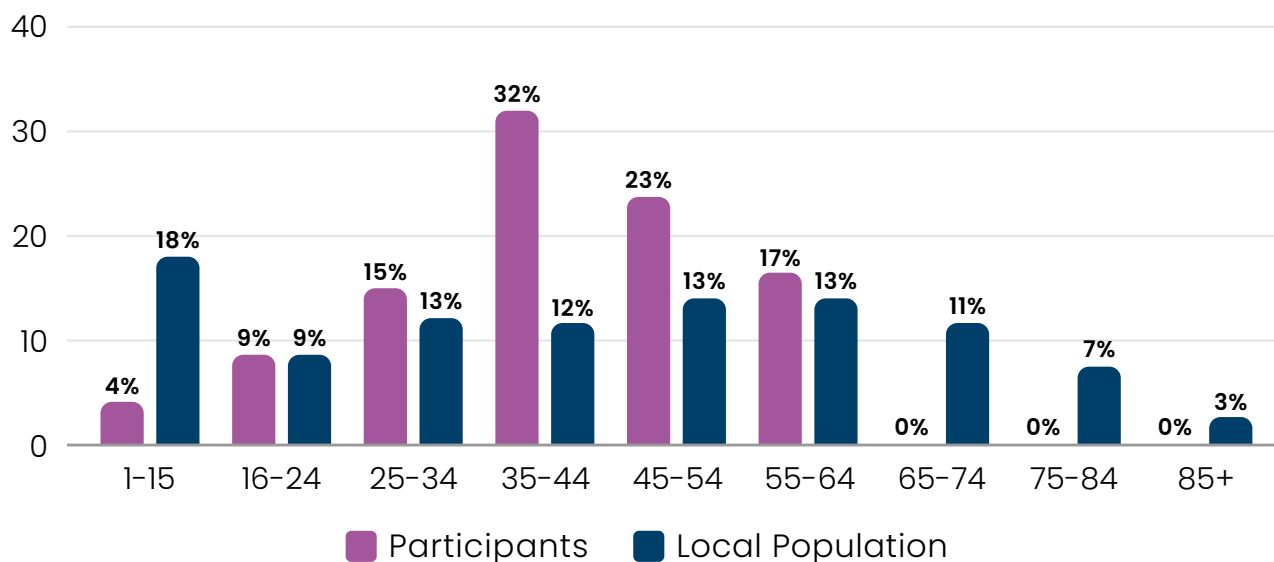


PARTICIPANT BREAKDOWN BY GENDER



Additionally, nearly nine in ten participants were female and over 50% were aged between 35 and 54.

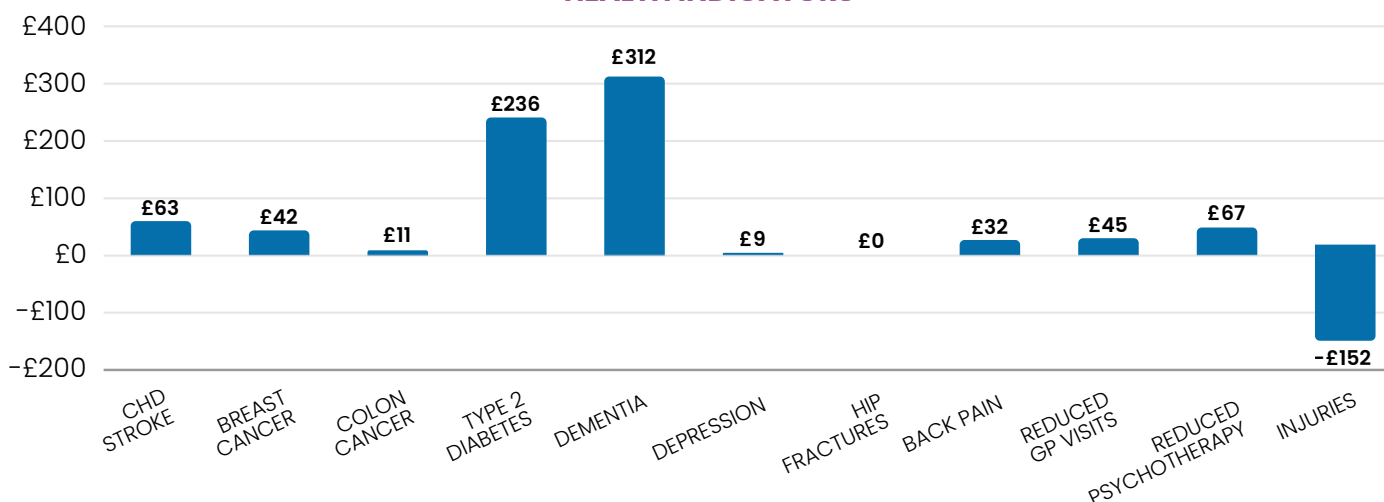
PARTICIPANT BREAKDOWN BY AGE GROUP



When looking at the social value from the initial 31-week pilot, Move More Outdoors generated over £3K, including nearly £700 in physical and mental health indicators.



