

# Donnington Project Report

## September 2022

### Contents

Overview .....	2
Rationale .....	2
Consultation .....	4
Findings .....	5
Learnings & Recommendations .....	7
Reference List.....	9
Appendices.....	10
Appendix 1: Project Snapshots .....	10
Appendix 1.1 Age UK – Line Dancing .....	11
Appendix 1.2 Bhangra Dance Fit Kidz .....	13
Appendix 1.3 Donnington Boxing Club .....	14
Appendix 1.4 Donnington & Muxton Youth Club Active Gaming.....	15
Appendix 1.5 Everyday Cycling .....	17
Everyday Cycling Project Participant Story - Susanne.....	18
Appendix 1.6 PODS .....	19
Appendix 1.7 Shropshire Cricket Board .....	21
Appendix 1.8 Telford MIND .....	23
Appendix 1.9 Zumba .....	25



## Overview

In September 2020, Energize Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin were awarded £30,000 by the Sports Council Trust Company to “provide activities targeting inactive, hard to reach people within a 20 mile radius of Lilleshall Sports Centre”. This piece of commissioned work very much aligned with our direction and purpose “to improve quality of life through the benefits of physical activity” and our drive to tackle inequalities across Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin. After consultation and discussion with partners and community organisations, including local authority representatives and with approval from the Sports Council Trust Company, it was determined that the £30,000 grant was to be split as follows:

- £10,500 Donnington Community Hub,
- £10,000 Shropshire Cycle Hub,
- £5,000 Telford Mind,
- £4,500 Capacity costs to Energize Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin.

Donnington Community Hub and Shropshire Cycle Hub were identified as suitable lead organisations to manage, deliver and support projects. Telford MIND were also awarded a larger investment to provide a more extensive programme to support mental health and wellbeing.

## Rationale

With this initiative, there was the opportunity to test a different approach to traditional grant funding, with an opportunity to move from transactional to relationship-based investment. Research into long-term systems change, highlighted place-based and asset-based community development approaches, when deployed correctly, as an effective way to support local communities. This research signified that change emerging from within a community is best placed to address the needs of local people over the long term.

As identified by Sport England (2021), many of the things that stop people from being active are not in their power to change. The places, policies and conventions that make up the system have a large role in shaping behaviour and the choices, however national programmes often can't tackle these barriers that exist at a local level, and top-down interventions don't lead to sustainable change (Sport England, 2021). Sport England (2021), advocate collaborating with communities to learn how to create a new way of co-creating change. Discussions with other active partnership colleagues also highlighted ways in which place-based and asset-based community development approaches could be used in deprived and ethnically diverse communities to reduce inactivity levels and support long-term systems change. Hence it was decided to trial a place-based initiative which incorporated an asset-based community development method. If successful, the influence this approach could provide to the long-term sustainability of the initiative through system change, was something that was crucial to explore which could alter our ways of working in the future.

Place-based working is both a person-centred and bottom-up approach which focuses attention and resource to a given 'place' or location to achieve 'joined-up' systems change (Taylor, Buckley & Hennessy, 2017). Together with an Asset Based Community Development method, this initiative sought to both empower, and develop the strengths of the local community by appreciating and mobilising individual and community talents, skills and assets, rather than focusing on problems and

needs, being truly community-driven rather than development driven by external agencies (Cunningham & Mathie, 2002).

Consultation with a range of partners was undertaken in April 2021 to determine a suitable target area for this piece of work, this consultation included: local authority partners (inclusive of; Senior Health Improvement Practitioner, Health Improvement Practitioner, Community Support Worker, Safer Stronger Communities Team), local councillors, VCS organisations and the social prescribing network to name a few. This consultation group then developed into a local steering group who committed to meeting on a weekly basis to support the initiative from ideation to completion and beyond. The establishment of this steering group has been pivotal throughout. Local and national statistics also informed this decision making process, including information gathered from Census data and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, with importance placed on those locations classified in the top 10% of most deprived areas nationally. Specifically utilising the 2019 IMD data, 1 area across Shropshire and 18 areas across Telford and Wrekin were identified in the top 10% of deprived areas nationally within a 20 mile radius of Lilleshall Sports Centre (Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, 2019). Since the previous reporting period in 2015, 3 areas (Donnington, Sutton Hill South and Madeley) had been added to the top 10% of most deprived areas nationally, thus displayed that depravity was increasing in those areas (Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, 2019; Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, 2015). Taking this information into consideration and in conjunction with the feedback gained from the local consultation undertaken, it was decided that Donnington was the most in need and suitable place to be awarded this pilot. It was also noted that many of the surrounding areas around Donnington, whilst they didn't rank in the top 10% of most deprived areas nationally, they did rank in the top 30% (Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, 2019). This raised concerns that these surrounding areas could also follow suit should support and early intervention not be provided.

“When we did the leaflet drop, I think you could see it, there weren't people out on the street, there weren't people out in their gardens, it seemed quite isolated” -  
*Telford MIND.*

Key community organisations within Donnington had recognised the increasing depravity and were keen to be involved in this initiative. This wider community involvement also supported the place-based and asset-based community development approach that we were keen to trial, as positive relationships with Donnington Community Hub, the parish council, the social prescribing network, Oakengates athletics track, Telford Priory school and the local leisure centre provided great energy to set the initiative off and the crucial connectivity to support the initiative in the long term.

