



WALKING CONNECTS 2022-23

END OF PROJECT REPORT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Walking Connects project was delivered by Living Streets between May 2022-May 2023, with a three-month extension to delivery to July 31st 2023 (with some staff continuing work until August 31st 2023). The project was funded through the Tackling Loneliness with Transport project from Department for Transport, with a £497,213 investment.

Our project team delivered:

- **109 led walks to 350 beneficiaries** across Blackburn, Bolton, Burnley, Fleetwood, Stoke-on-Trent and Wigan
- Community Street Review training to **58 volunteers Community Street Reviewers**
- Walk Leader training to **55 volunteer Walk Leaders**
- Accessibility Training in partnership with Dementia Awareness and Transport for All to **60 transport professionals**
- Communications with a reach of over **3,000,000 people**
- Activity to the targeted demographic of people who identify as lonely, drawing on partnerships with **104 local organisations**
- A legacy of 1 active local group and **4 supported local groups**
- A **8% decrease in loneliness** – from an average change in UCLA loneliness score from baseline 4.52 to end of project 4.16.
- A **65% increase in walking minutes** per week for beneficiaries, rising from an average baseline of 403 minutes walked per week to 665 minutes at the end of project.
- A wellbeing change from below the national average at baseline to **above the national average** at end of project across life satisfaction (9% increase), worthwhileness (6% increase), and happiness (8% increase)

Evidence for these statements have been linked where relevant. A visual representation of this is in the **Appendix**. This visual representation has been used in our online coverage of the project with beneficiaries and non-project stakeholders.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

In 2022, Walking Connects 2022-23 was set up to engage people aged 50+ in Bolton, Wigan, Lancashire (specifically Fleetwood, Burnley and Blackburn) and Stoke-on-Trent. These areas were identified using data from the Office of National Statistics and Public Health England and targeted for having high levels of inactivity within its population and a higher-than-average aging population. In addition to this, Age UK's loneliness surveys also highlighted these areas as showing high levels of loneliness, deprivation and low walking rates. Living Streets has a long-standing relationship with the local authorities involved, working in partnership and delivering on several Department for Transport Walking initiatives such as, WOW, Walking Works and Next Steps. Living Streets also has over 10 years' experience of working with older people to increase walking levels to improve wellbeing.

Tackling Loneliness with Transport invested £497,213 in the project and took place within the context of the government's Loneliness Strategy promoting walking activities to contribute to Tackling Loneliness with Transport. The project was delivered in collaboration with Age UK and local authorities, bringing in expertise from the accessibility training providers, such as Alzheimer's Society and Transport for All, and local partners, such as housing associations, health and social care providers and local support groups, to help reach at-risk participants.

As outlined in our recent Walking for Everyone report (Burns, et al., 2022), walking, which includes wheeling, helps people access the things they need – for example, food, health services, community, and green space. Walking and wheeling benefit physical and mental wellbeing, contribute to the decarbonisation of transport, and help reduce social and economic inequity.

Many older people are socially isolated and at risk of loneliness. Physical inactivity increases social isolation, reduces independence, erodes social connections, and reduces physical and mental wellbeing.

As such, the project looked to achieve positive outcomes across multiple areas of work.

AIMS

The project's main aims were to equip communities with the skills to promote walking by:

1. Engaging 400 older people at risk of loneliness through walking activities
2. Reaching up to 1,600 older people at risk of loneliness through information resources
3. Training up to 40 volunteer walk leaders and 55 volunteer Community Street Auditors to assess and make recommendations about their local walking environment.
4. Facilitating access to 55 places for transport planners and operators on Accessibility Trainings
5. Establishing four Local Groups – community-focused volunteers who create conversations around issues that encourage more people to walk, no matter their age or lived experience.

OUTCOMES

The anticipated outcomes were:

1. Older people report improved feelings of social connectedness and reduced loneliness through participation in walking activities.
2. Walk leaders are recruited and trained to lead local walking groups.
3. Communities make recommendations for improvements to their streets and local walking environment through training and participation in Community Street Audits (CSAs)
4. People have better access to public transport as transport operators and planners improve understanding of accessibility issues through training.

5. Increased evidence for the impact of walking outreach activities on loneliness to improve understanding of how to reach and support older people.
6. Better understanding of the relative impact of walking-group-based activities and access-to-walking based activities on loneliness.
7. Community action is sustained by establishing Living Streets Local Groups as a legacy for lasting impact on local walking environments.

Initially, the project end date was to be May 31st 2023, but this was extended to July 31st 2023 due to an underspend in the budget.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology for measuring the aims and outcomes of the project is outlined below. For the aims, the table follows an aim, indicator, explanation layout. For the outcomes, the indicators overlapped significantly, so an indicator, outcome(s), explanation layout has been used for ease of reading. Outcomes have been split into “anticipated outcomes (AX)” (meaning outcomes that were referred to in the project brief), and “unanticipated outcomes (UAX)” (meaning outcomes that were not referred to in the project brief, but ones that we found were relevant after delivery started). All underlined text carries a link to the relevant results or narrative section within the wider report.

AIMS

Aims	Indicator	Validity explanation
1. <u>Engaging 400 older people at risk of loneliness through walking activities</u>	a) <u>Event attendance and demographic profiles</u>	Registration forms were collected from all attendees on their first event with the project, and names added to unique event registers. Registers from all the events have been input for the counts on this. One event contained a large group of unregistered beneficiaries, this has been indicated where relevant in the report.
2. <u>Reaching up to 1,600 older people at risk of loneliness through information resources</u>	a) <u>Reach report</u>	Comprised of: numbers of partner organisations the project has engaged with; estimates of external communication reach; and results to Social

		walking survey “How did you hear about us?” question from participants.
3. <u>Training up to 40 volunteer walk leaders and 55 volunteer Community Street Auditors to assess and make recommendations about their local walking environment</u>	a) <u>Event attendance and demographic profiles</u>	Registers from the volunteer training sessions and subsequent volunteer led walks have been input for the counts on this.
4. <u>Facilitating access to 55 places for transport planners and operators on Accessibility Trainings</u>	a) <u>Training attendance profiles</u>	Registers from the accessibility training sessions have been input for the counts on this.
5. <u>Establishing four Local Groups – community-focused volunteers who create conversations around issues that encourage more people to walk, no matter their age or lived experience.</u>	a) <u>Engagement team report</u>	Status update from Engagement team on Local Group progress, with detail on groups active, supported and approached.

ANTICIPATED AND UNANTICIPATED OUTCOME INDICATORS

Indicator	Anticipated/ Unanticipated outcome number	Process and validity explanation
Social Walking Survey – baseline and during/end of project	<p><u>AO1. Older people report improved feelings of social connectedness and reduced loneliness through</u></p> <p><u>AO5. Increased evidence for the impact of walking outreach activities on loneliness to improve</u></p>	<p>Process: Baseline and during/end of project surveys contained the same questions. They were delivered online or through hard copies. Baseline surveys were given out to beneficiaries at their first session, and the close date for these was 30th June 2023. During/end of project surveys were given to all participants, but priority was made to get returns from baseline respondents. This included in person reminders with spare hard copies available and an email to the online link.</p> <p>Validity: The surveys included the Office for National Statistics’ (ONS) harmonised questions</p>

	<p><u>understanding of how to reach and support older people</u></p> <p><u>UAO8. Older people report that their wellbeing has improved through participation in walking activities</u></p> <p><u>UAO9. Older people report that they stay or become more active through participation in walking activities</u></p>	<p>on <u>loneliness and personal wellbeing</u>, and were used as advised in the guidance for these.</p> <p>They also included a modified version of the <u>IPAQ 20</u> questionnaire, shortening the standard 4 questions to 2 with a focus on moderate activity levels and walking alone over the last 7 days (rather than separating out vigorous, moderate, walking and sedentary activity).</p> <p>This reduction in questions was due to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - IPAQ's recommends that the questionnaire be used with adults from 15-69. Concerns were raised that our target participants were 55+ and may need less distinction between moderate and vigorous activity. - Due to the number of indicators relying on the survey for data, there was a need to limit survey length to secure completion rate. - Concerns were raised around the mental health impact of asking the sedentary behaviour question to beneficiaries who were identified as having low wellbeing, particularly if asked by staff without specific mental health expertise. <p>The survey also contained questions on barriers to walking (see <u>outcome 3</u>), modal shift and "how did you hear about us". The modal shift question was deemed invalid as the paper responses saw respondents ticking multiple boxes rather than one, resulting in a difference between online and hard copy answers.</p> <p>An infographic on survey completion in comparison to beneficiary numbers is here:</p>
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		<p style="text-align: center;">Survey Responses compared to beneficiary totals</p> <table border="1" style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <tr> <td>Project total</td> <td>350</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Baseline</td> <td>56</td> </tr> <tr> <td>End of project</td> <td>45</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Combined</td> <td>26</td> </tr> </table>	Project total	350	Baseline	56	End of project	45	Combined	26
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End of project	45									
Combined	26									
Control Group testing	<p><u>AO1. Older people report improved feelings of social connectedness and reduced loneliness through participation in walking activities</u></p> <p><u>UAO8. Older people report that their wellbeing has improved through participation in walking activities</u></p> <p><u>UAO9. Older people report that they stay or become more active through participation in walking activities</u></p>	<p>Process: Originally, Walking Connects was intended to take an enquiry-based approach to the project, with a comparator in each area as a benchmark, to measure and test the effectiveness of two types of interventions to tackle loneliness.</p> <p>However, over the course of the project delivery, barriers were raised to identifying and engaging with suitable comparator groups, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Internal staff absence - Other commitments of potential comparator groups¹ - Project benefit taking priority over research findings² <p>As an alternative research method, it was decided that comparator area evidence would come from national databases rather than gathering alongside project work. The main source for this is the <u>Active Lives survey results and database</u>, which has been used to compare our baseline data with that of the population of over 55s in each local authority area for questions on wellbeing, loneliness and activity levels. This can be seen in our <u>comparator-to-baseline charts</u>.</p> <p>Validity: More details on the methodology for the Active Lives survey can be found <u>here</u> or at:</p>								

¹ One of these groups was the Pensioner’s Convention in Stoke-on-Trent, whose activity calendar was already full for the year. Another had religious commitments that made it difficult to engage with the community consistently.

² Most individuals or groups that we interacted with wanted to benefit from participation in the project, rather than the research.

		<p>https://www.sportengland.org/research-and-data/data/active-lives. Our comparator data has used Local Area and National data for respondents over 55. It has used the latest annual source, which is from November 2021-2022.</p> <p>Sport England have made efforts to only include data from local authorities with 500+ responses, which is their defined sample size. It's likely that our sample size will be smaller than those for each local authority comparator.</p> <p>The project's social walking survey used the same questions as the Active Lives survey for wellbeing and loneliness indicators. Activity level questions were different, this has been considered in the results for this indicator.</p>
<p>Qualitative data – Focus groups</p>	<p><u>AO1. Older people report improved feelings of social connectedness and reduced loneliness through participation in walking activities</u></p> <p><u>UAO8. Older people report that their wellbeing has improved through participation in walking activities</u></p> <p><u>UAO9. Older people report that they stay or become more active through participation in walking activities</u></p> <p><u>UAO11. Better understanding of the barriers to volunteering faced</u></p>	<p>Process: In the project design phase, focus groups were identified as a key indicator for outcomes requiring qualitative data. However, over the project course this became unviable³, so alternative forms of qualitative data gathering were deployed, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Walking interviews (see 1d) - Vignettes (see 1e) - Case studies (see 1f) <p>These data sources have been collated and a thematic analysis done to identify key themes across all four sources.</p> <p>A focus group was run in Stoke-on-Trent with pre-selected walk attendees. The session was run at the end of a regular walk, with attendees who go on the walks often. It was held in a community park centre, which is a familiar setting for most of the group. Three topics were explored:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The impact of Walking Connects on participants. • Barriers to walking on participant's local streets. • Barriers to volunteering <p>Validity: The qualitative data has been coded by the project Impact and Evaluation coordinator, with a sample tested by the Impact and</p>

³ Barriers arose including reluctance from participants to engage in research process and turbulence in local staffing and connection building with appropriate venues.

	<p><u>by project beneficiaries</u></p>	<p>Evaluation Manager to compare result authenticity. It's likely that a third-party evaluator could strengthen the validity of this data, but this was not featured in the business case.</p> <p>The focus group featured an even split of trained volunteers and beneficiaries. However, the demographic representation of the focus group does not align closely with the profile for the area, so the data may not be truly representative of a wide range of views from minority groups or people with disabilities. Efforts were made to capture these perspectives in other ways, such as through case studies. In the case of gender, the representative split was intentional to help understand gendered barriers to volunteering. Charts with a full demographic split are featured in the <u>Appendix</u>.</p>
<p>Qualitative data – Walking interviews</p>	<p><u>AO1. Older people report improved feelings of social connectedness and reduced loneliness through participation in walking activities</u></p> <p><u>UAO8. Older people report that their wellbeing has improved through participation in walking activities</u></p> <p><u>UAO9. Older people report that they stay or become more active through participation in walking activities</u></p>	<p>Process: A solution to barriers to deliver focus groups in Lancashire was identified through approaching the research in a way that was more comfortable for the beneficiaries. This involved the local coordinator asking the research questions on a led-walk and recording the quotes in writing.</p> <p>The results from this data source have been collated with other qualitative sources and a thematic analysis done to identify key themes and indicate progress towards outcomes.</p> <p>Validity: The qualitative data has been coded by the project Impact and Evaluation coordinator, with a sample tested by the Impact and Evaluation Manager to compare result authenticity. It's likely that a third-party evaluator could strengthen the validity of this data, but this was not featured in the business case. The walking interview approach was the best available to the project when balanced with the ethical considerations of beneficiary requests for privacy. However, there may be some gaps in the depth of qualitative data through this process.</p>
<p>Qualitative data – Vignettes</p>	<p><u>AO1. Older people report improved feelings of social connectedness and reduced</u></p>	<p>Process: A solution to barriers to deliver focus groups in Bolton and Wigan was identified through approaching the research in a way that was more coordinator led. This involved the local coordinator asking the research questions on a</p>

	<p><u>loneliness through participation in walking activities</u></p> <p><u>UAO8. Older people report that their wellbeing has improved through participation in walking activities</u></p> <p><u>UAO9. Older people report that they stay or become more active through participation in walking activities</u></p>	<p>led-walk and recording the quotes in writing through a vignette form. This is a similar approach to the research used in our Walking Friend Wales report (Murray, Williams, & Singleton, 2022).</p> <p>The results from this data source have been collated with other qualitative sources and a thematic analysis done to identify key themes and indicate progress towards outcomes.</p> <p>Validity: The qualitative data has been coded by the project Impact and Evaluation coordinator, with a sample tested by the Impact and Evaluation Manager to compare result authenticity. It's likely that a third-party evaluator could strengthen the validity of this data, but this was not featured in the business case.</p> <p>The vignette approach was the best available to the project when balanced with the ethical considerations of beneficiary requests for privacy. However, there may be some gaps in the depth of qualitative data through this process.</p>
<p>Qualitative data – Case studies</p>	<p><u>AO1. Older people report improved feelings of social connectedness and reduced loneliness through participation in walking activities</u></p> <p><u>UAO8. Older people report that their wellbeing has improved through participation in walking activities</u></p> <p><u>UAO9. Older people report that they stay or become more active through participation in walking activities</u></p>	<p>Process: Through the support of the Communications Coordinator, the project team were able to publish 4 case studies from the project (see Appendix for full detail):</p> <p><u>Brenda's story</u></p> <p><u>Jacob's story</u></p> <p><u>Creating safer streets in Wigan</u></p> <p><u>Tackling Loneliness in Lancashire</u></p> <p>The results from these have been collated with other qualitative sources and a thematic analysis done to identify key themes and indicate progress towards outcomes.</p> <p>Validity: The qualitative data has been coded by the project Impact and Evaluation coordinator, with a sample tested by the Impact and Evaluation Manager to compare result authenticity. It's likely that a third-party evaluator could strengthen the validity of this data, but this was not featured in the business case.</p>

<p>Event attendance and demographic profiles</p>	<p><u>AO2. Walk leaders are recruited and trained to lead local walking group</u></p> <p><u>UAO10. Increase the diversity of our project profile by working with older beneficiaries from deprived communities</u></p>	<p>Process: Registers from the volunteer training sessions and subsequent volunteer led walks have been input for the counts on this.</p> <p>Validity: This was a highly reliable data source, as all volunteers trained were required to complete this.</p>
<p>Community Street Review (CSR) reports⁴</p>	<p><u>AO3. Communities make recommendations for improvements to their streets and local walking environment through training and participation in Community Street Reviews (CSRs)</u></p>	<p>Process: A bespoke approach to writing reports was used across the project areas, dependent on coordinator experience, community uptake and partner engagement. In Bolton and Wigan, the local authority partners directed the project coordinator towards streets that they were keen to have input on from the community. In Stoke-on-Trent, there was less of this direction, so volunteer community street reviewers focused attention on areas that were particularly of difficulty to them.</p> <p>Validity: Although different approaches were used across the project, the end reports were composed by experienced Living Streets staff with input from our technical streets team. As such, the recommendations from these reports are considered to be highly robust, given the collaborative input from community members and expert colleagues.</p>
<p>Social Walking Survey – mapping</p>	<p><u>AO3. Communities make recommendations for improvements to their streets and local walking environment through training</u></p>	<p>Process: Part of the social walking survey included questions to participants on their local streets. These were themed around the “10 Healthy Streets Indicators” (Healthy Streets Ltd, 2023). Analysis was done to map these survey responses across each area to find priority areas for improvement.</p>

⁴ An early conversation with our Technical team established that new terminology needed to be used for this outcome. As such:

“Community Street **Review**” was termed to refer to the work that communities (such as the volunteers and local groups identified during this project) undertake to review their streets.

