

A photograph of two women in an indoor setting. On the left, an older woman with short white hair is seen from the side, wearing a patterned top. On the right, a woman with shoulder-length blonde hair is smiling and gesturing with her hands. She is wearing a light-colored sweater with a colorful butterfly pattern and holding a pair of glasses. The background is a bright blue wall.

From data to action – Active Wirral

Moving Communities case study

Shaping Healthier Communities

When Active Wirral and its partners launched the Moving Communities Place Pilot Survey, their ambition was to better understand the health, wellbeing and physical activity needs of local residents, using that insight to make better decisions.

What they didn't anticipate was just how influential the findings would become.

With more than 3,100 residents sharing their experiences, the survey created one of the most detailed pictures yet of physical activity across the borough. But the real success wasn't simply collecting the data, it was how partners came together to use it.

Today, the insight is helping shape services, strengthen partnerships and target investment where it can make the biggest difference.





Building a Picture of the Community

The survey revealed a borough full of opportunity.

While only 35% of residents reported being active five or more days a week, slightly below the national average, an overwhelming 95% said they wanted to become more physically active. At the same time, almost half of respondents identified affordability as the biggest barrier preventing them from doing so.

Rather than seeing inactivity as a lack of motivation, the data highlighted a more complex picture.

Confidence, accessibility, affordability and having opportunities that genuinely met local needs were the factors most likely to determine whether someone became more active.

For Sarah Robertson, Active Wellbeing and Partnership Manager, the findings reinforced the importance of understanding communities before co-designing services.

“We needed to become local experts in understanding the needs, wants and barriers for our residents.”

Listening Before Leading

One of the biggest lessons from the project was that gathering meaningful insight requires more than simply distributing a survey.

Sarah explained that Active Wirral recognised early on that some communities had low levels of trust around sharing personal information, while others faced barriers through digital exclusion.

Instead of relying on a single approach, the team created multiple ways for residents to participate.

Working with libraries, local businesses, volunteers, walking groups and trusted community leaders, alongside paper-based and face-to-face engagement, ensuring that people who are often unheard were able to contribute.

“We listen and test...really understand what we’re doing well, who is involved and what has changed.”

That commitment to local engagement has become a defining feature of Active Wirral’s approach.





Turning Insight into Action

For Dave Simmonds, Active Partnerships Officer at Active Wirral, the value of the survey has never been about the numbers alone.

Instead, it has provided a shared evidence base that enables organisations across the borough to make more informed decisions together.

“We’ve used Moving Communities as our golden thread.”

Rather than individual organisations working in isolation, the findings have become a common language across leisure providers, health partners, local authorities and

community organisations.

The insight is now supporting funding bids, informing strategic planning, shaping outreach programmes and providing evidence for discussions with elected members and partner organisations.

As Dave explains, keeping the conversation alive has been just as important as producing the report itself.

“We use Moving Communities as a convening tool...we keep talking about it.”

ACTIVE WIRRAL

STRONGER HEALTHIER HAPPIER

Designing Services Around Need

The survey has also changed how programmes are developed on the ground.

By combining Moving Communities data with health intelligence, local surveys and community insight, Active Wirral has been able to identify where interventions could deliver the greatest health impact.

One example has been strengthening partnerships with healthcare providers to support people living with respiratory conditions.

Using evidence to target those communities most in need has led to clinically significant improvements for participants, with many continuing their physical activity journey by becoming regular members of local leisure facilities.

For Sarah, this represents a shift away from delivering programmes simply because they have always existed, instead, services are designed around what local people actually need.



More Than a Survey

The survey has also strengthened relationships between organisations.

Sharing the findings openly has encouraged new conversations, created new partnerships and helped different sectors work towards shared priorities.

As Dave explains, insight should never sit on a shelf, “using the data, insight and

community voice is our work. Share it with partners. Join it up.”

That collaborative approach has helped build trust across the borough while giving partners confidence that decisions are based on robust, locally relevant evidence rather than assumptions



Looking Ahead

Although the Place Pilot has already influenced local decision-making, Active Wirral sees it as the beginning rather than the end of the journey.

Future priorities include strengthening youth voice, supporting system leadership, exploring predictive modelling and continuing to use insight to identify where physical activity can have the greatest impact on communities.

As Sarah explains, success isn't simply about collecting more data, it's about continuing to listen.

"We listen and then support how tackling inactivity can be done differently."





Creating Lasting Change

The Moving Communities Place Pilot has demonstrated what can happen when data is combined with collaboration, local knowledge and a shared commitment to improving health.

Rather than producing another research report, the project has created something far more valuable, a living evidence base that is helping organisations across Wirral make smarter decisions, build stronger partnerships and deliver services that genuinely reflect the needs of local people.

As Dave reflected after presenting the findings to partners, the survey has given organisations “a strong evidence base” that is already informing planning, strengthening place-based working and helping identify where targeted action can have the greatest impact.

Ultimately, the project shows that when insight is accessible, locally relevant and shared across a place, it becomes more than data, it becomes a catalyst for lasting change.



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