Additional data also supported the decision to support Donnington, this included:

- Recorded Crime, anti-social behaviour noise reports were higher than the average in Telford. Donnington is ranked 8th out of the 30 wards for number of overall criminal offences, with only 57% of residents feeling that their area was a safe place to live. This is the 3<sup>rd</sup> lowest of all the wards, compared to the average across Telford and Wrekin of 77%.
- Several health issues have been identified in the Donnington area, with life expectancy 3 years lower for both males and females than the average across Telford and Wrekin. Other identified issues are: obesity in year six children and estimated general lack of exercise undertaken by adults.
- 44% of the residents of Donnington do not hold a passport compared to 33% average for Telford & Wrekin and an estimated 24% in the UK as a whole.

- In 2019, 1,794 people in Donnington (19.7%) were living in income deprived households. 554 children under 15 (26.4%) and 370 people aged 60+ (22%) are affected by income deprivation. This is worse than the borough average and worse than the national average.
- Loneliness in Donnington is predicted to be at the highest within the borough, with the 65+ age group being at the highest risk of loneliness.
- Obesity levels for reception and year 6 children are similar to the borough average and worse than the average for England.

(Telford & Wrekin Council, 2021)

To have a meaningful impact with this funding, and in line with the adopted approach, collaboration and coproduction were essential. Attempting to coordinate this pilot in isolation without consultation, would have proved detrimental to the sustainability of the initiative following the funding cycle, thus compromising relationships and trust between partners. The rationale behind this was to create further connectivity and to empower community based organisations to develop projects and programmes for their local community.

## Consultation

We were keen to ensure the pilot included a diverse range of voices which incorporated and reflected residents living in the Donnington community. There is often a detachment between decision makers and those members of the community who the decisions effect. As a result, for this initiative we explored different approaches to consultation and how we could best engage with the local community. Ensuring that the consultation process was honest and authentic so that we could better understand the lived experience of those in the Donnington community was an integral part of our approach.



Consultation with residents took place from June to August 2021 via an online survey, as well as 3 face to face pop up events taking place in local areas, in partnership with Learn Telford/Job Box. Questions asked in the consultation asked residents to consider what they liked about living in the Donnington area, what wasn't so good about living in the Donnington area, as well as the role of physical activity in their lives, how and where they prefer to be active, what stops them being active and what would help more people in the community to be active. Feedback gained through consultation not only helped to drive this project, but it has also helped to highlight problems such as fly tipping, crime and speeding in the local area which has been raised with Telford and Wrekin Council Safer Stronger Communities Team.

"I'm not very active because of health reasons, but I would like to be, I'm just not sure where to start"  
*Donnington Resident.*

Feedback from the consultation highlighted; health reasons, lack of knowledge of activities going on in the area, and work commitments, as major reasons that stopped residents of Donnington being active. Childcare, costs of activities and the weather were also noted. However, by far the biggest restrictor reported was technology, with nearly a third of all residents surveyed highlighting that computers, tablets, gaming devices such as Xbox's, TV's inhibits their available time to exercise and be active.

There was a range of activities suggested, with the majority of residents favouring informal group activities which they could take part in with friends. Some residents also suggested that by educating local residents on the benefits of physical activity on overall health and wellbeing, coupled with better communication of the activities taking place, would encourage residents to change their behaviours and sustain physical activity.

"Groups for larger ladies - don't want to feel we don't fit in with groups"  
*Donnington Resident.*

"There's nothing for ages 12-14 - I'm the oldest in my youth club."  
*Donnington Resident.*

Residents also reported that conducting a leaflet drop would be useful to ensure that those who don't or aren't able to access social media could also be made aware of local opportunities. It was emphasized that activities should be varied and include evening and weekend sessions so that residents who work could still attend.

All activities as part of this initiative were guided by this resident consultation, as well as both national and local data and insight.

## Findings

At the beginning of this process we didn't know the exact direction that this programme would take, but we knew that we wanted to try something new, changing the way we worked in our local communities and with local partners.

From the offset our ambition was to support community groups and organisations working in the Donnington community to embed physical activity within their provision, including in their ethos, policies and values. From the evaluation conducted so far, it is evident that the initiative has made successful strides towards this ambition, creating and sustaining new opportunities for local residents in Donnington to get physically active. Of the 9 projects funded in Autumn 2021, 12 months later, 8

"We have been able to offer a new type of dance class at Age UK STW, enabling us to engage with new members, who have had the opportunity to be introduced to our other services including volunteer opportunities."  
– *Age UK.*

projects are still providing some form of activity in Donnington. Following the initial funding period, further funding has also been drawn into the Donnington community, with new activities starting up as a result of the momentum created. The findings of this initiative demonstrate that bringing cross-sector organisations together to address the underlying causes of inactivity and other social problems, in a more holistic and more joined-up way has many benefits and is effective. Specifically tailoring programmes to specific groups, and combining resources, insights, knowledge, and strengths of multiple organisations can begin to address diverse and interlinked health inequalities in our local communities.

Across the initiative there were numerous successes and challenges identified, from the ongoing impacts of Covid-19, the successes and difficulties in finding suitable local venues, high participant numbers resulting in waiting lists, as well as some activities experiencing a lack of participants. Although there is no one model to use when implementing a place-based approach, the following components proved crucial in this initiative:

- Having a shared vision, goals and outcomes that were realistic.
- Use of data as well as lived experience to understand Donnington and the local area.
- Support and commitment from partners and local organisations to drive momentum.
- Taking advantage of local assets and utilising trusted relationships in the Donnington area.
- Having an open and positive mindset, focusing on the strengths of and opportunities available to the Donnington community rather than a focus on solving problems.
- Engaging communities and partners in design and delivery to tailor programmes to need.