HEALTH INDICATORS



Key Achievements:

- Successful retention in both class activity groups
- Survey results suggest an improvement in activity levels since taking part in the programme
- Creating links with local resident association groups
- Continuation of classes beyond the 31-week pilot programme with leftover grant funding
- Variance in age of users
- Engaging with residents in the target locality but also in wider Suffolk
- Improving health inequalities

Challenges:

- Marketing language to engage with inactive individuals
- Community 'Health' Walks not fulfilling maximum capacity
- Digital surveying response does not correspond with the number of individuals engaged
- Seasonal changes have required indoor space within the community which Abbeycroft have continued to facilitate

Move More Outdoors Testimonials

"Exercise classes outside are great and feel safe. I haven't done this before and have always found classes inside a gym too intimidating. The weekly class has given me a pattern I can stick to and has made me feel better. I feel confident now too. Thank you for putting these on. I'm pleased that they are such a success with a loyal group each week."

- Bootcamp participant (4-6 months)

"I love attending boot camp and have seen a huge improvement in my strength and stamina over the last few months."

- Bootcamp participant (6+ months)

"I really enjoy exercising outside, much better than being stuck inside."

- Bootcamp participant (1-2 months)

"The MMO bootcamp has been great fun and got to meet and get to know people as well as benefiting from the exercise."

- Bootcamp participant (6+ months)

"I really enjoy the community walks; I have been attending for 3-4 months and have noticed I can walk longer than I used to without losing breath."

- Community Walk participant (3-4 months)





What does the future look like?

Building on the success of 2021's pilot, Abbeycroft are expanding to a further six locations across Babergh and West Suffolk, with each programme running for an initial 26 sessions aimed at all abilities, focused on social deprivation and high inactivity groups, and designed to be fun and informal.

A new Healthy Lifestyles Contract commenced in 2023, which is a five-year contract from Public Health Suffolk, known as Feel Good Suffolk. The next phase of MMO is being funded through Feel Good Suffolk funding, as a test and learn, so it will be embedded in the physical activity aspect of the Healthy Lifestyles Contract, making it sustainable and enabling direct referral for the inactive individuals.

How will success be continued going forward?

Using Moving Communities Place, the programme will be tracked and evaluated to understand if the desired outcomes are being met and the social value generated to the local communities. Sessions will be devised to motivate and encourage regular activity for the inactive to active cohort and achieve a high level of retention. Working alongside existing community leaders will enable identification of the needs and wants of the community, support community consultation and provide local engagement.

Community consultation will be a key aspect to deliver the appropriate sessions for the target cohort and improve physical activity levels.



Fit Villages

What is Fit Villages?

'Fit Villages' is a programme run by Active Suffolk that supports villages in rural locations across Suffolk to set up physical activity sessions for adults aged over 55 by using local facilities such as community centres, village halls, libraries and playing fields. It has been designed to target inactivity amongst older adults. It had been running since 2014 but was paused after COVID until a new pilot was reinstated in 2021. The impact of this pilot was evaluated through Moving Communities Place to understand value to the local villages and if the pilot achieved its aim.

How does it work?

Active Suffolk liaise with an individual from the village that they would like to work in and then survey the residents to identify the right offer, including activity, location, frequency and time of day. Active Suffolk support the setup of a new programme in a variety of ways including sourcing an instructor, subsidising the first eight sessions, supplying any equipment required, and measuring the initial uptake. Following this, the ongoing running of the

session is handed over to the instructor with 90% of projects continuing after the initial pilot period and associated funding ends.

Why is it needed?

Post-COVID, Abbeycroft had an opportunity to bid for some place-based funding to the West Suffolk Alliance Wellbeing Forum (part of the SNEE ICB). The Alliance was asked to fund COVID recovery to ensure effective health outcomes were delivered in a fully integrated health and activity system approach, and to consider how partner organisations could link together to maximise wider system benefits across the West Suffolk Alliance area. The bid was submitted by Abbeycroft and included funding for Active Suffolk to enable the delivery of an Active Schools project and the return of Fit Villages to West Suffolk. The overall bid was successful, and this collaboration led to Fit Villages returning to West Suffolk. Specifically, a co-produced Fit Villages programme of chair-based yoga was delivered for the village of Kedington, based on local consultation and need.