“Community Street **Audit**” continued to be used in reference to the work Living Streets does as an organisation to better understand the needs of local streets users and, from this feedback, advise those who manage streets on how to overcome the physical and emotional barriers to walking.

	<p><u>and participation in Community Street Reviews (CSRs)</u></p>	<p>Validity: Due to low survey completion rates, some areas feature less data than others, giving less equitable input to commentary on street priorities.</p> <div data-bbox="748 383 1477 958" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; text-align: center;"> <h3>Survey Responses compared to beneficiary totals</h3> <table border="1" style="margin: auto;"> <thead> <tr> <th>Category</th> <th>Value</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Project total</td> <td>350</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Baseline</td> <td>56</td> </tr> <tr> <td>End of project</td> <td>45</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Combined</td> <td>26</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> </div>	Category	Value	Project total	350	Baseline	56	End of project	45	Combined	26
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Baseline	56											
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<p>Pre training exercise</p>	<p><u>AO4. People have better access to public transport as transport operators and planners improve understanding of accessibility issues through training</u></p>	<p>Process: A pre training exercise was carried out by our project coordinator, gathering attendees previous experience with disabilities and objectives for the training. 100% of participants engaged in this task.</p> <p>A thematic analysis of this has been done alongside the post training survey data and follow up survey data.</p> <p>Validity: The high response rate on this task indicates the robustness of the data. The qualitative data has been coded by the project Impact and Evaluation coordinator, with a sample tested by the Impact and Evaluation Manager to compare result authenticity. It's likely that a third-party evaluator could strengthen the validity of this data, but this was not featured in the business case.</p>										
<p>Accessibility post training survey and follow up survey</p>	<p><u>AO4. People have better access to public transport as transport operators and planners improve understanding of accessibility issues through training</u></p>	<p>Process: A post training survey asked participants to detail what they found most and least useful from the course, alongside additional comments. 86% of participants engaged in this task.</p> <p>A follow up survey was sent to participants in the last week of the project, asking whether attendees had applied learning to their profession and for additional comments. 8% of participants engaged</p>										

		<p>in this task, a very low response rate meaning the project findings were more reliant on the post-training survey and follow up data.</p> <p>A thematic analysis of these indicators has been done alongside the pre training exercise.</p> <p>Validity: The qualitative data has been coded by the project Impact and Evaluation coordinator, with a sample tested by the Impact and Evaluation Manager to compare result authenticity. It's likely that a third-party evaluator could strengthen the validity of this data, but this was not featured in the business case.</p>
<p>Staff narrative interviews</p>	<p><u>AO4. People have better access to public transport as transport operators and planners improve understanding of accessibility issues through training</u></p> <p><u>AO5. Increased evidence for the impact of walking outreach activities on loneliness to improve understanding of how to reach and support older people</u></p> <p><u>AO6. Better understanding of the relative impact of walking-group-based activities and access-to-walking based activities on loneliness</u></p> <p><u>AO7. Community action is sustained by establishing</u></p>	<p>Process: Narrative interviews have been conducted with all project team staff. Questions were sent to staff before the session, and the session was recorded and transcribed after.</p> <p>Specific questions were asked from the project coordinators for each outcome, with prompts given to develop more evidence. These questions included:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Describe your involvement with Walking Connects. What did you deliver? 2. What went well with your delivery? 3. What problems did you face? 4. If this project was run again, what would you change? 5. How did the project input to learnings for the organisation? 6. Describe how you perceived the impact of led walks vs CSRs on loneliness of beneficiaries. 7. (Delivery team only) How did the distinct coordinator roles (for Impact and Evaluation, Comms and Engagement) support the project delivery? 8. Is there anything else that you want to say? <p>Validity: There may be some bias in this research source, given the individual interviewed and conducting the interview has a vested interest in the project success, as both are employees of Living Streets (the organisation running the Walking Connects project).</p>

	<u>Living Streets Local Groups as a legacy for lasting impact on local walking environments</u>	The qualitative data has been coded by the project Impact and Evaluation coordinator, with a sample tested by the Impact and Evaluation Manager to compare result authenticity. It's likely that a third-party evaluator could strengthen the validity of this data, but this was not featured in the business case.
Reach report	<u>AO5. Increased evidence for the impact of walking outreach activities on loneliness to improve understanding of how to reach and support older people</u>	<p>Process: This was comprised of numbers of partner organisations the project has engaged with, estimates of external communication reach and results to Social walking survey "How did you hear about us?" question from participants.</p> <p>Validity: Highly engaged organisations from the "organisations engage number" have been detailed for clarity. The reach report includes media forms were "double counting" may occur. This is indicated per media in the <u>Appendix</u>. Responses to the "How did you hear about us" question have been taken from the baseline survey only, given the premise that the baseline survey was completed at a closer date to the participant's initial hearing of the project.</p>
Engagement team report	<u>AO7. Community action is sustained by establishing</u>	Process: This was comprised from input from the engagement team on local group sign up from the project. Three categories were established:

	<p><u>Living Streets Local Groups as a legacy for lasting impact on local walking environments</u></p>	<p>Active = An active Living Streets local group, with events or activities planned/delivered and all registration paperwork complete. Supporting = A Living Streets local group that is well established in its journey to becoming active i.e. regular contact, plans for engagement. Approached = a group that has been approached with the idea of a local group but hasn't taken the offer further.</p> <p>Validity: The engagement team report came from Living Streets staff members who are closest to the local groups processes, making it the most up to date tool for monitoring this outcome.</p>
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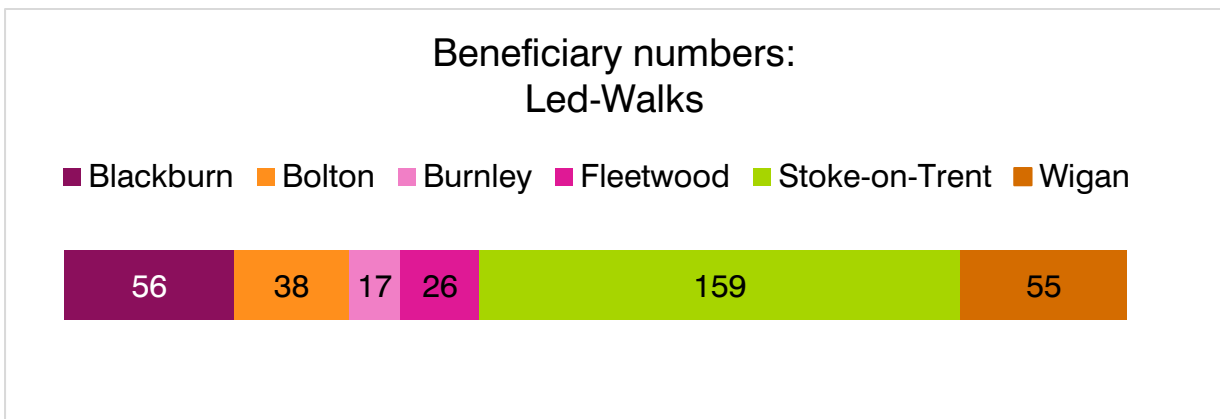
PROJECT RESULTS – OVERVIEW

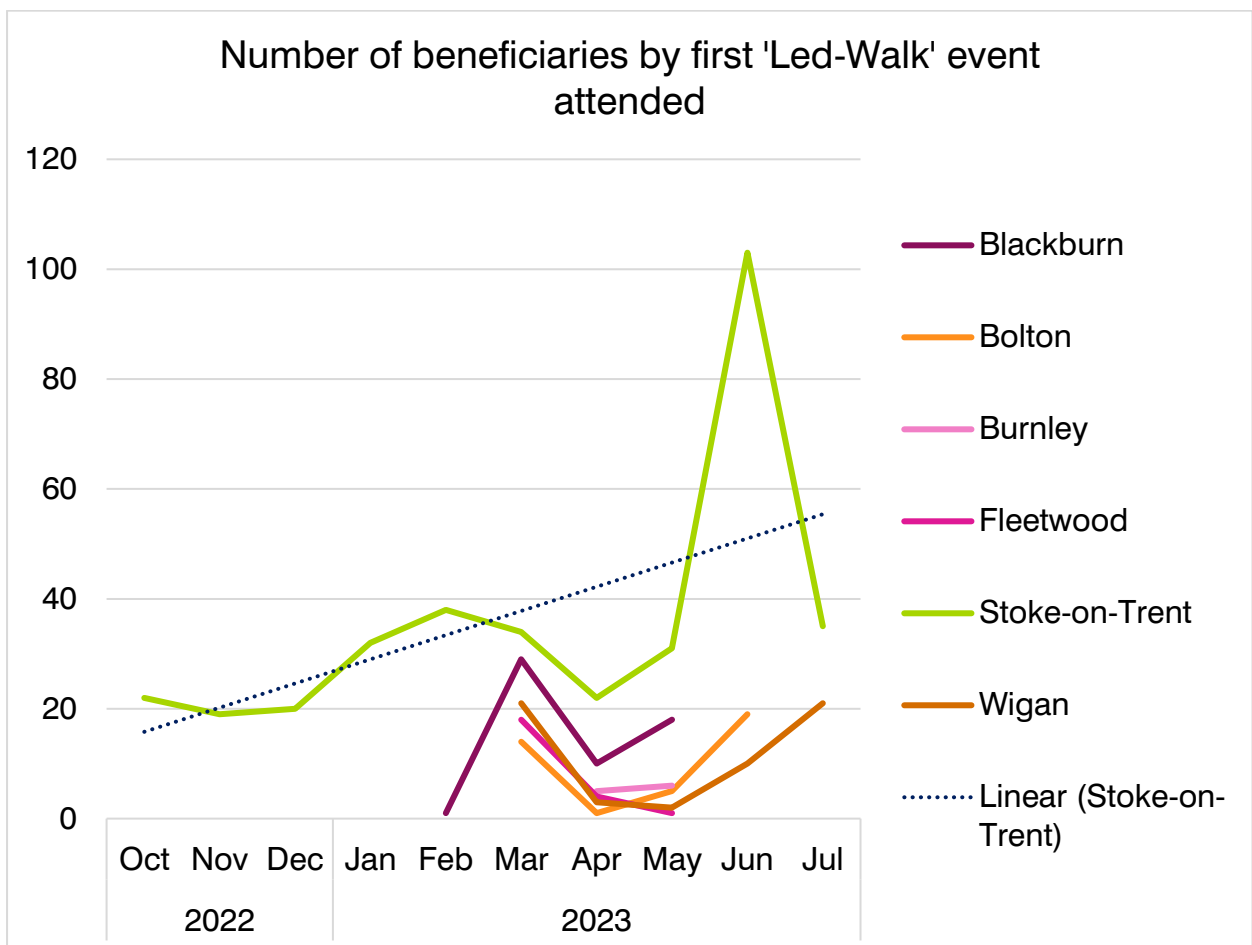
AIMS

AIM 1 – ENGAGING 400 OLDER PEOPLE AT RISK OF LONELINESS THROUGH WALKING ACTIVITIES.

Indicator: Event Attendance

This aim was partially achieved with 350 older people reached through our walking activities. Although the target 400 older people was not met, our legacy work indicates that further beneficiaries will engage with the project through the volunteer led walks. Volunteers have successfully led 26 walks and 11 Community Street Reviews in the Stoke-on-Trent area since April, and there is a pool of 10 committed volunteers in this area to sustain weekly walks into the summer months and beyond. Living Streets will continue supporting these volunteers through our local groups offer. Walking trends also show a steady growth of participants across walks in Stoke-on-Trent with more referrals coming from social prescribers.





Indicator: Demographic profiles

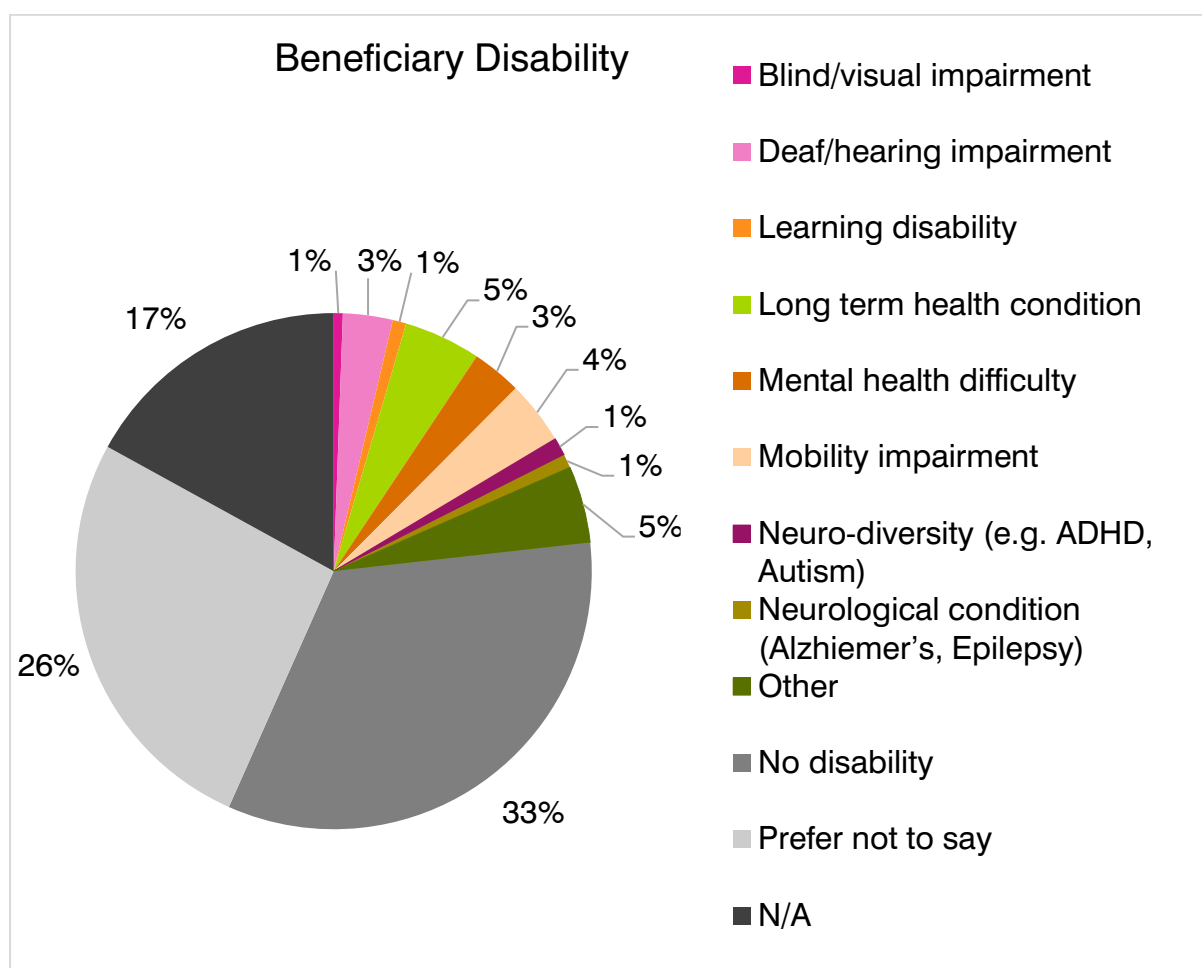
In our project plan we outlined a desire to target beneficiaries who:

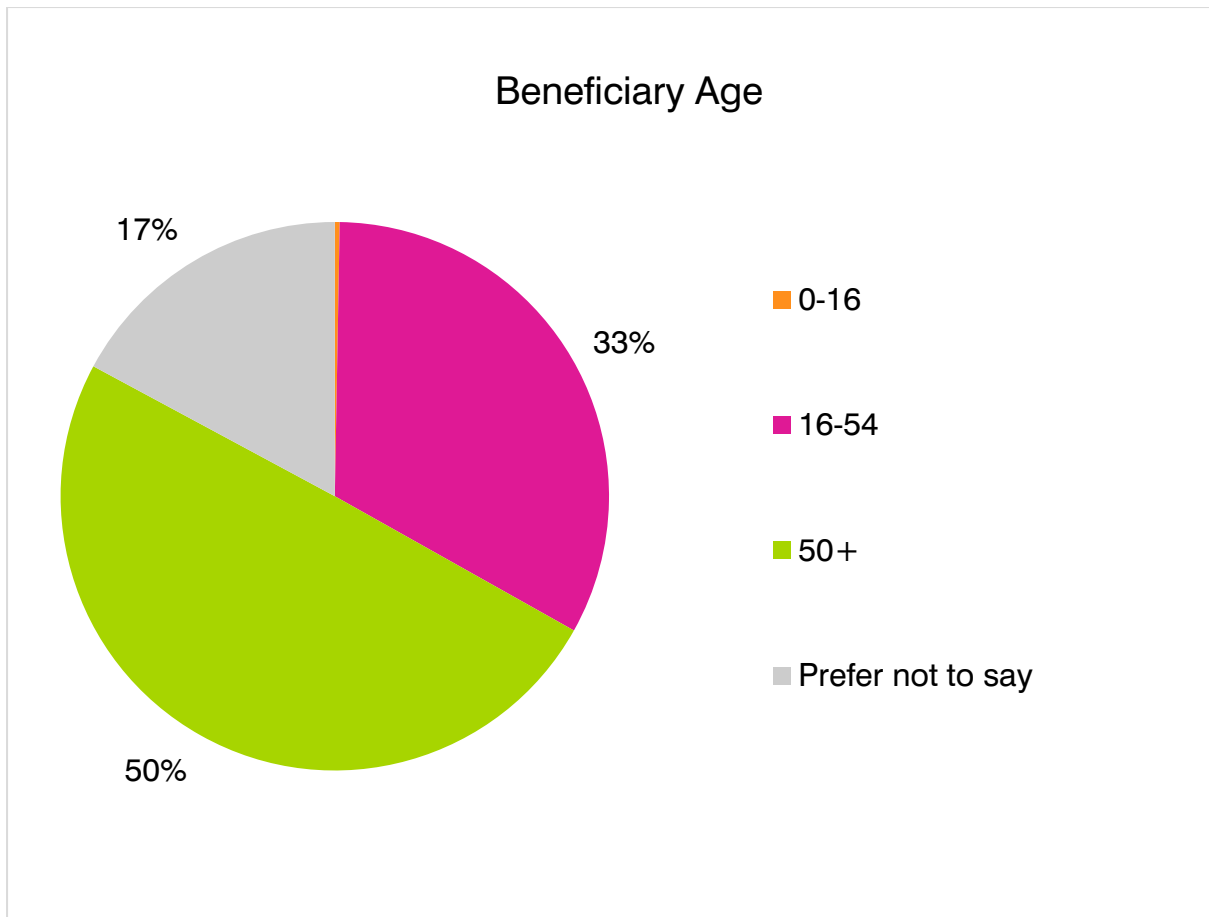
- Are experiencing or at risk of experiencing loneliness and would like to be signposted to walking activity (i.e. people who are living alone, experiencing multiple deprivation, and/or mental health problems).
- Have perceived physical barriers to walking in their local community whose routes have changed and are at risk of disengagement (i.e. people with

reduced mobility or fitness, worsening health condition, or entering supported housing).

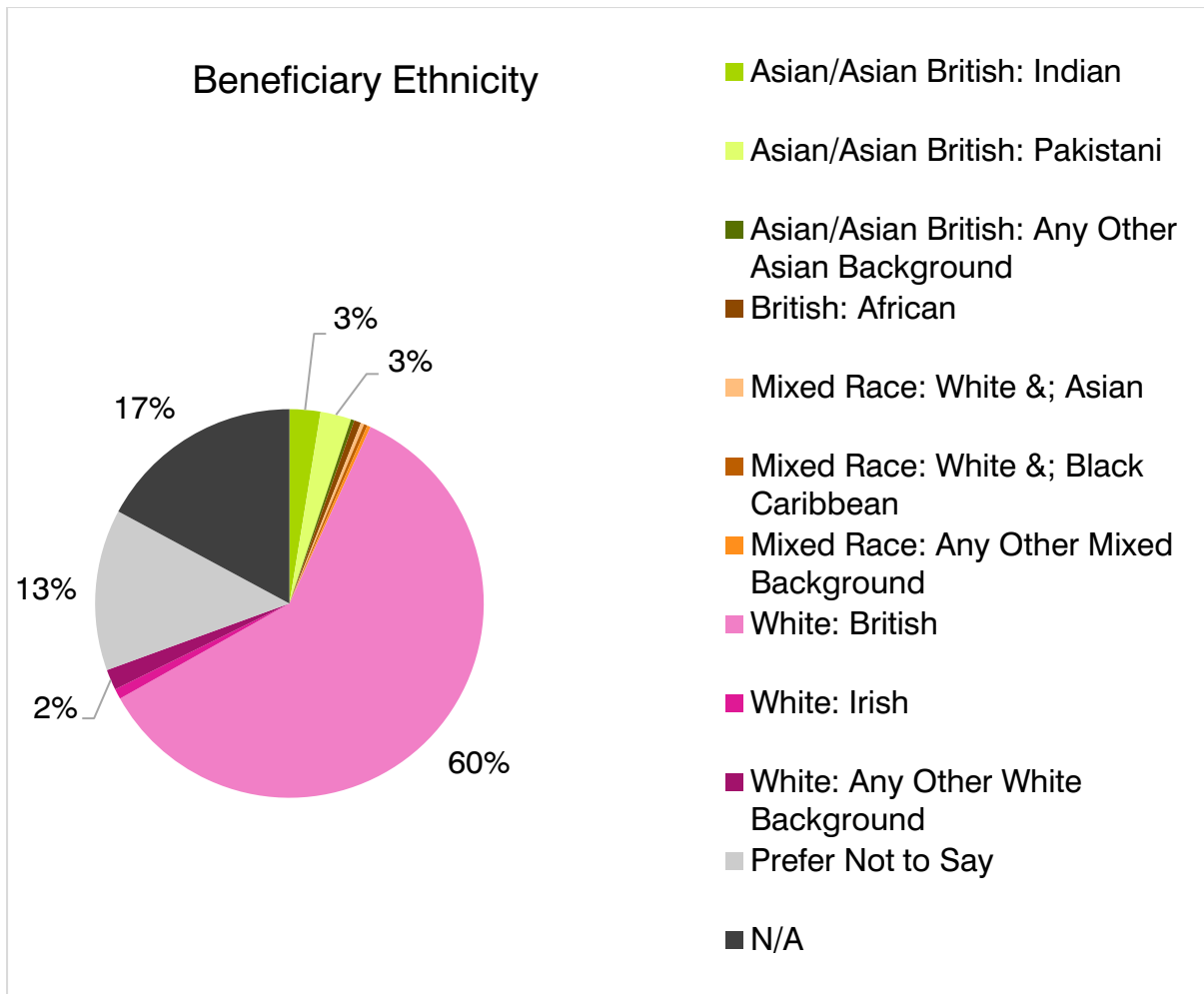
- Were over 50 or cared for people over 50.

As intended, the demographic charts indicate strong engagement with people with reduced mobility or people with physical or mental health problems. 24% of beneficiaries identified as being disabled, higher than the national proportion of disabled people of 17.8% (Office for National Statistics, 2023). The beneficiary ages comprised of 50% of 50+ beneficiaries, an indication that the age group received the interventions well, but also that the project scope met needs across other age groups (see ["What would we do differently"](#) for more on this). Similarly, as part of the project's [comparator work](#), we identified that the people we were working with were more at risk of loneliness than the national average.

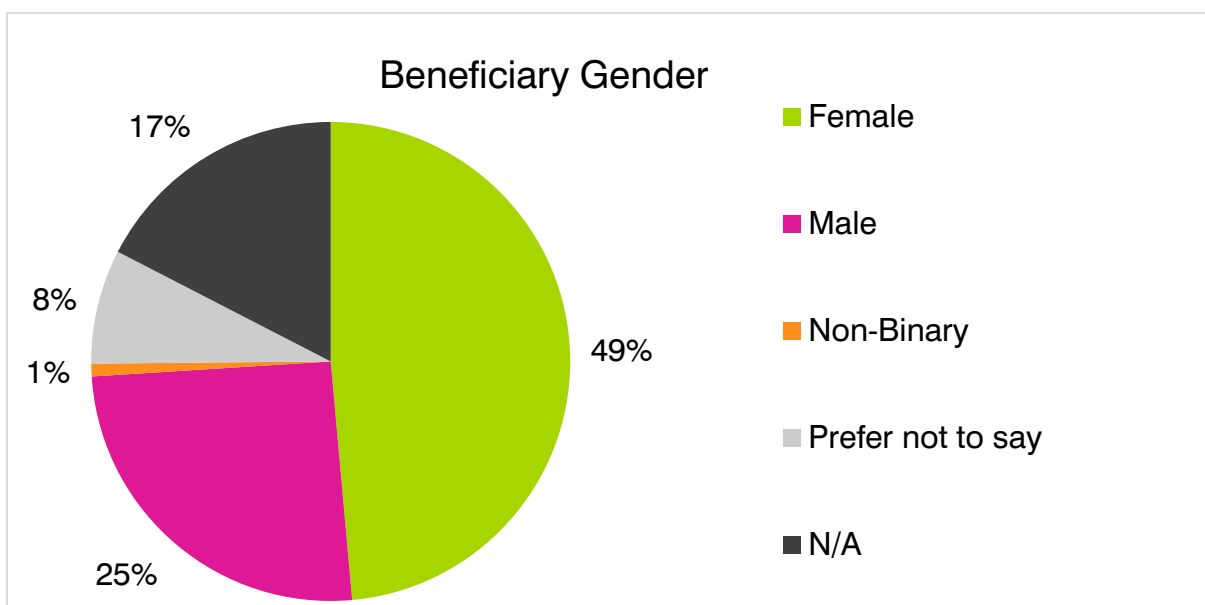




The project coordinators strove to engage with communities from diverse ethnic backgrounds, and data was gathered from most beneficiaries detailing an ethnicity profile with 6% Asian or Asian British, 2% Mixed or Multiple ethnic and 1% African. 17% of the group did not enter their demographic details to the project because they were part of a refugee group that attended a led walk en masse in partnership with the Shelton based charity, Asha. Members of this group were described by its organiser as having an African or Iraqi heritage. As such, the actual percentage of minority ethnic groups involved in the project was 26%, against a national proportion of 18.3% (Office for National Statistics, 2022).



Over the project course, it was noted that a high proportion of event attendees (particularly at volunteer training sessions) were female, so analysis of this was included in our qualitative data – see [Unanticipated outcomes](#). By the project close, 49% of beneficiaries were female.



Following on from this, the project was successful in engaging with the LGBTQ+ community. Sexuality was not part of the demographic questioning, but evidence of this lies in the creation of the OLGBT+ local group in Stoke-on-Trent. Similarly, the gender chart indicates there was some engagement from people who identify as non-binary.

Overall, the demographic profiles indicate a project with high levels of inclusivity and engagement from deprived communities. This was reflected in the qualitative data also, particularly the [analysis on social connection](#) from the project.

AIM 2 – REACHING UP TO 1,600 OLDER PEOPLE AT RISK OF LONELINESS THROUGH INFORMATION RESOURCES.

Indicator: Reach report

This aim was exceeded comprehensively through multiple information and media resources. An overview of this is detailed below, with a full breakdown and detail in the [Appendix](#):

Form	Result
Living Streets Website	2,431 page views
Facebook	340 post engagements
Twitter	510 post engagements
Press	3.5 million + in reach
Printed media	3,050 printed copies

Similarly, 108 organisations were approached with information on the project to disseminate to their beneficiaries. These organisations included Local authorities, charities, voluntary and community groups, and corporations. Of these, strong partnerships were built across the project areas with:

- Canal and Rivers Trust (Blackburn and Burnley)
- Wyre Council (Fleetwood)
- Hanley Park and the Park Liaison Officers (Stoke-on-Trent)
- VAST (Stoke-on-Trent)
- Bolton Council
- Wigan Council – Wigan Safer Streets Team
- Stoke-on-Trent City Council (Transport Planning, Environment and Parks)
- Transport For Greater Manchester
- Greater Sport Manchester
- Lancashire Heritage Zone – Including Fleetwood Museum
- The Dudson Centre and Museum (Stoke-on-Trent)
- The North Staffordshire Pensioner Convention (Stoke-on-Trent)
- Integrated Care Board (Staffordshire)
- Together Active (Staffordshire)
- Burnley FC
- Age UK Blackburn with Darwen

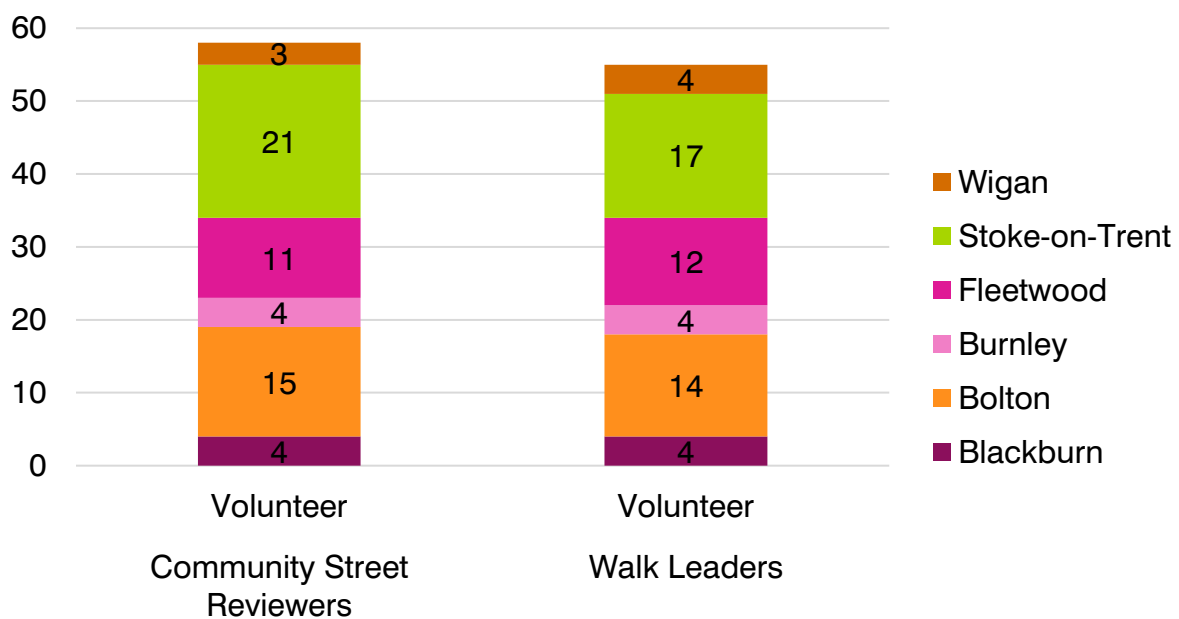
In [Outcome 5](#) there is more detail on how these outlets and organisations assisted build understanding of the target demographic.

AIM 3 – TRAINING UP TO 40 VOLUNTEER WALK LEADERS AND 55 VOLUNTEER COMMUNITY STREET AUDITORS TO ASSESS AND MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS ABOUT THEIR LOCAL WALKING ENVIRONMENT.

Indicator: Event attendance

This aim was exceeded, with 58 Volunteer Community Street Reviewers and 55 Volunteer Walk Leaders trained through project training sessions. The Walk Leader target was exceeded by 37.5% and the Community Street Review target by 5.4%.