Specifically, the importance of building relationships and developing trust was key. Building relationships and developing trust proved more challenging for partners who had not previously worked in the Donnington area, and for those who didn't have connections in the local area before this initiative. Where partners and providers had limited presence in Donnington, projects experienced significant challenges in uptake, however there were other challenges which led to low uptake, with two thirds of groups in the initiative experiencing low attendance. Providers involved in the initiative stuck to the place-based approach as planned, however many fed back that they believed that if they'd have opened up their sessions to a wider audience, then they would have filled the sessions. This was a big challenge for some providers and a key learning curve for many who don't normally experience this challenge, overall highlighting the importance that outreach plays in tight knit local communities such as Donnington.

"It's been very small numbers... I never expect for these things when they start that they're going to be massive."  
- *Shropshire Cricket.*

Feedback gathered demonstrated the benefits of implementing a place-based approach, however the approach did come with some difficulties which made it challenging to embed the approach fully. For all parties involved, this was a new way of working, and for some, this was their first time working in the Donnington area of Telford. Overall, the value of place-based working and the importance of

"I think that's one of the biggest successes from the project is that steering group, not only seeing what difference we could make to our project, but what we could contribute and collaborate with other projects." - *Telford Mind*

relationship building came through clearly. The involvement of Donnington Community hub and the support of the hub manager, who is also the deputy council leader, was crucial and led to many connections and project applications. Without this connectivity, this initiative would have relied on external partners from out of area, rather than following the asset-based community approach we had set out to.

The support provided to Donnington Community Hub and the community groups and organisations involved in the initiative has been instrumental in establishing and sustaining activity. The creation and continuation of the partner steering group has been so significant in providing support. The steering group includes partners from a range of different sectors containing; the local Social Prescribing Link Worker for Donnington, local authority including representatives from; Telford & Wrekin Council's Safer Stronger Communities team, Community Services Team, and Health Improvement team, Telford MIND, Donnington and Muxton Parish Council, Telford Job Box, Donnington Community Hub. The steering group continues to meet once a fortnight to discuss provision in Donnington and the surrounding areas. The supportive environment created fostered an environment of collaboration and partnership working. This opportunity to get together and network

has been highly regarded and proven vital to the success of the project. In particular, the variety of expertise and experiences really influenced provision, some of which would not have happened without having everybody involved. Having such a strong link with partners from across a variety of different systems proved invaluable, encouraging localised system change to reduce inactivity and health inequalities. This steering group format has now been adopted by partners and advocated across other areas of our work. The steering group continues to grow and develop with new members coming on board continually to add expertise and continue to support the project.

This initiative aimed to tackle inequalities by taking a collaborative approach, however this was at times difficult, with some groups experiencing resistance from other local providers. The drive to recruit new members, retain current members and to make profits to cover costs and minimise losses, meant that a key venue in the local area was unavailable. This significantly reduced the venues available to some of the programmes as this was not something that aligned with their agenda which became a challenge.

As a result of the initiative, Donnington Community Hub have grown and developed the confidence to apply for funding directly to Sport England to expand and add further value to the work that has started in Donnington. Donnington Community Hub were successful in gaining £10,000 funding from Sport England's Queen's Platinum Jubilee fund to use sport and physical activity to continue to bring the Donnington community together and tackle inequalities.

## Learnings & Recommendations

Whilst we wish there was, there are no simple answers to complex problems and the more we delve into the complexities of problems, the more chaos we uncover. Whilst sitting in this state of chaos can feel uncomfortable (and this was extremely uncomfortable for many of us who are used to approaching challenges through a structured project plan) and time consuming, it was essential to moving forwards and making progress. Taking the time to explore emerging ideas and opportunities, sitting in chaos and recognising that we don't have all of the answers, or a magic wand to solve complex problems, added considerable value to this piece of work, creating a level of honesty and trust within the initiative. Whilst this initiative has taken considerable time and capacity, this was necessary to try to take on the real barriers to physical inactivity and their root causes. When we rushed to provide solutions and to get interventions up and running we were largely ineffective and found this really didn't help.

Not being scared to try something new, having the confidence to pilot approaches and take chances without undue pressure was fantastic. Having the flexibility with this initiative meant that we could respond to the evolving needs of communities, being proactive but also reactive where we needed to be. Without this flexibility, we don't believe that the same number of projects formed as part of this initiative would still be providing opportunities in the Donnington community nearly 12 months later.

This initiative has highlighted that people don't engage wholeheartedly with organisations that they don't trust. Without engagement in services, there is going to be limited, if any legacy of behaviour change in the local community. We've learnt that building relationships and developing trust are crucial resources in tight knit communities, it may take considerable time and effort but the importance of developing these relationships from the offset is essential. Influencing and empowering the 'right' organisations which really connect with and work at the heart of local communities plays a massive role in this, as does consultation with local residents.

Overall, to gain a greater understanding of the barriers that residents within our local communities face to becoming physically active at a local level, we also need to understand the wider systems that surround this and how this impacts on perceptions and engagement with physical activity. This insight

can then be used effectively to influence systems change and ensure the needs of our local communities are catered for appropriately through future provision.



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## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Project Snapshots

The First applications for the project were received in September 2021 with the Safer, Stronger community launch also taking place in September 2021. Community organisations were recruited for the programme initially via an online workshop which took place in August 2021 which sought to promote the fund and connect with local community organisations. Utilising the relationship building at the heart of this application process, community connectors involved in the steering group supported and worked with groups to encourage them to apply for the fund and to develop their ideas into tangible action.

A total of 9 projects were funded as outlined below:

- Shropshire Cycle Hub Everyday Cycling Project – Providing cycling activities including group cycle rides
- POD's – Activities for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities.
- Zumba – Adults Zumba classes, targeting women.
- Donnington Boxing Club - Family Boxing with a focus on attracting mums and young children.
- Shropshire Cricket Board – Holiday and indoor cricket sessions for children.
- Bollywood Bhangra Fitkids – Dance and fitness activities for children aged 7-11.
- Age UK Line Dancing – Line Dancing for older adults.
- Donnington and Muxton Youth Club – Active Gaming sessions for children and young people.
- Telford MIND – Walk and Talk mental health and wellbeing sessions for adults experiencing mental ill health.

## Appendix 1.1 Age UK – Line Dancing

A total of £1,020 was awarded to Age UK to coordinate line dancing sessions for older adults. The classes aimed to:

- Increase stability and mobility and improve overall health outcomes through increased physical activity levels,
- Reduce risk of isolation and loneliness and increase community cohesion,
- Maintain and optimise independence,
- Ensure older people are informed and can assert their rights effectively to access the services and support they need,
- Ensure older people's voices are heard.



Line dancing was chosen as an activity in response to the feedback from the community consultation which took place at the start of the Donnington project. Consultation found that there were no other line dancing sessions in the area currently with just one class over in Madeley which is very successful. Due to the different nature of line dancing, and the social aspect considered within this project proposal, it was believed that this project could be prove effective in engaging with older residents in the local community to take part in physical activity.

Sessions started in January 2022 with a very positive uptake. Spaces for the sessions filled very quickly and thereafter so did the waiting list. To date sessions have engaged 51 people, with an average of 29 (capped at 30) people attending sessions weekly. Feedback received so far indicates that participants not only feel fitter, but they have also benefitted from improved wellbeing and social connectivity. For many participants it was the improved wellbeing including mental wellbeing and feeling more positive, and social connectivity that saw them continuing to attend sessions, not necessarily the activity of physical benefits gained. Participants have also noted their appreciation of feeling part of their community once again, especially after the lockdowns resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic.

“This has enabled us to engage with new members who have had the opportunity to be introduced to our other services including volunteer opportunities. We have trialled a new model of working - dancing and then social time which has been welcomed.” *Age UK*

““It's not a venue that we've used before we really like it, it's got great car parking, it's got Aldi next door and that was one of the things that people were telling me they go to the line dancing, they have a cup of tea and then they'll go and do their shopping in Aldi so it's kept it all really local” - *Age UK*

With the success of these classes, the venue - Casey's, has also experienced significant benefits as the class has introduced lots of new people to the venue. As a result, Casey's have significantly discounted the room hire for this session. This is a further example of how partnership working in a place-based way can encourage sustainability.

This programme has faced a couple of challenges, namely class cancellations due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the affects of the cost of living crisis. Cancelling sessions due to Covid was both challenging for organisers and disruptive to session continuity, however this doesn't seem to have a knock on effect on attendance. Secondly, Age UK have noted that participants would find it difficult to pay the £6 session costs needed to sustain the sessions, a jump of £5 from the £1 the participants currently pay. With the cost of living crisis predicted to peak along with rising energy prices in October 2022, keeping activity costs to a minimum has been prioritised over the winter months, as a result, Telford & Wrekin Council are currently supporting this group to obtain funding to continue the sessions at the subsidised rate. This is expected to cover the winter months and to be re-evaluated on an ongoing basis to ensure there is sufficient support to encourage this activity to transition into self-sustainability.



The main learnings from this session have been around the offer of a social opportunity alongside the class. This has showcased the emphasis attendees place on social connection, for many this was their main draw to the session, with line dancing being a by product of their want to socialise and interact with others.

“The model that we used has worked brilliantly, that’s not a model that Age UK normally use but we’re definitely taking that forward because they love talking to other people, new friendships have been formed, new opportunities. In that half an hour to chat, they’ve shared other groups that they go to, so it’s opened other opportunities for people, which you know, that is just lovely.”- Age UK

In response to the success of the class and with the class now at capacity with some still on a waiting list, the classes are now being extended. Classes will be supported to continue with both Safer and Stronger Funding and Public Health Funding. Both funding streams will also be used to set up and support a new class in Hadley, using the same teachers and format, including time for socialisation and refreshments. The additional class will be commencing mid-May, with both sessions continuing to be practically supported by Age UK Shropshire Telford & Wrekin.



## Appendix 1.2 Bhangra Dance Fit Kidz

A total of £1,155 was awarded to Fit Kidz to coordinate Bhangra Dance and fitness activities for children and young people aged 7-11 years old at Donnington Community Hub. Sessions included fitness activities as well as a variety of different dance activities including Street Dance, Bhangra and Bollywood style dance.

A total of 12 participants engaged in the programme, with an average session attendance of 10.

The sessions proved extremely popular and allowed children to become fitter, enjoy dance, express themselves, make new friends and to build confidence.

The age group of the sessions was lowered based off of feedback from enquiries and participants as many of the participants had younger siblings who wished to participate. This change worked well and increased participant numbers.

“It allowed me expand the area of my business which is working with children. I predominantly work with adults but started a kids class in Oakengates in June 2021, adding this additional class has allowed me reach the wonderful community of Donnington” *FitKIDS Deliverer*

Sessions finished at the end of March 2021, unfortunately due to other work commitments, the deliverer is unable to continue the programme currently, but she wishes to pick this back up again on an ad hoc basis in the future. To ensure there was no gap in provision, Donnington Community Hub have successfully recruited another teacher to continue dance provision for children and young people at the Hub. Donnington Community Hub have offered free venue hire for this session to support with the sustainability of the programme.

Donnington Community Hub, along with the support of the steering group, will monitor and support the start of the new regular dance activities as they commence at the Hub in September 2022. Dependent on the availability of deliverers as well as local community demand, FitKids may also provide holiday activities on an ad hoc basis.

“I have thoroughly enjoyed running Dance FitKIDS at the Donnington Community Hub and have put lots of love, time and effort into building the group” *FitKIDS Deliverer*

## Appendix 1.3 Donnington Boxing Club

A total of £1,498.80 was awarded to Donnington Boxing Club to provide a one hour weekly female only and family boxing session.

This programme was developed based on feedback that childcare was a major barrier to women accessing sport and physical activity in the local Donnington community. As Donnington and many of the surrounding areas fall into the top 30% of most deprived areas nationally, disposable income to cover childcare, as well as disposable income to access sport and physical activity is a major barrier for many. Previously to this programme, Donnington Boxing Club did not hold female only or family based sessions, across the club generally there was a low number of female participants.

Funding to support this programme sought to remove these barriers, making it affordable for families to attend sessions together and give them an introduction into boxing. The funding granted was largely spent on new equipment for the class so that there was no expectation for participants to buy their own equipment, thus making it inclusive. Funding also covered room hire and costs of capacity for the instructor to coordinate sessions.

Sessions engaged 14 people, with an average of 10 attending weekly sessions.

From this experience, Donnington Boxing Club have noted the importance of female only sessions and have identified this as an area of ongoing development for the club with the hope to upskill and later qualify a female boxing coach. By upskilling a female coach, Donnington Boxing Club hope to encourage more women and girls to engage with the club and get involved in the women and family sessions.

Donnington Boxing Club have successfully sustained sessions funded as part of this initiative but are looking to expand the uptake of sessions further.

## Appendix 1.4 Donnington & Muxton Youth Club Active Gaming

A total of £1,940 was awarded to Donnington and Muxton Youth Club to deliver active gaming sessions, specifically aiming to target young people aged 11-16. The premise of this project was to attract young people who weren't currently engaging in the Donnington and Muxton Youth Club or activities taking place at Donnington Community Hub. Active gaming combines the use of technology and physical activity, encouraging children to engage in the technology games they enjoy, whilst also encouraging them to be physically active.



Whilst traditional gaming typically adds to a person's total sedentary time leading to adverse health outcomes including obesity, poorer dietary habits and lower overall physical fitness levels, we know that gaming is one of the key interest of young people in the 11-16 age bracket (Gilsenan, 2021; Puolitaival et al., 2020). However, a recent study found that gaming is the top interest of boys aged 8-15 and the second highest interest among 8-11 year-old girls out of a list of 30+ interests, beating things like movies, music, and TV shows (Gilsenan, 2021). Of a study which specifically looked into the validity of E-Gaming, results were extremely positive and demonstrated that e-gaming can increase activity levels and achieve recommended levels of moderate- to vigorous-

intensity physical activity. Taking this information into consideration, it was decided to pilot an e-gaming programme as part of the wider Donnington and Muxton Youth Club sessions.

The aim of this project was to:

- 1) Attract new young people to attend the active gaming sessions who otherwise would have been involved in sedentary behaviours whilst gaming at home.
- 2) Engage young people who otherwise would not have the opportunity, including those who cannot afford to purchase active gaming equipment, to experience active gaming to reduce social isolation.

The Donnington and Muxton Youth Club sessions are currently averaging 30 young people attending sessions per week, with an influx of six new members showing interest in the club with the addition of the active gaming sessions. Donnington and Muxton Youth Club are currently working collaboratively with Saint Matthews school to showcase what services they offer at the youth club and the hub more generally. The youth club are also linking in with some of the other sessions taking place at the hub as part of this initiative such as cricket to showcase what other opportunities are available to get involved in locally.

"We lost a couple of kids... like 11 year old kids and I said well why don't you come back as a volunteer and help with the games and they've come back". (Donnington and Muxton Youth Club Deliverer)

Through collaboration with the local social prescriber a volunteer who had a keen interest in gaming was identified to support with the active gaming sessions. The volunteer in question had been

experiencing low mood after becoming unemployed and struggling to find work. Through volunteering at the active gaming sessions the volunteer in question has been able to develop a range of different skills, and we are pleased to say, has now been able to find full time employment. This example demonstrates the effectiveness add this steering group established as part of this initiative which allowed the sharing of information between projects to be able to connect opportunities.

Donnington and Muxton youth club have fully established the active gaming sessions into their ongoing programme. This project is now self-sustainable due to the support from Donnington Community Hub and the team of dedicated local volunteers. Without the team of dedicated local volunteers not only would the active gaming sessions not run but neither would any of the youth club provision. Whilst the youth club provision solely was not part of this initiative, it is a great example of how an asset-based community development approach can be utilised to develop sustainable activities.