What are the key aims of Fit Villages?

- Reducing inactivity levels in the over 55 age group
- Living healthier and more connected lives

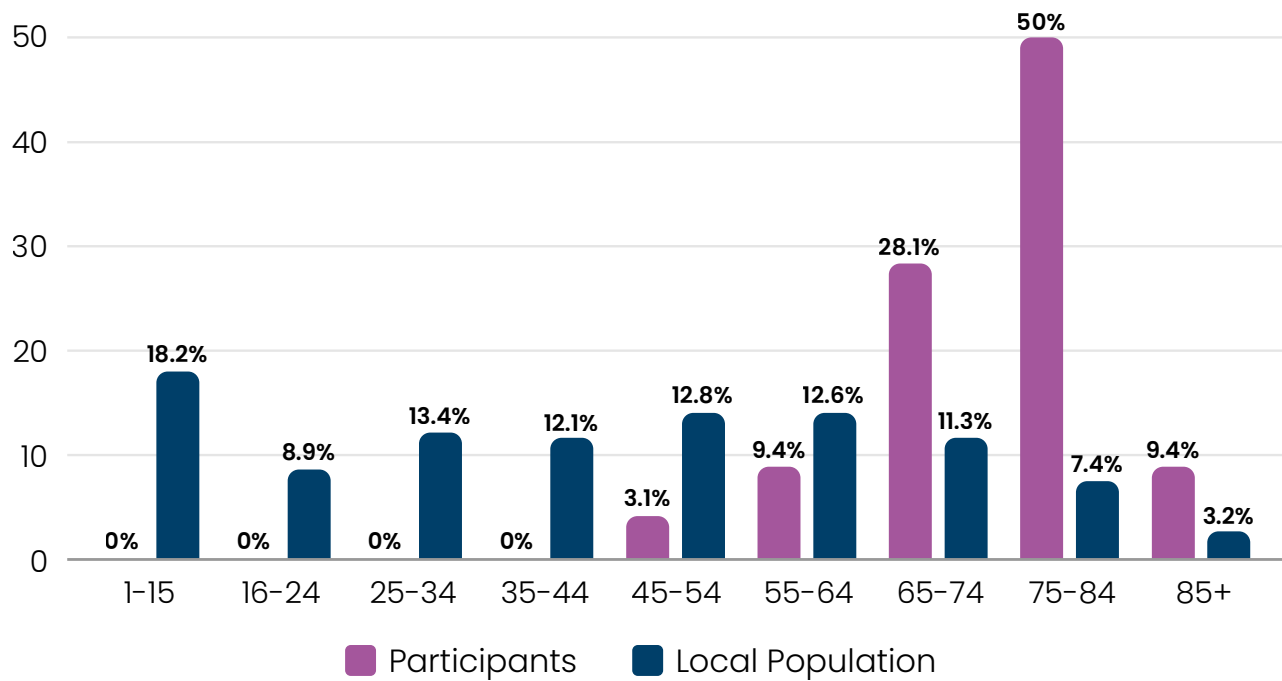
How is data collected?

Participation data was collected throughout the pilot phase via an Excel register before being uploaded to the Moving Communities Place platform. This includes session location, participant age, gender, IMD group and frequency of attendance.

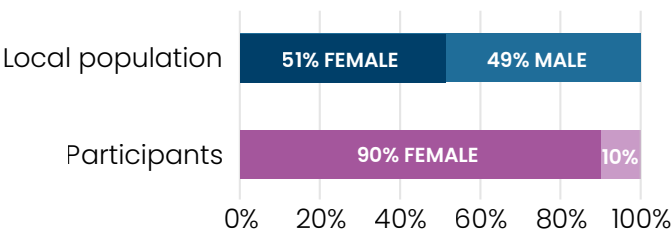
What were the results from the pilot?

Nearly all the participants in Fit Villages were over 55, the target demographic for the programme. 59.4% of participants were over 75 which is far greater than the local population rate of 10.6%, as shown in the figure below.