Volunteers trained by area

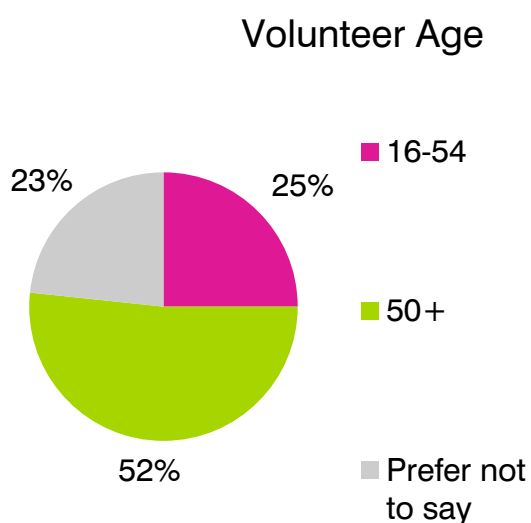
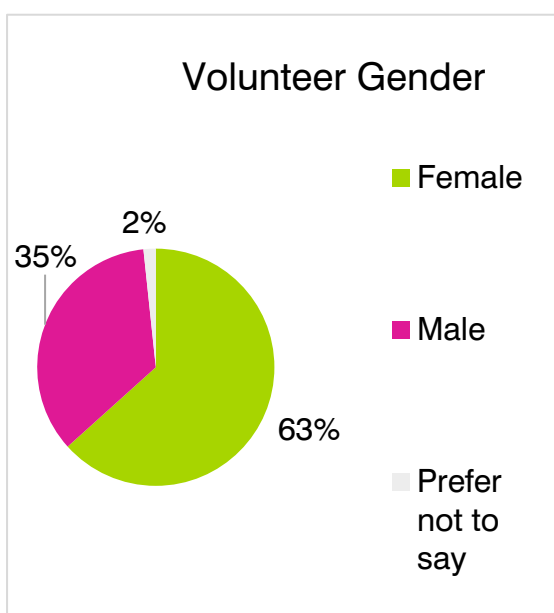
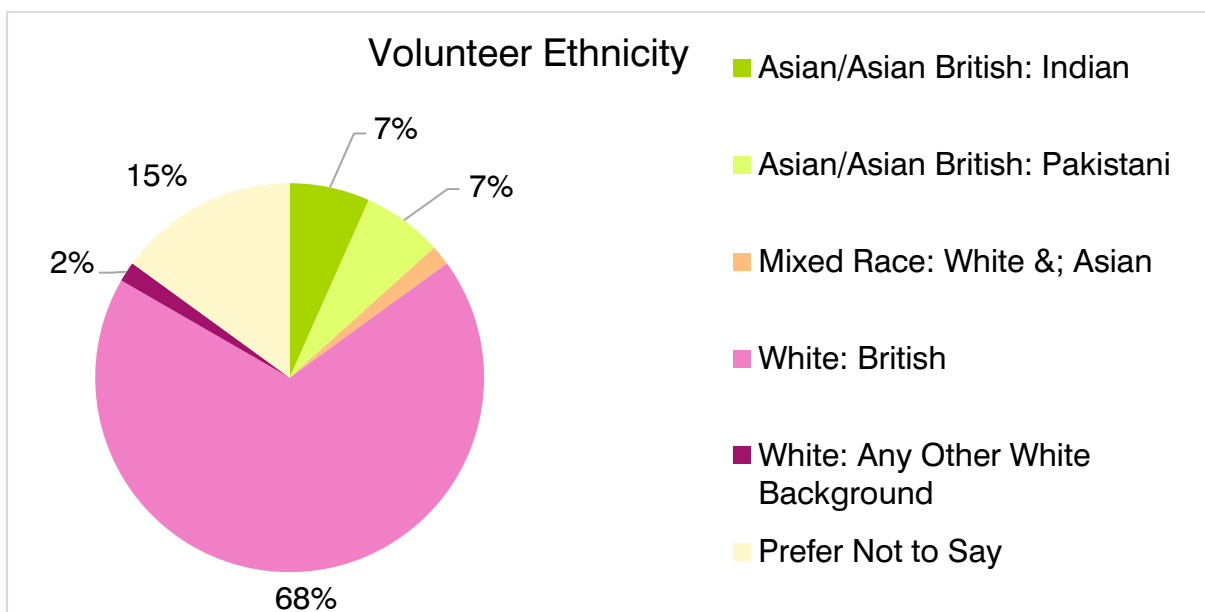


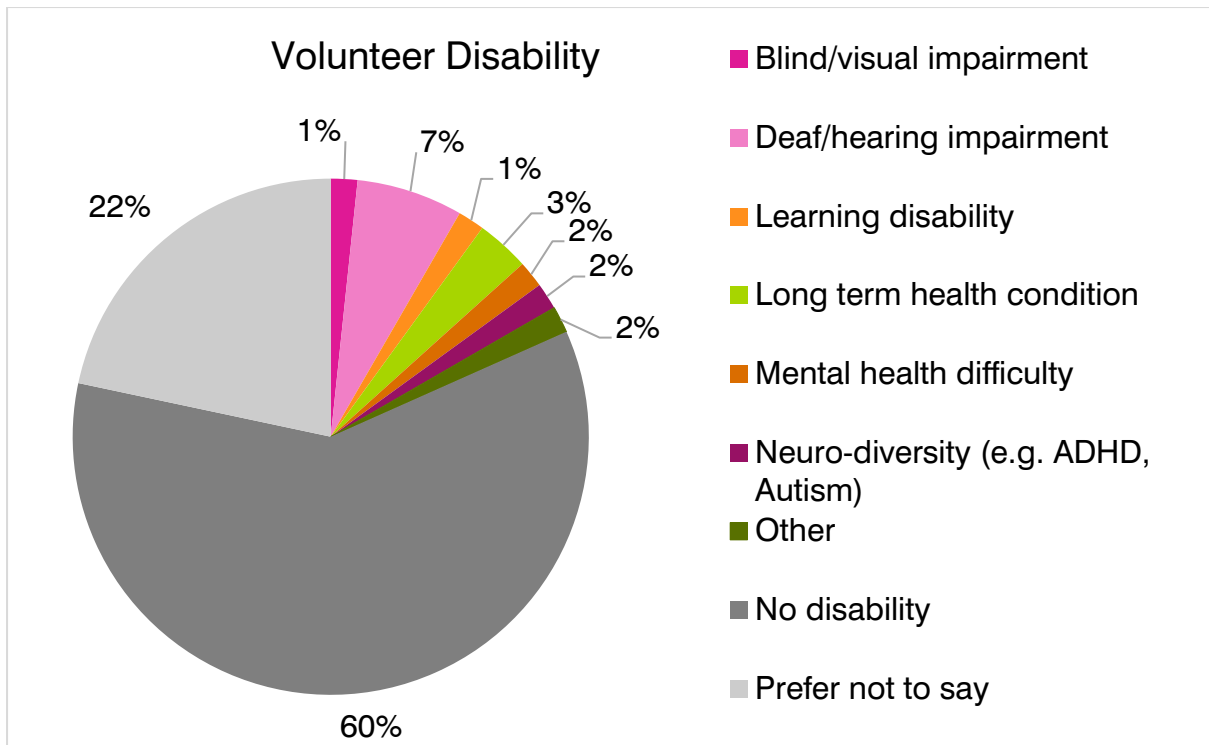
After volunteers were successfully trained and inducted, they took the lead on both Community Street Reviews and group walks.



Indicator: Demographic profiles

Although the [beneficiary demographic profile](#) indicated high levels of inclusivity, the volunteer demographics show more work is needed to engage diverse volunteer groups (see more in [“What would we do differently”](#)). 15% of the volunteers identified as being from a minority ethnic group, lower than the national proportion of 18.3% (Office for National Statistics, 2022) and project beneficiary profile of 26%. 18% of volunteers identified as being disabled, broadly in line with the national proportion of disabled people of 17.8% (Office for National Statistics, 2023), but lower than the project beneficiary profile of 24% (if this was broken down further, 20% of Community Street Reviewers identified as disabled and 17% of Walk Leaders). 52% of volunteers were 50 years old or older, broadly in line with the project beneficiary profile of 50%. 63% of volunteers were female – a trend that was noted early on and featured in our [unanticipated outcomes research](#).

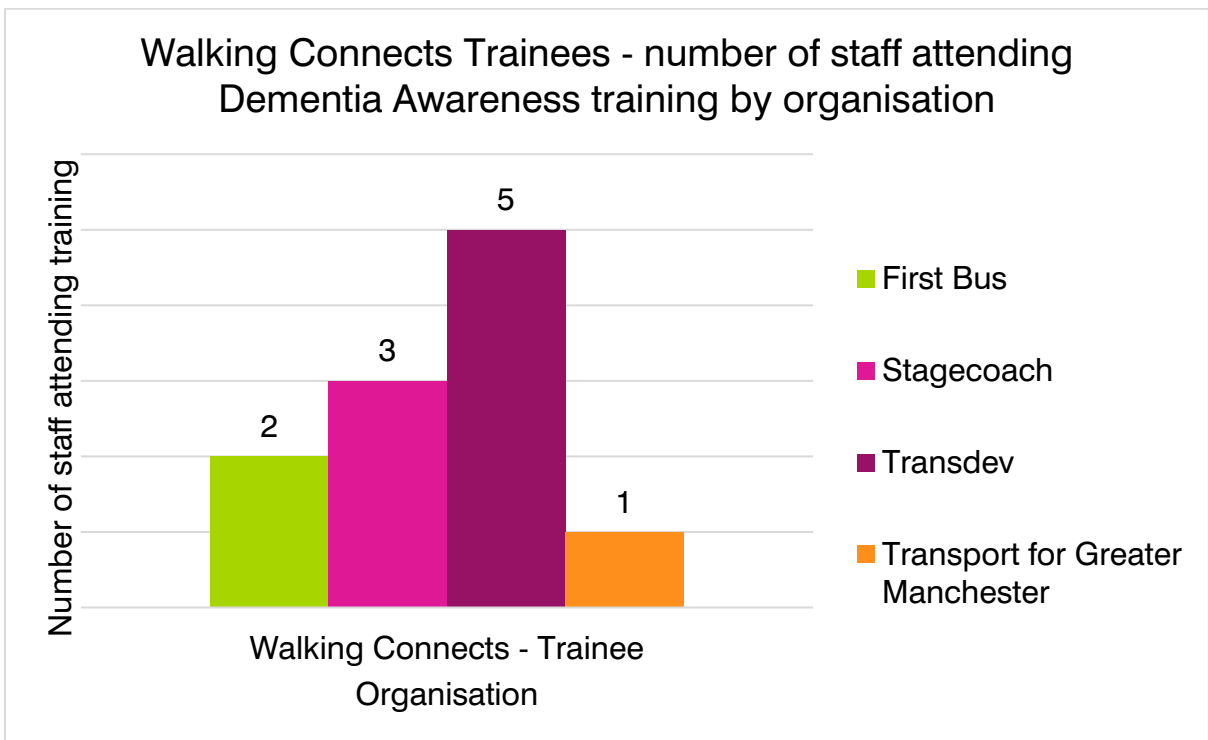
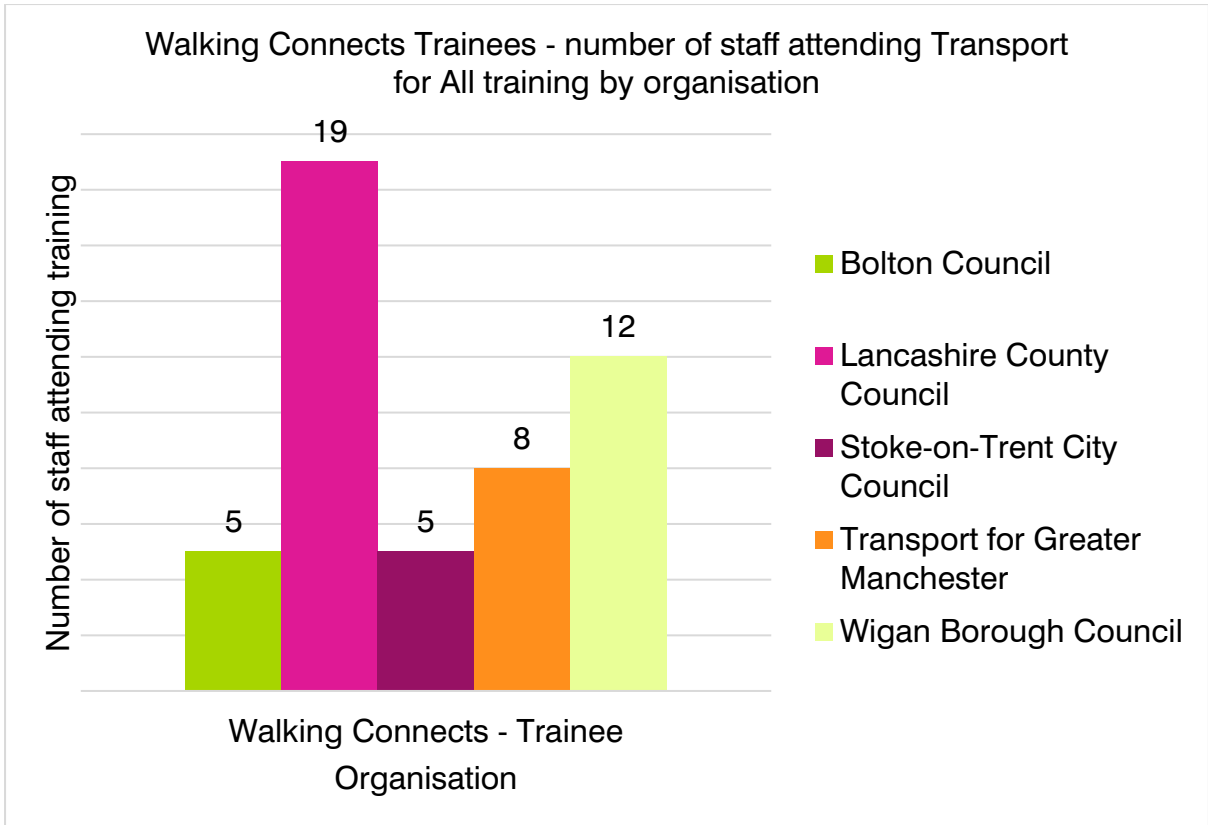




AIM 4 – FACILITATING ACCESS TO 55 PLACES FOR TRANSPORT PLANNERS AND OPERATORS ON ACCESSIBILITY TRAININGS

Indicator: Training attendance profiles

This aim was exceeded, with 60 transport planners and operators engaged the Accessibility Training sessions, run in partnership with Dementia Awareness and Transport for All.



AIM 5 – ESTABLISHING FOUR LOCAL GROUPS – COMMUNITY-FOCUSED VOLUNTEERS WHO CREATE CONVERSATIONS AROUND ISSUES THAT ENCOURAGE MORE PEOPLE TO WALK, NO MATTER THEIR AGE OR LIVED EXPERIENCE.

Indicator: Engagement team report

This aim was successfully achieved, with the organisation ‘supporting’ the onboarding of 4 local groups in Stoke-on-Trent and Wigan. These four groups have faced barrier with running events and activity due to familial commitments from volunteers and other commitments, but regular contact has been sustained and the journey to becoming ‘active’ is progressing well.

An additional local group is ‘active’ - the ‘OLGBT group’ in Stoke-on-Trent. This group has been set up to run Rainbow Walks in coordination with Stoke Pride, and has been assisting the Living Streets’ wider affinity group work to include further LGBTQ+ groups across the country.

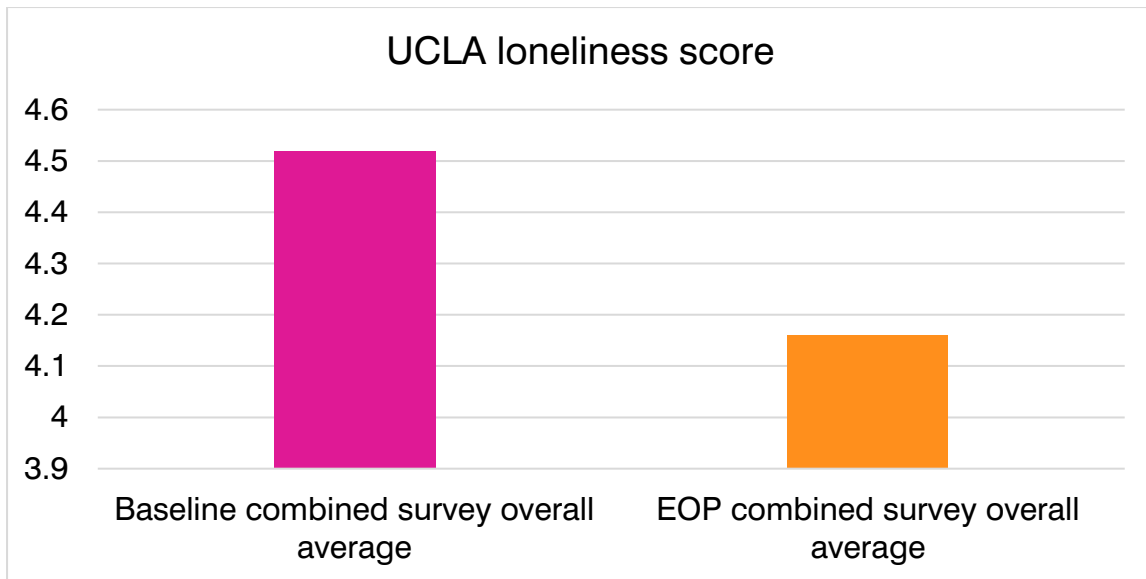
A further 5 potential groups were identified and ‘approached’ in Lancashire, Stoke-on-Trent and Wigan, who are strong potentials to start walking activity in their area over the coming years.

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES**OUTCOME 1 – OLDER PEOPLE REPORT IMPROVED FEELINGS OF SOCIAL CONNECTEDNESS AND REDUCED LONELINESS THROUGH PARTICIPATION IN WALKING ACTIVITIES.****Indicator: Social Walking Survey (Baseline and End of Project comparison)**

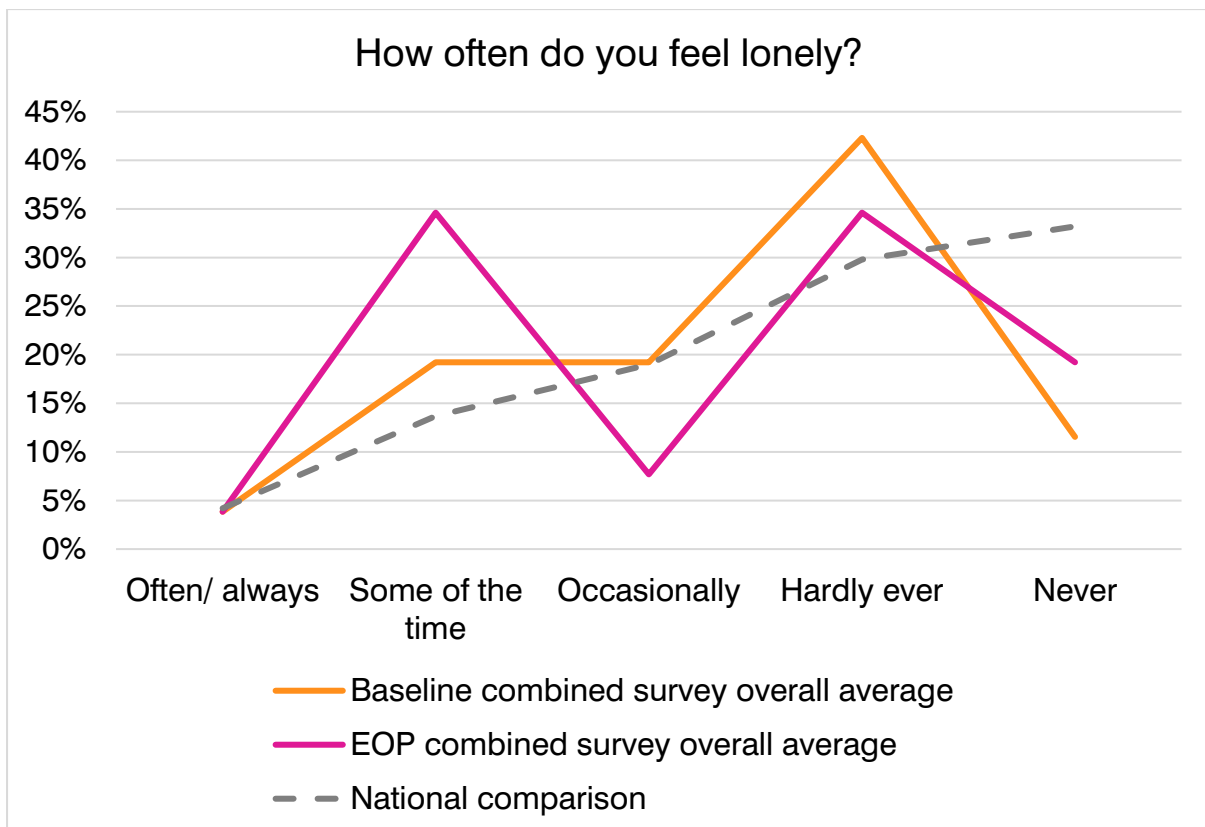
Our survey results and qualitative data indicate that this outcome was successfully achieved, and control group testing indicators show that the project engaged the intended demographic.

The project survey used UCLA loneliness questions to gather data on beneficiary feelings of loneliness. There is no standard accepted score on the UCLA scale for which a person would definitely be considered lonely, however it is considered helpful to “use the average score across the sample to monitor and report changes over time.” (Office for National Statistics, 2018)

The analysis used results from baseline and end of project to determine a loneliness score for participants, with the objective that this would be reduced over the project course. The results from these surveys indicate an 8% decrease in UCLA loneliness score, from an average of 4.52 at baseline to 4.16 at the end of project. The lowest possible combined score on the loneliness scale is 3 (indicating less frequent loneliness) and the highest is 9 (indicating more frequent loneliness).



The surveys also asked the standalone, direct question “How often do you feel lonely” but results on this were inconclusive from baseline to end of project. A graph has been included to show this, demonstrating an unclear pattern between changes in loneliness from baseline to end of project. The data from this question has been more conclusive in the [comparator analysis](#) with our baseline.



Indicator: Qualitative data

A thematic analysis of the qualitative data provided evidence that participants on the project felt it was effective in increasing feelings of social connectedness. A high frequency of positive references was made to “new connections”, with participants

revelling in the conversations they had with people they met through the project. Participants enjoyed the fact that the walks brought people together from diverse backgrounds and liked having the opportunity to share different life experiences. Participants liked having the opportunity to converse and connect with others, meaning the walk and the “cuppa” afterwards were a valuable part of the activity. Beneficiaries felt the project had increased the *diversity* of their social interactions and the *quality* of them. Through the project, beneficiaries started to indicate more feelings of social agency: comments were made around planning future activities with participants. Furthermore, beneficiaries showed an active role in promoting the benefits of the project to their wider community. For example, a participant in Wigan found the walks so beneficial that she began to promote them to the other attendees at her physio group, while another in Bolton would encourage his colleagues and Somalian family to take up walking during and outside of the activity. This empowerment of beneficiaries to connect others themselves was an unexpected, but welcome, step towards achieving the outcome.

Through the qualitative data, many of the beneficiaries indicated that the Covid-19 pandemic, chronic illnesses, and retirement had triggered feelings of loneliness and isolation for them. These beneficiaries found the walking groups particularly helpful because they provided the opportunity to rebuild social habits in a safe, inclusive environment. There was also consensus that walking in some of the project areas was safer in groups than alone.

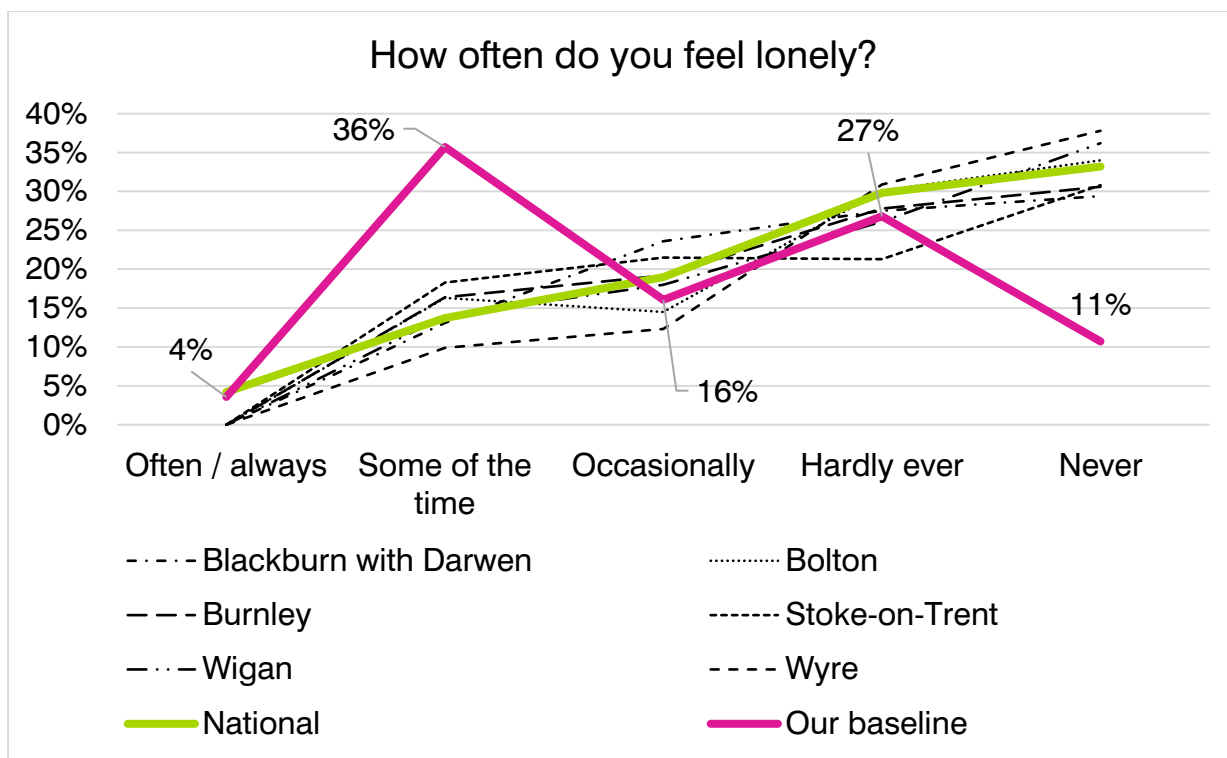
Theme: Social Connection and Loneliness through Walking Connects			
Our qualitative data found the project successfully achieved the outcome of older people reporting improved feelings of social connectedness and reduced loneliness through participation in walking activities. Comments were made on the following themes to evidence this:			
Joy in random and new interactions	“I’ve met people as I haven’t seen around before , even though I’ve lived in this area all my life , and that’s mainly why I’ve got involved with the group as it is now.”	Joy in conversation and connection	“I don’t like walking so much, but I do love chatting, and that’s why I come to the led walks; so I can meet new people and chat away, otherwise I’d be at home, with no one. ”
	(Hanley Park Focus Group attendee)	A general social connection increase	(Ruth, 76, Blackburn)
Promoting independent social agency	“It doesn’t matter what the weather’s like because that’s	Promoting connection for others	“These walks would be ideal for them [taxi driver colleagues] to

	<p>my purpose, to get out of the house and be with other people.</p> <p>(Hanley Park Focus Group attendee)</p>		<p>join when they can and improve their health. I try to encourage people to walk.</p> <p>(Abdul, Bolton)</p>
<p>Share common interests/ life experiences with participants</p>	<p>Finding safety in numbers</p> <p>“The walks create a comfortable environment to a group of likeminded people with similar abilities and gives them the support of a group setting in which to thrive.”</p> <p>(Charli, Lancashire coordinator)</p>	<p>“Many have reported that the walks help boost their confidence and find purpose during this significant life change [retirement].”</p> <p>(Lancashire case study)</p>	<p>Re-build social connection after pandemic/ other significant life event</p> <p>Improvement in social confidence</p>

Indicator: Control Group Testing

Our comparator-to-baseline charts indicates that the demographic the project worked with had comparatively lower wellbeing scores, higher anxiety levels and higher levels of loneliness than the local area and national average:

- When asked the question “How often do you feel lonely”, 36% of project baseline respondents answered, “some of the time,” while 11% answered “never”. This indicates that more of the project baseline sample feel lonely than the national and local area Active Lives Survey samples.



OUTCOME 2 – WALK LEADERS ARE RECRUITED AND TRAINED TO LEAD LOCAL WALKING GROUP.

This outcome was successfully reached – see [Aim 1](#) and [Aim 3](#).

OUTCOME 3 – COMMUNITIES MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENTS TO THEIR STREETS AND LOCAL WALKING ENVIRONMENT THROUGH TRAINING AND PARTICIPATION IN COMMUNITY STREET REVIEWS (CSRS)

This outcome was successfully reached – see [Aim 3: Event Attendance Indicator](#) in addition to the below. Over the project course, beneficiaries demonstrated a clear progression in skills around talking about improvement to their streets and local walking environments and making recommendations for these. Detail on how these recommendations have fed into local authorities is detailed below.

Indicator: Community Street Reviews

Community Street Review (CSR) delivery over the three areas of Bolton, Wigan and Stoke-on-Trent was very different due to a number of external factors, including relationships with local authorities, local communities and the involvement of volunteers.

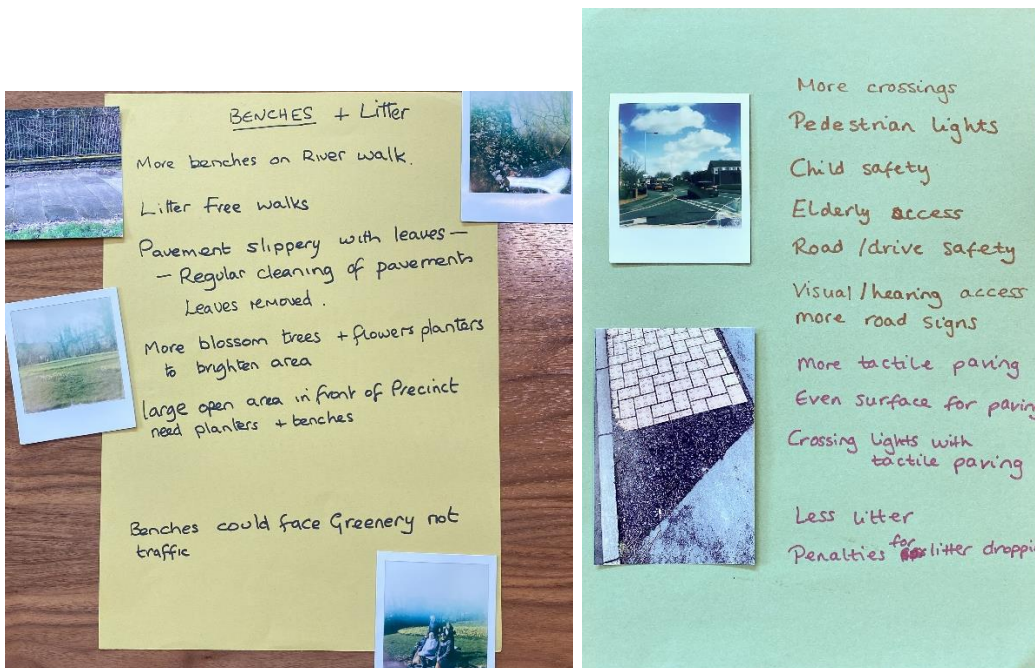
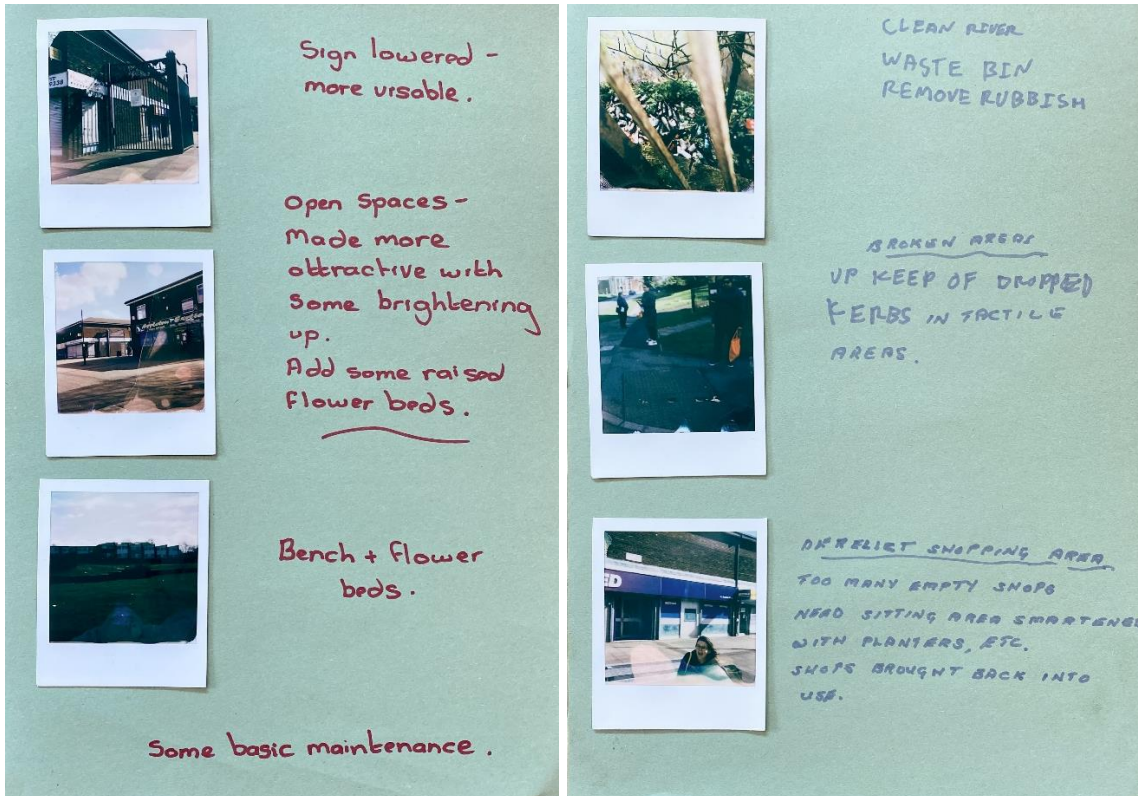
In Wigan, the local coordinator developed a strong relationship with the local authority’s Safer Streets Team, which resulted in some strong collaborative work. On the 24th March 2023, in partnership with the Safer Streets team, volunteers from the local community and MP Lisa Nandy, Living Streets delivered a CSR within the Scholes area of Wigan. The findings on the day were collated within a CSR report

which was shared with all key stakeholders and has been used as part of a wider consultation process which will help shape future capital spend plans.

On 23 June 2023, Living Streets was invited to conduct a CSR by The Valley Primary School, Bolton. Residents, staff and MP Mark Logan joined local people to identify and record issues that encouraged or discouraged everyday walking. Further discussions then took place, agreeing on short and longer-term priorities that would improve the walking environment. These findings are now being submitted to our local and combined authority contacts and will also be shared with our Walk to School Outreach team for ongoing support with the Valley Primary School.

One of the many successes of the Walking Connects project has been volunteer engagement within Stoke-on-Trent and in particular the support of the volunteer Community Street Reviewers. At the project outset, our priority was to use the CSRs to work strategically with local authorities to plan and deliver around Local Cycling and Walking Investment Plans (LCWIP), however in Stoke-on-Trent this was unachievable as Stoke-on-Trent's LCWIP was incomplete at the time of project delivery. Following feedback from baseline surveys, and meetings with the Walking Connects Coordinator, volunteers began to carry out their own CSRs in areas that they felt needed improvements for accessibility. This has resulted in over 20 local reviews, all of which are now being submitted to the Transport Planning team at Stoke-on-Trent City Council as part of a list of recommendations.

In Bolton and Wigan, beneficiaries participated in Community Street Reviews with Living Streets staff and reports have been fed back to local authorities, as stated previously. Photos of outputs from these are below, with full reports available for [Wigan](#) and [Bolton](#) on request.



In Stoke-on-Trent, multiple volunteer Community Street Reviewers conducted independent reviews of their local streets using our prompt cards:

Space and crossing

Is there enough space to walk comfortably? Can you cross where you need to, without detours?

Pavement quality

Are pavements smooth, even and well-maintained? Is there anything in your way—permanent or temporary?

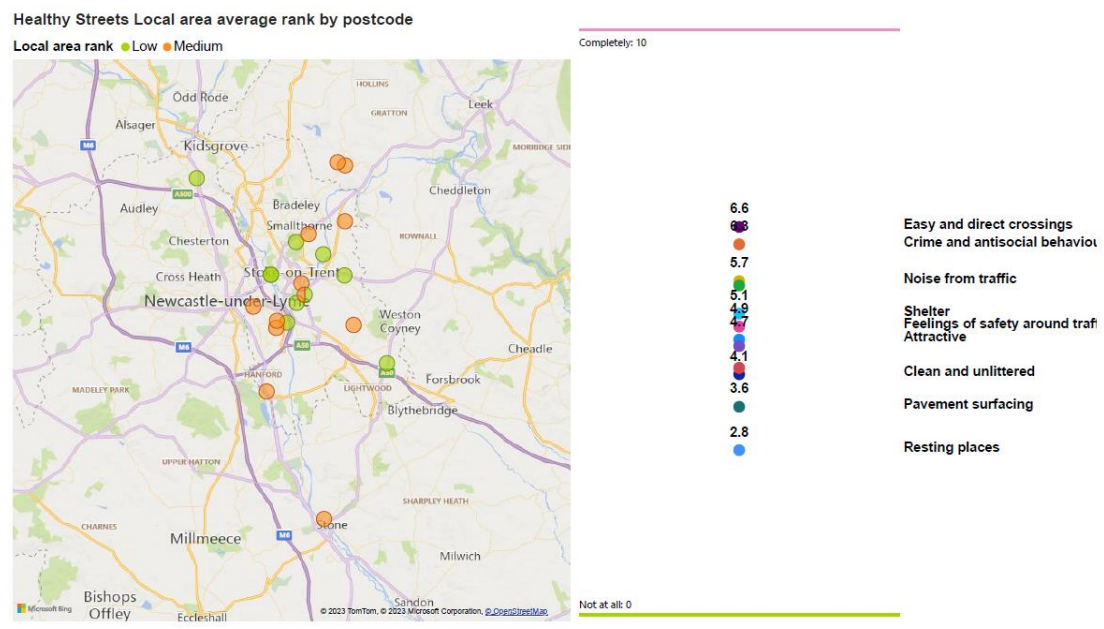
Things you need	Is there everything you need to walk, stop and find your way—regular benches, clear signs, toilets, bins and lighting?
Feeling safe	Does this feel like a safe place to walk, including at night? Is the amount or speed of traffic dangerous or unpleasant?
Spending time	How attractive and appealing is it to be outdoors here? Is this a good place to spend time with other people?

As mentioned previously, the comments from these prompt cards were collated into a combined document and sent on to the local authority with recommendations per locations.

Indicator: Social Walking Survey (mapping)

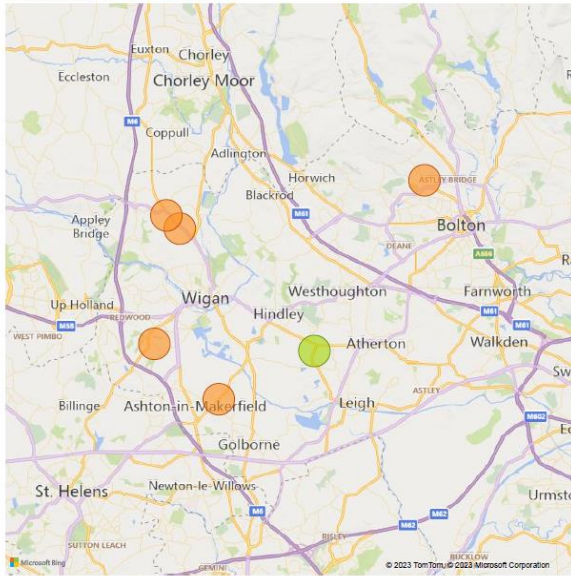
Our survey data indicated that priorities for each local area differed. Lowest scoring areas have been highlighted below (indicating a high priority for improvement):

- In Stoke-on-Trent, lowest scores were given to “Resting Places”, “Pavement Surfacing” and “Clean and Unlittered”.
- In Bolton and Wigan, lowest scores were given to “Feelings of safety around traffic”, “Resting places” and “Noise from traffic”.
- In Blackburn and Darwen, lowest scores were given to “Clean and Unlittered”, “Feelings of safety around traffic” and “Noise from traffic”.
- In Fleetwood, lowest scores were given to “Shelter”, “Resting places” and “Attractive”.

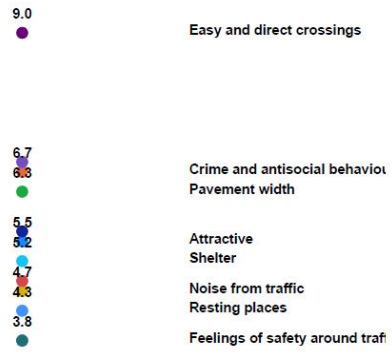


Healthy Streets Local area average rank by postcode

Local area rank ● Low ● Medium



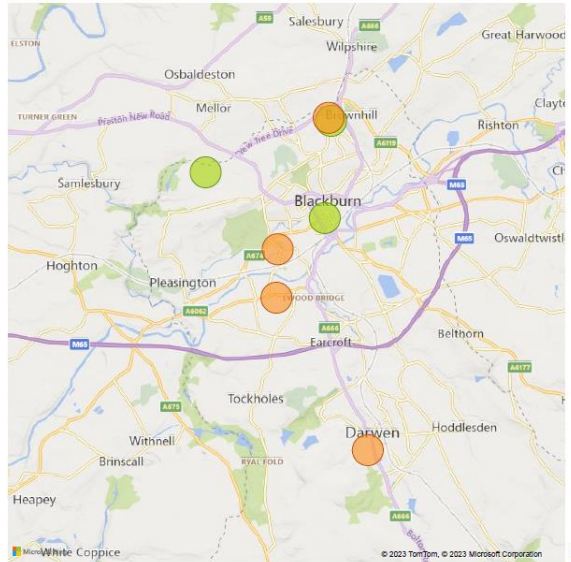
Completely: 10



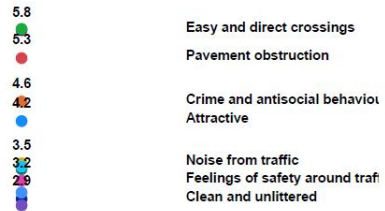
Not at all: 0

Healthy Streets Local area average rank by postcode

Local area rank ● Low ● Medium



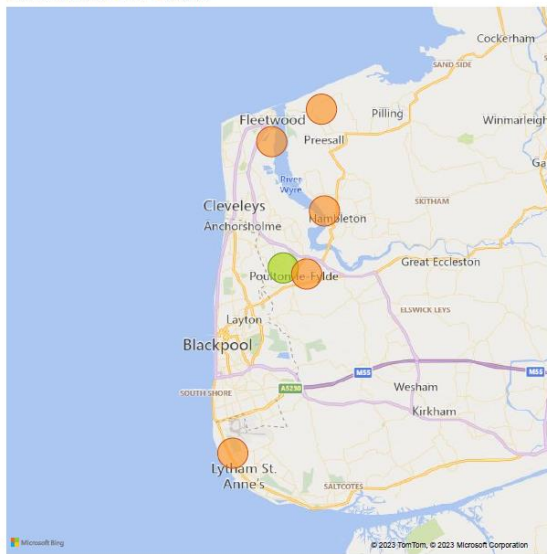
Completely: 10



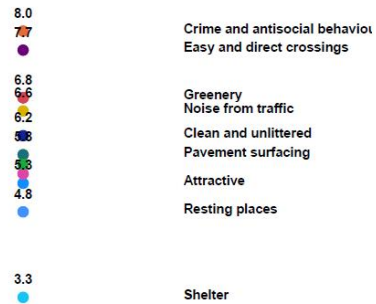
Not at all: 0

Healthy Streets Local area average rank by postcode

Local area rank ● Low ● Medium



Completely: 10



Not at all: 0

Indicator: Qualitative data

Overall, the main barriers to walking faced by our focus group participants in Stoke-on-Trent were related to: cleanliness and litter; pavement surfacing; and, pavement clutter (including pavement parking). Concerns were also raised around: easy and safe places to cross; feelings of safety around traffic; and the general attractiveness of the walking environment. Participants were also keen to contribute positive examples of walking environments that they enjoyed, both within the area and abroad. These positive examples supported the comments around barriers in their own areas, referencing locations where streets were clean; pavements were wide; or pavements had been surfaced appropriately. The participants from these focus groups shared ways that they had contacted local authorities about these issues, and the support they felt from participating in Community Street Reviews with Living Streets to become, as one beneficiary liked to say, “militant pedestrians”.

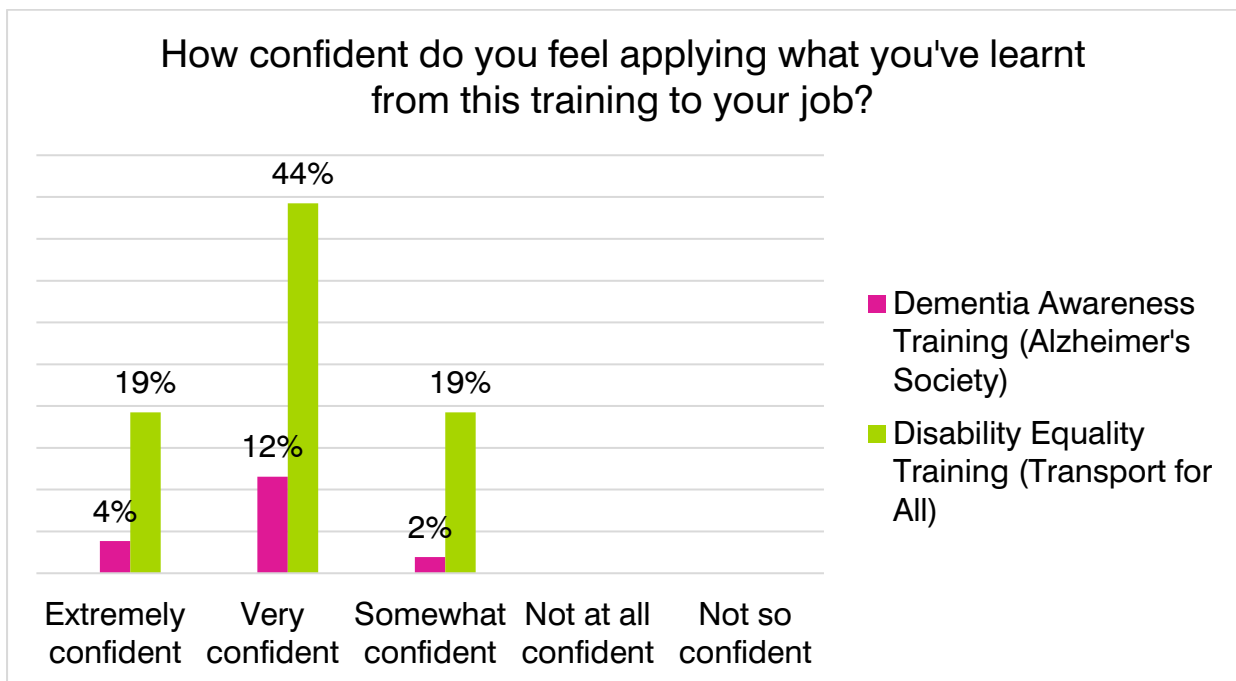
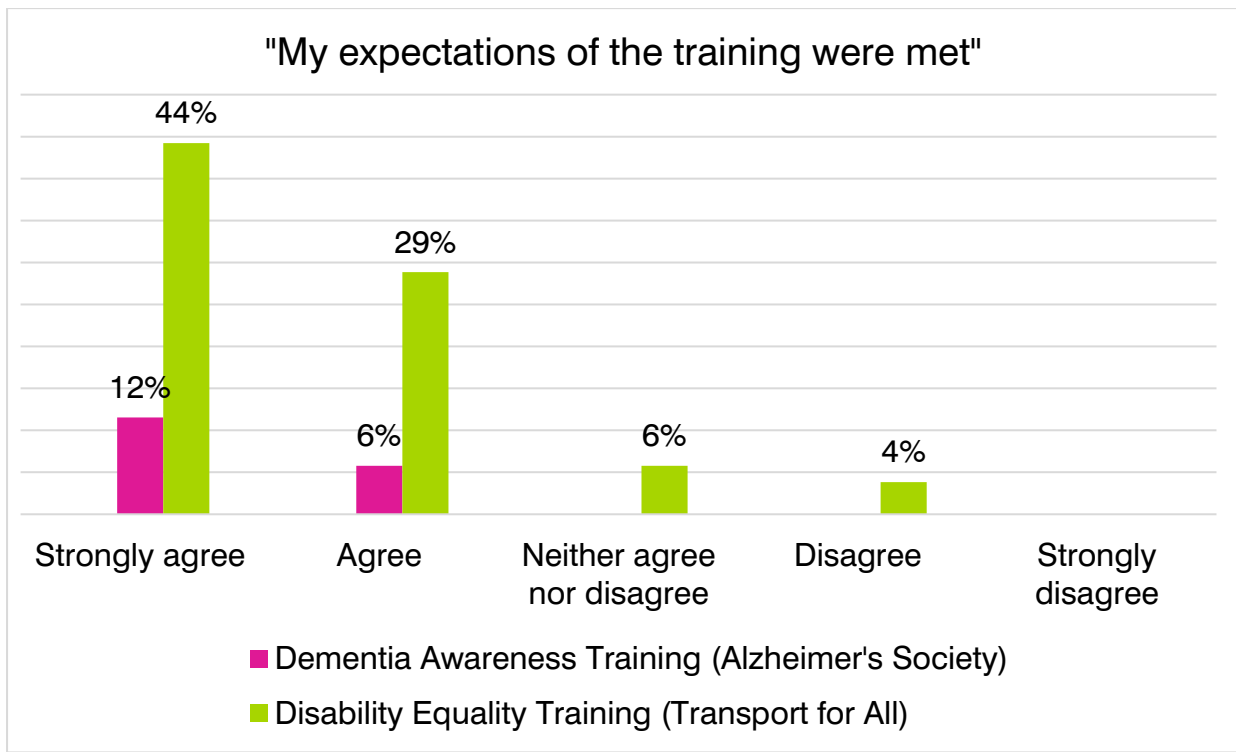
OUTCOME 4 – PEOPLE HAVE BETTER ACCESS TO PUBLIC TRANSPORT AS TRANSPORT OPERATORS AND PLANNERS IMPROVE UNDERSTANDING OF ACCESSIBILITY ISSUES THROUGH TRAINING

This outcome was partially met: the indicators evidence that transport operators and planners had an improved understanding of accessibility issues through the training. However, the link to this leading to better access to public transport is assumed, not proven from the project data.

Indicator: Accessibility post training and follow up survey

The survey datasets evidence that transport operators have an improved understanding of accessibility issues through the training sessions run. Most of the attendees agreed or strongly agreed that their expectations of the training were met and felt confident in applying this to their profession. The follow up survey indicated that most respondents agreed that they have been able to apply learnings from the training to their job, but with the minimal response rate (5% of attendees) there is no

presumption that this is applicable for all attendees. More follow up work with the attendees and the local authorities or organisations they work with would be needed to track this outcome in future (for a full list of local authorities in attendance, see [Accessibility Training attendance profile](#)).



Indicator: Qualitative data

The qualitative data for the accessibility training was composed of three parts:

- A pre training exercise identifying previous experience with disabilities and objectives for the training (100% of participants engaged in this task).

- A post training survey asking participants to detail what they found most and least useful from the course, alongside additional comments (86% of participants engaged in this task).
- A narrative interview with the project coordinator dedicated to the organisation of the training sessions.

The pre training analysis identified that most attendees identified as having little to no previous disability training or knowledge, with those that did having gained this through professional training or previous work experience. A small number of attendees talked about their own lived experience as a disabled person, or as a carer to someone who was disabled; or identified that they had a personal interest in the subject matter. Attendees seemed to interact with disabled people predominantly through school-based project work or through community consultations. When asked to reflect on what they wanted from the training, most participants indicated a desire to deepen their general understanding of disability. There was a moderate desire from participants to learn about appropriate language, community engagement strategies and ways to ensure that they could apply learning to their profession.

The feedback from the training sessions were overwhelmingly positive, with most survey respondents having no recommendations to improve the trainings. One respondent said they “enjoyed the full course [and] wouldn’t change anything”. The component of the course that was commented on as the most useful was the section on language use, followed by having the opportunity to discuss learnings with colleagues and professionals in break out rooms. People said that they found the most useful parts of the course to be:

“Understanding that tone, intention and willingness to listen and accept feedback/comments can help overcome ‘incorrect’ language use.”

“The time to have an open discussion in a non-judgemental space.”

“Listening to various points made from people in very different professions than my own.”

Many also acknowledged that the course had deepened their understanding of disability and gave opportunity for workplace specific learning.

For the respondents that did have comments on developing the course, the two main recommendations were to alter the logistics of the sessions and consider more workplace examples. A few respondents commented that the discussion points in the breakout rooms needed to be shared online with the participants, while others felt that being grouped with their colleagues could have been beneficial for discussion. One respondent said they felt a need for “more real-world examples of barriers and removing them for improving mobility access”. Living Streets has a

strong relationship with the trainers and has shared this with them for development of future learning sessions.

Indicator: Staff narrative interviews

The project team felt that the Accessibility Training element of the project was successful with increasing understanding of accessibility issues to transport planners and professionals. The Transport for All training, in particular, saw a high attendance rate and open, honest discussions amongst attendees, leaving the impression that this understanding would be applied into the public facing elements of the profession. There was some concern that the Alzheimer’s training was less successful, as the intended audience (i.e. public facing transport professionals like bus drivers, or ticket officers) struggled with logistics of attending. More detail on this is provided in [“What would we do differently?”](#).

OUTCOME 5 – INCREASED EVIDENCE FOR THE IMPACT OF WALKING OUTREACH ACTIVITIES ON LONELINESS TO IMPROVE UNDERSTANDING OF HOW TO REACH AND SUPPORT OLDER PEOPLE.

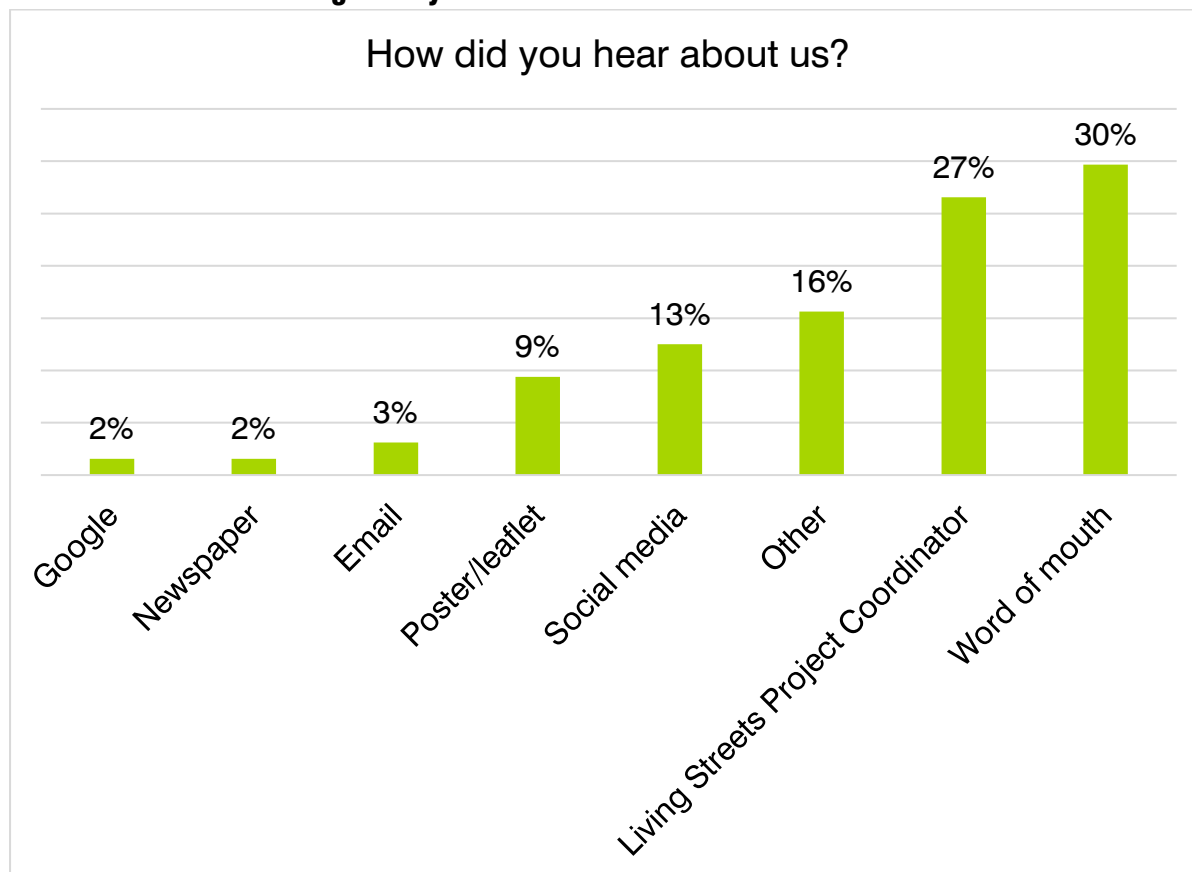
The project has contributed to evidence of the impact of walking outreach activities on loneliness through the analysis in [Outcome One](#). Increased awareness of how best to reach older people has been gathered by the indicators below. The overarching theme is that older people were most responsive to communication from non-virtual sources, particularly face to face interaction. Most of the survey respondents indicated they’d heard about the project from a Living Streets coordinator, word of mouth, poster/leaflet, or an “Other” communication source (with comments detailing council or voluntary sector workers). This is reinforced by comments from the staff narrative interviews. This latter indicator also evidenced that a strong radio presence was a key to reaching audiences, especially local stations.

Although this outcome was achieved, more research questions were raised through this increased understanding including:

1. What part of an activity is most likely to engage an older/ lonely person? (Obtain activity feedback around “why did you sign up?”)
2. How do we better convert reach into engagement?
3. Who didn’t we reach on this project? Do we need to reach them? How do we do this?

More detail on this in [What would we do differently?](#).

Indicator: Social Walking survey



Indicator: Reach report

Form	Result
Living Streets Website	2,431 page views
Facebook	340 post engagements
Twitter	510 post engagements
Press	3.5 million + in reach
Printed media	3,050 printed copies

With a detailed breakdown in the [Appendix](#).

Indicator: Staff narrative interviews

The project team found that the best way to reach the demographic was through in person interactions. Our communications coordinator observed:

“I think with that age group, it's really important to be speaking to them face to face. Digital is a bit hit and miss with them.” (Communications Coordinator interview transcript)

As a result, efforts were made early on from coordinators to reach beneficiaries in person through attendance at key events for older people in the areas they were working in, as well as through sharing printed materials with community centres and NHS practices.

The project coordinators felt that the partnership working with local authorities, social prescribers and other local or national charities helped to identify beneficiaries who were most at risk of loneliness and approach them with details of the project activity (see more on this in [“What went well?”](#)). This partnership brought the “right” audience to the project (see [Outcome 1](#)). As part of this outreach work, the team felt that it was of great importance to build trust with the beneficiaries and communities, approaching activity alongside an already “established” community partner helped develop this relationship. The team also highlighted that to ensure inclusivity of reach, the walks themselves needed to be planned and advertised with logistical consideration of timings (both start time and duration), location, route (including accessibility needs) and proximity to public transport routes. Walks where this planning was done the most diligently tended to have higher attendance and reach a broader demographic. Following on from this, the post walk ‘cuppa and chat’ was also stressed as highly important by the project team:

“There's a lady in Blackburn who said to me “I hate walking. I don't like sweating. I don't like being outside, but I love chatting and if I need to walk to chat, then that's fine”.” (Project Coordinator interview transcript)

“After the walks, you could see people getting a chance to speak to each other and talk about future walks and their interests and so on.” (Project Coordinator interview transcript)

An additional note on reaching the audience from the project team was noted around themed walks, particularly around heritage and memory. These were shown to be popular across all the project areas, and something that the coordinators expressed would be beneficial to do more of.

OUTCOME 6 – BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF THE RELATIVE IMPACT OF WALKING-GROUP-BASED ACTIVITIES AND ACCESS-TO-WALKING BASED ACTIVITIES ON LONELINESS.

This outcome was achieved, although more questions were raised through this research that the project team would want future work in this area to continue to explore, including:

1. Why do beneficiaries engage in Community Street Reviews?
2. Is there a draw from minority groups towards walking-group-based activity versus access-to-walking based activity?
3. How are the recommendations from the Community Street Reviews acted on?

(See [What would we do differently?](#) for more detail).

Indicator: Staff narrative interviews

Across the project team there was consensus that the walking-group-based activity (led walks) were the best activity at dealing with loneliness in the short term. All staff

members commented on the dramatic impact they had observed these walks had on beneficiary wellbeing, activity levels and feelings of social isolation. Some colleagues went on to say that the led walks were better suited for the age group, featuring a high concentration of retired people who wanted a relaxed activity with low levels of personal commitment.

In terms of access-to-walking based activity (Community Street Reviews – or CSRs), there was more divergence in observations from the team on the impact of these. Most of the team felt that the volunteers who led CSRs tended to be a similar “type” of person – someone who was an activist, or who already had the confidence to critique and make recommendations to authorities. There was contention within the team around whether the CSRs were accessible for the most lonely beneficiaries within the project: it was an activity that involved a time commitment, high skill level and confidence to engage with; however, there was also indication that the act of learning a new skill (i.e. completing a CSR and making recommendations to a local authority) gave those beneficiaries who were more lonely a sense of agency and feeling of control. Having a structured task to complete through the CSRs gave some people more of a purpose to engage with than the led walks:

“With the CSRs, you've obviously got a focus of we're walking along the street and reviewing this... there is that focus of you're dealing with the task in hand.” (Project Coordinator interview transcript).

Overall, the team agreed that in the long term the CSRs' intended impact was to influence the walking environment and remove physical barriers to walking, however more monitoring is needed to track these changes and impact over time.

OUTCOME 7 – COMMUNITY ACTION IS SUSTAINED BY ESTABLISHING LIVING STREETS LOCAL GROUPS AS A LEGACY FOR LASTING IMPACT ON LOCAL WALKING ENVIRONMENTS.

This outcome was partially achieved. Full details of the local groups legacy of the project are detailed in [Aim 5](#). Although local groups were established, the extent that community action is sustained from this is not possible to report at this stage. However, the ‘Staff narrative interviews’ indicator provides some predictions on this.

Indicator: Engagement team report

See [Aim 5](#).

Indicator: Staff narrative interviews

The project team felt that the legacy of the project, and similar community projects, was well supported through establishing local groups amongst the volunteers within the project areas. One coordinator felt that the local groups legacy allowed volunteers to continue to have a safe space to discuss key issues raised through led walks or community street reviews. The project coordinators who had worked locally indicated hope that the project work could continue through this support from the organisation. Where local groups weren't set up, there was also indication

that legacy could be sustained through the partnership work that the project championed. Staff also felt positive that in these areas where local groups weren't set up, beneficiaries would still be keen to continue with their established walking habits and engage with their walking environments in a more informed way (i.e. taking more interest in local plans for walking infrastructure, engaging in Living Streets campaigns against pavement parking/ clutter).

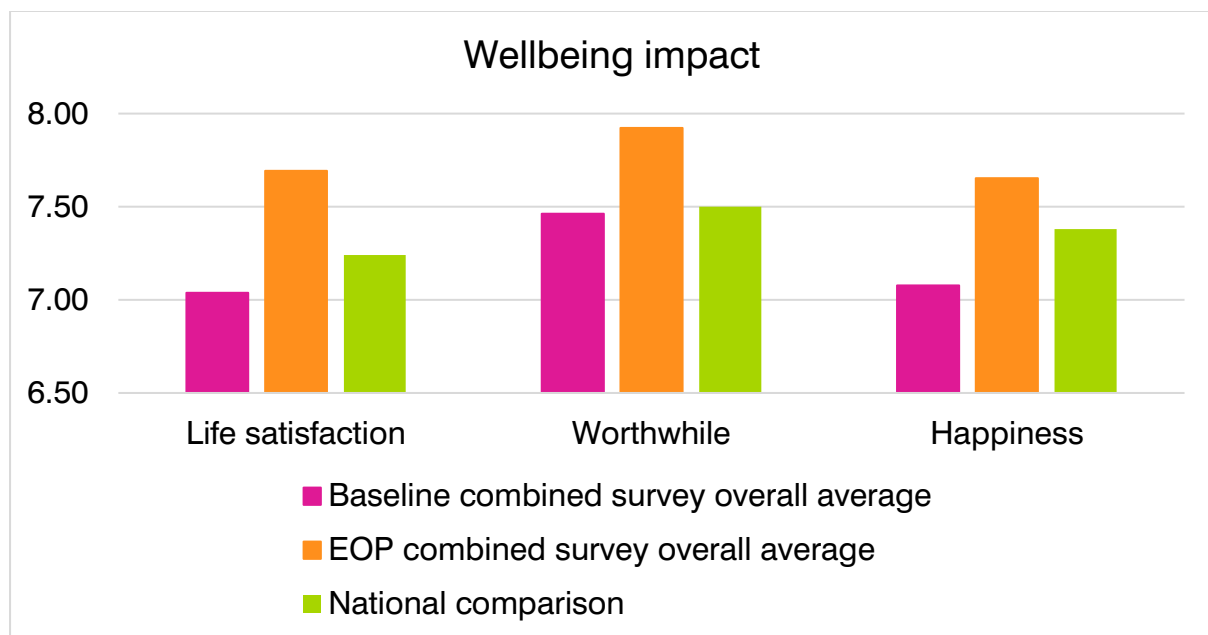
UNANTICIPATED OUTCOMES

UNANTICIPATED OUTCOME 8 – OLDER PEOPLE REPORT THAT THEIR WELLBEING HAS IMPROVED THROUGH PARTICIPATION IN WALKING ACTIVITIES.