## Appendix 1.5 Everyday Cycling

Shropshire Cycle Hub received £10,000 to provide opportunities for members of the local community to engage in cycling opportunities. The funding was utilised to create the Everyday Cycling project, an initiative to encourage more Donnington residents to access cycling.

The programme saw 26 people sign up and 24 completed the project. Key findings from the project identified that lack of basic knowledge about the right type of bike, routes and maintenance were huge barriers, restricting local residents from accessing cycling in Donnington. Shropshire Cycle Hub found that personalised support was a big factor in overcoming these barriers, in particular having Holly the project leader readily available to provide support, advice and encouragement was key. Holly proved invaluable in supporting 2 group members to upskill and train as ride leaders. Both ride leaders now support the sustainability of the Everyday Cycling Project by leading group rides out in the local community. Group rides proved extremely popular, providing a social and enjoyable opportunity to get involved in cycling. Group rides also gave people knowledge of routes, confidence to progress from paths to roads, and the opportunity to test and ultimately realise how far they could cycle. Group rides are regularly promoted on the Everyday Cycling Project Facebook group which is monitored by Holly and other ride leaders. This group currently has 61 members and has demonstrated how organically a project can grow and thrive by utilising an asset based community development approach. The Everyday Cycling Project has demonstrated how projects can utilise and develop the skill sets of local residents to empower them to provide and sustain activities for their local community.



Shropshire Cycle Hub measured participants experience, confidence and competence across 28 different variables before involvement in, and after being involved in the Everyday Cycling project. Of the 28 measured, 12 showed a statistically significant change for the better after taking part in the project. The 12 areas that showed statistically significant benefit were:

- Mental health (SF-20)
- Usual mode of transport 1-3 miles
- Proportion of journeys cycled
- Days a week cycled for transport
- Days a week cycled for leisure
- Time spent cycling in a typical week
- Furthest can cycle comfortably
- Cycling confidence – cycle lanes on road
- Cycling some or all of the time for fun
- Cycling some or all of the time to for fitness
- “I know how to plan a good route wherever I want to go”
- “I have the equipment I need to cycle whenever and wherever I want to”



Shropshire Cycle Hub have identified that any future projects would benefit from a beginner session on bike handling and very basic bike maintenance to develop the confidence of participants to fully understand how to use and repair their bike should they need to. Shropshire Cycle Hub also

recommend varying the times for group rides and splitting group rides into groups for different abilities to ensure that participants have flexibility and choice over their cycling. With these additional changes as stated above, Shropshire Cycle Hub believe that the Everyday Cycling Project could be an effective model to follow in future in other local communities to encourage sustainable cycling opportunities.

“We have learned a huge amount from this pilot about what people want and need, and what we can do to improve how we support people into cycling.” – *Shropshire Cycle Hub*

### Everyday Cycling Project Participant Story - Susanne

Susanne is a single parent working full time and lives with her teenage son. She learnt to cycle as a child in Germany and was a regular cyclist through her late teens and all the way into her thirties. Susan now has decreased mobility due to osteo-arthritis and she finds walking moderate distances to the shops painful. She has relied on her car for transport in recent years and her activity levels dropped, leading her to gain weight and lose fitness.

When she joined the project she had a bike but found the high cross bar design difficult to use with her reduced leg mobility. As a participant on the Everyday Cycling Project Shropshire Cycle Hub assessed Susanne’s needs and found her a town style bike with a low step through design. Susanne has found this much easier to use and has been able to get back to cycling again. She is a great example of what transformation can happen if people are given help to find an appropriate bike and are supported to engage in cycling. Susanne is really happy with her progress and has been cycling almost everyday since she received the bike! She cycles to the shops, cycles for leisure, with her son and with friends, and she has increased her cycling distances impressively. She bought a new lightweight detachable bike basket to enable her to go shopping by bike, instead of driving.

“Thanks to the project I am cycling nearly everyday” *Susanne - Everyday Cycling Project Participant*

“Just back from my furthest bike ride with the Everyday Cycling Project group leaders Marie and Rupert. Thoroughly enjoyed the scenery as well as lots of banter about hills and ‘who rides down must ride up’! Can’t wait for the next ride. Marie and Rupert are fab”. *Susanne - Everyday Cycling Project Participant*

Susanne is fitter, happier, more independent and spending less on fuel. She is working on persuading her teenage son to cycle more too. Having been reluctant to cycle, he now has a bike more suited to his needs and has joined two group rides to gradually build up his cycling confidence. He hopes to join some of the upcoming Confidence Buster bike skills revision sessions. Susanne is very pleased that she has had this support and now has the ability to share the experience of cycling with her son and hopes it will help him with his independence, health and transport.

## Appendix 1.6 PODS

A total of £1,100 was awarded to PODS to provide activities to support families of children (0-25) with disabilities and additional needs. Activities offered as part of this project included; badminton, table tennis, tennis, martial arts, personal training sessions as well as establishing a parent and carers walking group.