PARTICIPANT BREAKDOWN BY AGE GROUP



PARTICIPANT BREAKDOWN BY GENDER

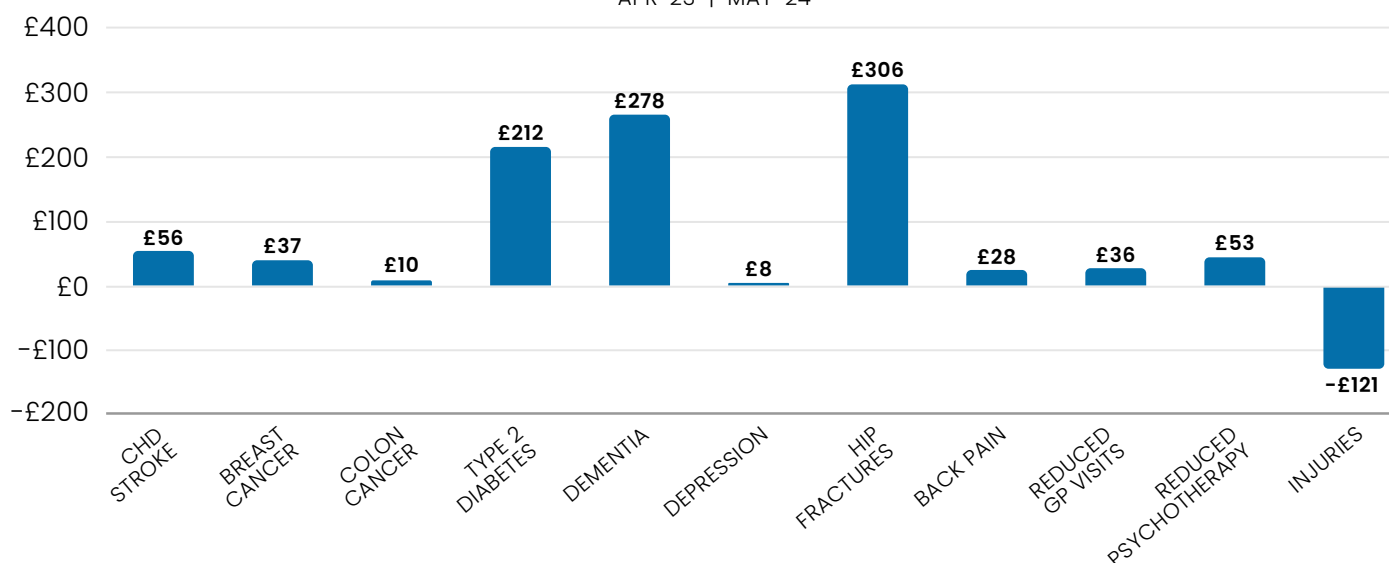


90% of participants were female which is far higher than both the local population and leisure centre participants.



HEALTH INDICATORS

APR-23 | MAY-24



The Fit Villages programme generated £1,765 of social value across the ten-week summer period, with over half being generated from physical and mental health indicators.

Fit Villages Testimonials

"[It's] great to have a fitness session in the village and tailored to the over 50's. It's helping me recover from [a] back injury. Not the generation to go to a gym, sessions in the village hall tailored to older folks' needs is spot-on. We have progressed from an easy intro and are now pushing on at our own, individual pace. I know there are others in the village it would help, too."

– **Andrew, Kessingland Strength and Balance session participant**

"Hearing the positive experiences of those attending and how much it had improved their wellbeing was wonderful. Speaking with participants reinforced the belief in the variety of benefits gained by being involved in these sessions. The facilitator used their expertise to know when to motivate and support them, to encourage laughter and joy in the session, whilst also providing information on the benefits of the activity. Fit Villages is clearly so much more than just physical activity – the new and enhanced social connections and improvement to mental health were evident."

– **Emma Swan, Active Suffolk Sport Welfare Officer at Westerfield Seated Exercise Group**

[Read more about case studies here](#)

What does the future look like?

Following a successful pilot last year, the Fit Villages programme is being expanded across 30 villages in the Suffolk region. It is a scalable programme that is piloted in areas of greatest need, to ensure equity of access to opportunities that enable people to stay healthy and well. The initial proposal included a £10K contribution which is used to underpin bids for additional funding for this project. The successful collaboration to bring back Fit Villages post-COVID, between Active Suffolk and Abbeycroft in funding and delivery of the programme, has a positive impact enabling further Fit Villages funding to be secured across the wider Suffolk area.

How will success be continued going forward?

The ambition is to continue to use Moving Communities Place to measure the uptake and impact of these pilots, helping to support future planning and any wider expansion.



January 2025

Moving Communities Partners:

