

MMEC 6 Month Report (May '21 – Nov '21)

A narrative on learning and impact from the Move More Empowered Communities work

The aim of the Move More Empowered Communities project is to work with communities across Sheffield to understand what works to enable physical activity at a local level, what factors affect this, and to ultimately enable more people to do physical activity where they live. To do this in a strength-based way by Identifying and building on existing community assets and empowering communities to deliver the work themselves. It is being coordinated by the health and wellbeing team at Voluntary Action Sheffield, working closely with Sport England, NCSEM, and Move More partners.

Project Progress - Key achievements in the last 6 months

The following are, what I believe to be, the key achievements that have been important in progressing towards our aims in the Move More communities work.

Physical activity delivery

16 organisations have been delivering activities over the last 6 months. These have been anything from bird watching, to tennis, to dance, to woodland confidence building sessions.

Good conversations with organisations about progress

We've got a good routine of talking with organisations about the progress and challenges of their activities. Celebrating what's working and seeing how we can do more, but also supporting them with challenges. Picking out more of the key information about what works, why, and how it can be supported to grow. This is the majority of my role now.

Project visits

Making the effort to get out to see as many organisations as I can, on their premises, and at their activities, has been a great way to get a real life feel for the work and improve relationships with organisations.

Connecting

Slowly but surely, linking orgs together, or to other projects/training/funds. Encouraging projects to learn from others facing similar challenges. Encouraging buddying. Connecting assets together. This has resulted in some good new links being formed. For example, Bens Centre and MCDT are now working together on a pilot outdoor confidence building session. Fresh Start are sharing learning with Chocolate Box about supporting vulnerable groups of women. And SAPAG are learning from the This Girl Can workers about how they can attract more women to their events.

Linking with Social Prescribing support networks

We've formed better links with the social prescribing work in the city. Information and opportunities that go to Social Prescribers, now go to orgs we are working with too. A networking event has started for all front line workers, and orgs we are working with have been made a part of this.

Activation pot

Through our regular conversations with orgs, we're picking up more and more opportunities to support orgs to grow or diversify what they are doing, or invest in skills to better embed physical activity in their organisation. Our activation pot is supporting these impromptu opportunities. For example, Roshni have arranged for training which will allow them to include health walks as part of their (previously indoors/seated) counselling sessions. It's had a fantastic staff take up, and they've even invited other orgs to be part of the training. We're also using this pot to trial physical activity sessions at the SACHMA lunch club (along with a Q&A on benefits of physical activity), to offer confidence building adventure activities (e.g. abseiling, bouldering) for Fresh Start clients, and lots of other stuff too.

Community of practice

We've tested some smaller, themed, community of practice events. Based around isolated men, vulnerable groups of women, and bringing different ethnic minority communities into green spaces. We've had conversations about successes orgs have had here, what key conditions made these happen, and where the opportunities lie for future work. Encouraging a collective approach working around problems. These have been promising, and we will try one on a bigger scale in the new year.

What challenges have we been facing and what are we worried about?

Connecting to other physical activity work

The Move More Communities work still feels isolated. Much more could be done to pool resources if we better connected with other parts of Move More and partners. This feels like a stubborn issue however. It's hard to break out of conversation about projects, and into conversations about common aims and problems.

Bottle neck of information/learning

We are learning a lot, but it is getting stuck with us. We want to better capture it, share it, use it to inform and inspire decisions. To share with funders and other stakeholders. There is still more I can do here personally (write reports, share more often etc., bug people, get involved in other steering groups, bid development etc.). But, as mentioned in the last report, the real opportunities are in bringing people in community spaces to hear what works first hand.

Scaling up the learning and sharing conversations

We hoped that this MMEC2 process could initiate a 'live conversations' between the different orgs, to be able to spot opps as they come up, and connect assets, among other things. This is now happening in each 1-1 conversation with orgs, and in brief windows when we introduce orgs and hold small community of learning discussions. But it still needs to happen more on a bigger scale between orgs, this feels like the place where we can add value. And orgs have expressed a desire for this. I'm wanting to try a '1 year on' review where all orgs come together to share what they've done; this might be a good way to try it. But i feel it would have to be totally lead by orgs need.

What we want to test going forward, and where are the opportunities?

- Develop more case studies to better show what's going on in the delivery side of things.
- Replicating the EOI process on future pots of money
- To double down on good ideas! Invest more where it's working. Delve deeper into promising approaches - refined them, keep fine tuning, and give them more money to continue for longer

- The biggest opportunities are addressing the 'things we are stuck on' as mentioned above. Which i hope will results in better pooling of other resources, knowledge, skills, opps etc from other orgs to better support orgs we're working with (e.g. by offering training, connecting to upcoming funds, getting new direct relationships with funders, raise profile of org).
- To better connect across projects and orgs to help more peer to peer learning/connecting. Holding more of the community of learning discussions. Having a year on review. And asking orgs what next priorities should be to support growth of work.
- To connect orgs/leaders directly, or indirectly through sharing learning, to strategy. Although based on what I've said previously in this report, supporting leaders to connect and support each other might be more effective?
- Look at the data and try to pick up on who we have missed this time round (which ethnicities, communities, locations etc.). Then look at how we can work with these communities

Thanks for reading, if you want to discuss anything in this report, or other work we might be delivering in the team, feel free to contact Adam Batty on a.batty@vas.org.uk and I'd be happy to chat.

Thanks,

Adam Batty