The session aimed to;

- Reduce isolation levels and improve the integration of children and young people with disabilities and additional needs into the local community.
- Offer activities and events to children and young people with disabilities and additional needs to help improve their confidence and well-being, in a supportive and non-judgemental environment.
- To encourage children and young people with disabilities and additional needs to build up friendships and help develop their social communication.
- To increase activity levels of children and young people with disabilities and additional needs, supporting both their physical and their mental health.
- To provide a supportive environment during term time for parents and carers of children and young people with disabilities and additional needs. Providing an opportunity for parents and carers to meet and interact with other parents in a similar situation.
- To reduce levels of isolation in children and young people with disabilities and additional needs.

“The PODS members who have attended the session have benefitted from the variety of the activities provided both in terms of getting the physical activity and being able to socialise with others. It has reduced isolation and helped integrate families into the local community. It has enabled families to try something different in a supported environment.” *PODS*

Sessions engaged 15 young people from the local Donnington community, with an average of 5 participant attending weekly.

As a result of this programme, PODs have been able to raise their profile with families living in and around the Donnington and Muxton areas, engaging with both existing families who had previously accessed PODs services, as well as new families who had never previously accessed their services before. Engaging new families was a particular success for PODs who as a result of this programme have been able to widen their reach as an organisation.

One of the main challenges experienced by PODs as part of this project has been high participant drop out rates. PODs found the community particularly hard to engage with, and experienced low attendance numbers even after advertising sessions repeatedly. As has been reiterated by other projects involved in this initiative, low attendance seems to be a consistent challenge. Feedback collated by PODs has associated the high drop out rates experienced to the ongoing challenges with the COVID-19 pandemic. Taking into consideration the target group for this project, this feedback is not necessarily surprising as many participants had additional needs which may have made them more

prone to becoming severely affected by the COVID-19 virus and hence affected their attendance and involvement in the programme. As documented by the Activity Alliance (2021), inactivity levels rose to 42.5% for disabled people, with a peak of inactivity at 46.5% during the first lockdown. This inactivity trend continued as people with a disability experienced many more barriers to accessing sport and physical activity as a direct result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Barriers experienced included the necessity to self-isolate as well as ongoing worries about COVID-19 (Activity Alliance, 2021). Research from the Sport and Recreation Alliance also shows that disability sport providers are expecting a lower proportion of participants to return post pandemic with only 53% compared to 75% on average returning (Sport Industry Research Centre, 2021).

As engagement with the families in Donnington was very low and with ongoing concerns about COVID-19, PODs have made the decision not to continue the sessions. Instead, PODs are exploring how they can engage families based within the Donnington area into their broader provision which is open to all PODs families from across Telford and Wrekin. Along with PODs, the steering group established as part of this initiative will continue to explore ways in which we can support both children and young people, as well as adults with a disability to engage in sport and physical activity.

## Appendix 1.7 Shropshire Cricket Board

A total of £1,510 was awarded to Shropshire Cricket Board to provide the delivery of Cricket sessions in both the autumn and spring half term holidays with drop-in taster sessions leading up to the holiday provision. Interest from these sessions led on to weekly indoor softball/street cricket sessions from February- April.



The sessions aimed to empower members of the Donnington community to learn new skills to be able to lead sessions, with initial support and training to build stronger, more sustainable activity sessions.

Participants would be recruited by linking in with local clubs and schools. The session aimed to create the next generation of Young Leaders within the community. Through collaboration with Donnington and Muxton Youth Club the hope was that this programme would build both interest and skills in cricket delivery, leading to training and workforce development of young leaders in the local area. At the end of programme delivery, it was proposed that any equipment purchased would be left at the venue free to use for the local community.

“We wanted to see if there was a community aspect if there were kids that couldn't access club because they're kind of a long way from our cricket clubs, so we needed to bring it to them in the community” *Shropshire Cricket Board.*

Sessions engaged 8 young people from the Donnington community and sessions have been successful in building relationships and linking in with schools and local community groups. The sessions proved extremely successful in providing opportunities for young people from ethnically diverse communities to get involved, with all attendees coming from either an Asian or South Asian culture.

The biggest challenge faced as part of this project was the lack of suitable indoor facility space. Unable to access local facilities, the majority of sessions took place on a local car park. Whilst this allowed sessions to take place in the short term, this was not a suitable venue for the sessions to continue to take place in.

Another challenge experienced was slow uptake and low number of attendees. In particular, the group didn't get as many secondary school age attendees as was initially hoped. Through discussion with other providers, it became evident that low attendance levels were a recurring issue, and even when activities were provided free of charge, uptake was slow and engagement of 12-18 year olds was near non-existent. Whilst It has been identified that this was a consistent issue with other providers experiencing the same difficulty (for example Donnington and Muxton youth club), it is interesting to note that this activity was popular with participants from ethnically diverse communities. Therefore, it is also important to consider the extra barriers that the 8 participants overcame in order to attend these sessions, and whether the way in which these sessions were facilitated reduced some of these barriers to encourage their participation and engagement in the project.

“I am pretty sure that once you've gained trust of the families and communities, they will come.” *Shropshire Cricket Board.*

The key learnings from this programme have been the importance of building relationships in the community and engagement of parents. As a result of the interest built off the back of this programme,



Shropshire Cricket board have been successful in gaining funding through the England and Wales Cricket Board Chance to Shine Street Cricket programme to continue sessions in Donnington. Donnington Community Hub are also supporting Shropshire Cricket Board to continue these sessions expanding street cricket provision available in Donnington.

Sessions will continue to be monitored by Shropshire Cricket Board as well as Donnington Community Hub to ensure that ongoing provision is both relevant and targets the most in need young people engage them in sport and physical activity.

## Appendix 1.8 Telford MIND

Telford MIND were awarded a total of £5,000 to provide 'walk and talk' sessions to support those experiencing emotional and mental ill health. Sessions provided an informal social space to meet like-minded people and gain support from trained staff. The project not only explored how mental health services can be integrated into local community settings, but also how extra support around mental wellbeing can be coupled with social and physical activities.

"There are people from Mind there, but it's about going along having a chat, tea and biscuits, it's more of a social thing that I push to people" –  
*Donnington Social Prescriber*

"We did find it incredibly difficult to be in a place based approach but it was a valuable experience. I think our volunteers learned a lot, as we did." -*Telford Mind*

Whilst the approach adopted proved effective in strengthening relationships with partners, it appeared to create barriers for residents, with only 2 residents engaging in the programme. Whilst the plan was to encourage peer led conversations it became more of a peer support group that focused on wellbeing, with conversations about getting active and what the barriers were as opposed to a 'walk and talk'. Appreciating that it can take a long time for people to warm up to a group, even with extensive planning and promotion (including a door to door leaflet drop, social media

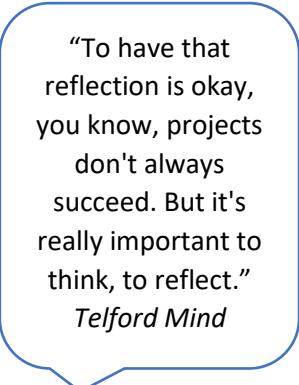
posts, insight from the local social prescriber and referrals made into the programme), and making adjustments, the service still experienced low uptake. Resident's readiness to engage in mental health support, venue, limited service presence of Telford Mind in Donnington beforehand, time of year, ineffective marketing and promotion, inconsistency in session delivery, poor weather, covid, momentum and personal preference were all discussed as possible reasons for this low uptake. Personal preference was particularly interesting as it was evident that Donnington residents were accessing provision out of area, however, for residents that can't drive or access public transport, this proves very limiting. Feedback disclosed preferences in venue, busyness – preferences in busy sessions for social interaction vs quieter sessions, preferences in accessing support out of the local area due to fear of bumping into somebody they know. This feedback posed additional challenges and demonstrated the stigma that is still present around mental health support. It was also evident that some of these challenges also impacted the volunteers and their availability to support the programme. Telford Mind determined that reputation, lack of outreach provision and going into a community where they didn't have a strong presence an extremely challenging barrier to overcome.

"It feels like we've tried something and adapted it slightly and it still clearly isn't hitting the mark." -  
*Energize*

"It was a brilliant opportunity to be able to try a place based approach. It's not something that we have done specifically with our service before working in a truly place based way" -  
*Telford Mind*

Whilst as acknowledged above there were many challenges with this programme, there was also lots of learnings and successes. Telford Mind have managed to begin a presence in Donnington, they have engaged with and trained up two amazing volunteers who have gone on to contribute wider within the local community. This experience and approach adopted has also challenged Telford Mind to think about group sustainably from the offset, they are now looking at this kind of this model and how they can extend this into other areas of their work.

In response to the above challenges and recognising the importance that support is accessible, Telford Mind took time to reflect and re-evaluate their programme in collaboration with both volunteers and Donnington residents. Results of this process demonstrated a need for mental health services to be outreach focused and practical, offering more of a hand holding approach to support to overcome many of the challenges experienced. The service has now been updated to incorporate this with a wider wellbeing focus and a more subtle approach to mental health and physical activity, offering a 'buddy' scheme whereby a local volunteer is matched with a local resident.



“To have that reflection is okay, you know, projects don't always succeed. But it's really important to think, to reflect.”  
*Telford Mind*

The findings and subsequent learnings from this experience open further discussions around the way in which place-based and asset-based community approaches can work, or not work so successfully. Whilst this project continues in the adapted format, it is pertinent to consider, particularly with close knit communities such as Donnington, whether a place-based, asset-based community is a suitable approach. As this service continues and is monitored and evaluated, we continue to understand more about how we can better support mental health and wider wellbeing services.



## Appendix 1.9 Zumba

A total of £1,300 was awarded to provide weekly Zumba sessions for adults, taking place at Donnington Community Hub. Funding was awarded to cover the costs of the venue hire and capacity costs for the instructor to deliver a 26 week programme.

Zumba sessions had previously taken place at Donnington Community Hub and were extremely successful and well attended but unfortunately sessions were discontinued when previous funding pots finished. Frequent queries and expressions of interest demonstrated a demand and need for re-establishing sessions at Donnington Community Hub.

Sessions engaged 10 people with an average 5 participants attending on a weekly basis. These sessions have been extremely successful in bringing people together that not only enjoy exercise but also enjoy a good chat and sharing experiences and stories. This feedback has similarly been noted in other projects as part of this pilot such as the Age UK line dancing sessions.

With support from Donnington Community Hub, sessions have been able to continue past the initially funded 26 week programme. Sessions now have a committed cohort of attendees, but the group are looking to continue to grow and fill to capacity to ensure the sustainability of the group. The group will continue to be monitored by Donnington Community Hub, with ongoing developments and changes to the sessions made based on participant feedback.

“It's socialising isn't it you know when you're in a community setting rather than being in a leisure centre you can communicate more... it's not just solely exercise it's meeting people” *Zumba Deliverer*