This unanticipated outcome was achieved, with beneficiaries reporting an improvement in wellbeing through involvement in the project in the survey data and qualitative sources.

Indicator: Social Walking Survey

The survey data indicated a change in average wellbeing levels of respondents from below the national average at baseline to above the national average at the end of the project across life satisfaction (9% increase), worthwhileness (6% increase), and happiness (8% increase).



Indicator: Qualitative data sources

Mental health professionals and charities advise that people experiencing poor wellbeing should practice the “**5 ways to wellbeing**” (NHS, 2022): Connect, Get active, Take notice, Learn and Give. As such, these categories were built into the analysis of wellbeing of Walking Connects beneficiaries, with evidence provided that the project helped promote the 5 ways to wellbeing effectively. The most common themes from this list were **Connect** and **Get active**, an unsurprising finding given the project’s activities centred around social walking. **Take notice**, **Learn** and **Give**

featured as a secondary theme in the qualitative data from the led walks, particularly in relation to people's desire to be in nature, reconnect to the geography, ecology and also history of their area. Following on from this, the volunteering side of the project inspired people to **Give** back to their community, with many people feeling the immediate benefits of the social walks and, therefore, willing to support the continuation of the activity. The Community Street Review Trainings provided a further place for beneficiaries to **Learn**, where they were able to pick up new skills and perspectives in reviewing their local streets and barriers to walking. Participants also commented on their joy in meeting new people and learning about different life experiences. The Community Street Reviews provided another opportunity to **Take notice**, but there was an interesting split in the data between people taking notice of the **streets** and the **people** that were using them. Beneficiaries demonstrated empathy across this split: they took consideration of the barriers within the built environment that impede individuals from walking; but also the mental barriers for the target demographic, taking time to check and support others in the project group and beyond into their own community network.

Beyond the ways to wellbeing, further distinct themes were identified in the data relating to participant wellbeing, including: planning for the future; recovery from mental health problems; building self-esteem; feelings of relief and joy through the act of walking; sense of purpose from the project work; getting outdoors and enabling participants to engage in self-care.

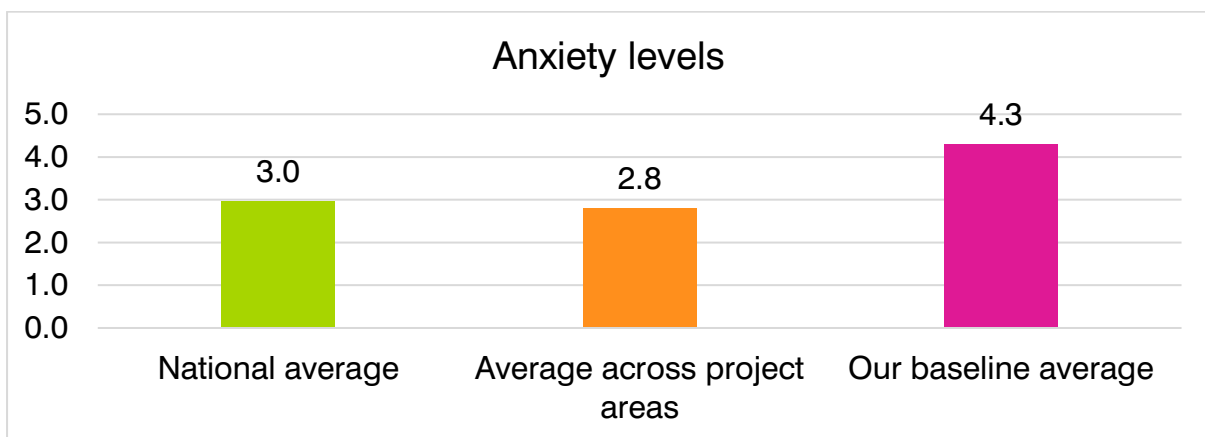
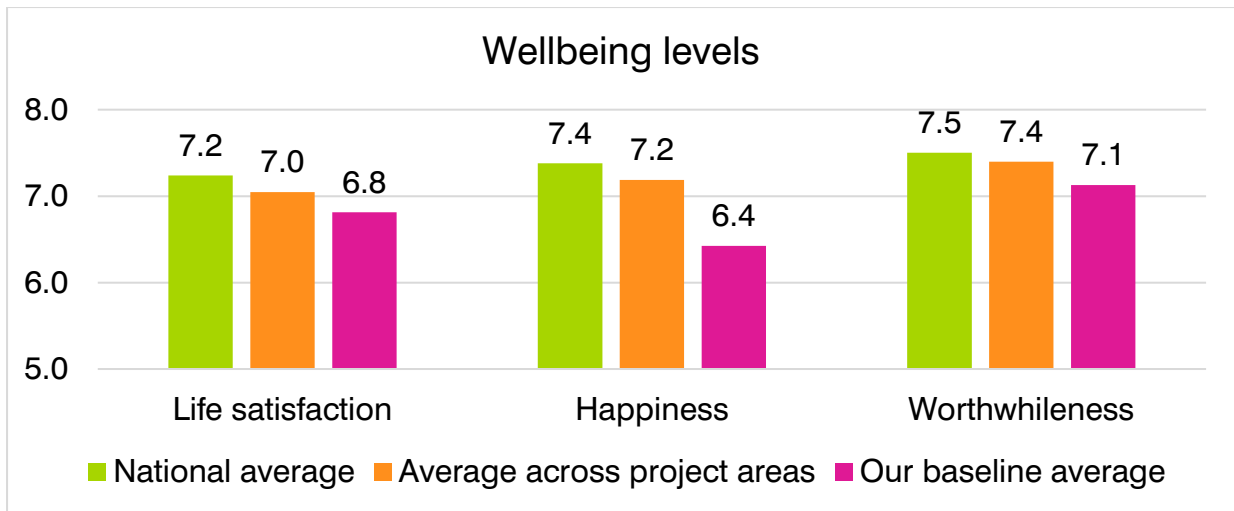
Theme: Wellbeing through Walking Connects				
Our qualitative data found the project contributed to older people reporting improved feelings of personal wellbeing. Comments were made on the following themes to evidence this:				
5 Ways to Wellbeing				
Get Active	Connect	Take notice	Learn	Give
<p>"I started this to get some more exercise and build myself up."</p> <p>(Hanley Park Focus Group attendee)</p>	<p>"I enjoy meeting up with different people and sharing our life's experiences."</p> <p>(Hanley Park Focus Group attendee)</p>	<p>"We would set off on a 30-minute walk up and down the tow path, watching the boats going by and admiring the local wildlife."</p> <p>(Lancashire case study)</p>	<p>"Meeting new people and attending the history talks at the Dudson Museum has allowed her to learn new things."</p> <p>(Brenda's case study)</p>	<p>"Abdul would also stop members of his community to tell them about the weekly walks, encouraging them to join in."</p> <p>(Bolton Vignette)</p>
Further wellbeing themes				
<p>Planning for the future</p>	<p>"Whatever happens, I'm</p>	<p>Recovery from mental health problems</p>	<p>"I personally have suffered with mental health problems and the group and connection with others</p>	

	<p>going to keep walking.”</p> <p>(Margaret, Wigan vignette)</p>		<p>has enormously helped and drastically improved my condition.”</p> <p>(Jacob’s case study)</p>
<p>Getting outdoors</p>	<p>Building self-esteem</p>		<p>Relief/ Joy from project work</p>
<p>“This exercise also offers an opportunity to be out in the fresh air, exercise and share with others, it was a holistic experience to all residents!”</p> <p>(Leticia, Creating Safer Streets in Wigan case study)</p>	<p>“I feel a lot less confident since I retired six years ago. I also had a hip replacement three years ago. I’ve been wanting to join a group walk for a long time, and today I did just that... I’ve loved getting out in the fresh air and chatting to new people.”</p> <p>(Sue, Fleetwood)</p>	<p>“After the walks I feel invigorated and happy.”</p> <p>(Margaret, Wigan vignette)</p>	
<p>Engaging in self-care</p>	<p>“At the walks, I feel wanted, welcomed, connected and included. My mental health has improved, I want to do more and feel motivated to do things when I get home.</p> <p>(Brenda’s case study)</p>		

Indicator: Control Group data

Our comparator-to-baseline charts indicates that at the start of the project, the demographic the project worked with had comparatively lower wellbeing scores, higher anxiety levels and higher levels of loneliness than the local area and national average:

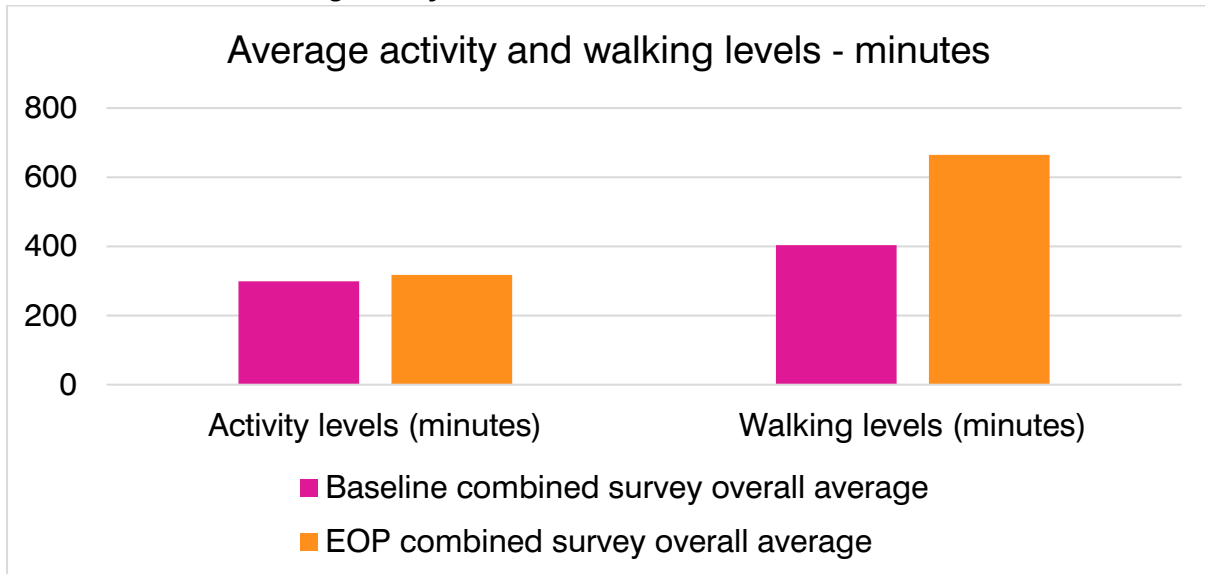
- Life satisfaction for baseline survey respondents was an average of 6.8, a score that is lower than the project area average by 0.2 points and lower than the national average by 0.4 points.
- Happiness for baseline survey respondents was an average of 6.4 a score that is much lower than the project area average by 0.8 points and lower than the national average by 1 point.
- Worthwhileness for baseline survey respondents was an average of 7.1 a score that is lower than the project area average by 0.3 points and lower than the national average by 0.4 points.
- Anxiety levels for baseline survey respondents was an average of 4.3 a score that is higher than the project area average by 1.5 points and higher than the national average by 1.3 points.



UNANTICIPATED OUTCOME 9 – OLDER PEOPLE REPORT THAT THEY STAY OR BECOME MORE ACTIVE THROUGH PARTICIPATION IN WALKING ACTIVITIES.

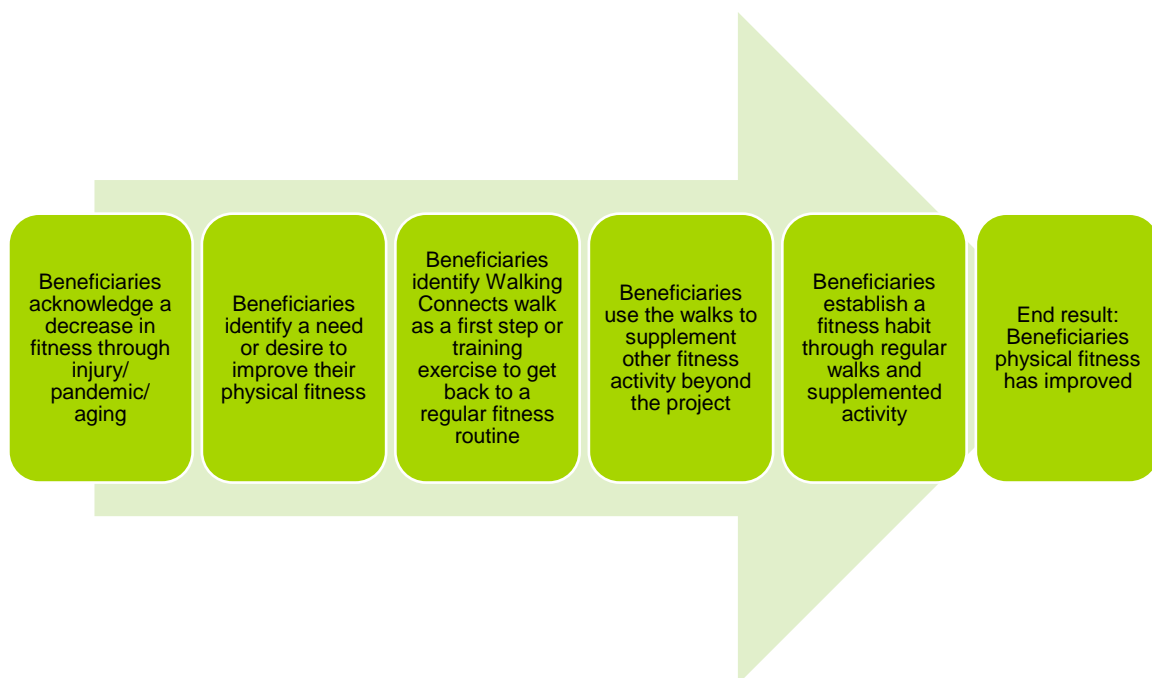
This unanticipated outcome was achieved. Survey respondents reported a significant increase in average number of minutes walked per week (65% or an average increase of 261 minutes) and an increase in average number of minutes spent on other activities outside of walking (6% or an average increase of 18 minutes).

Indicator: Social Walking Survey



Indicator: Qualitative data

A thematic analysis was done of the qualitative sources, and a clear, common “journey” was identified through the project and how it contributed to beneficiaries staying or becoming more active. These themes are presented below in a linear format to demonstrate the development of activity levels from beneficiaries over the project course.



Some quotes below evidence achievement of the end result:

“Jacob has reported an increase in social connections and an overall improvement in his physical and mental health.” (Jacob’s story – case study)

“She is happier and more hopeful, energised, motivated and physically fitter.” (Brenda’s story – case study)

“Abdul told us how much his health had improved in recent weeks, which he attributed largely to walking, especially the regular park walks, and insisted that this was now a definite part of his lifestyle.” (Abdul’s vignette)

Indicator: Control group data

Activity levels from the project baseline survey and the Active Lives survey cannot be quantitatively compared due to question difference.

UNANTICIPATED OUTCOME 10 – INCREASE THE DIVERSITY OF OUR PROJECT PROFILE BY WORKING WITH OLDER BENEFICIARIES FROM DEPRIVED COMMUNITIES.

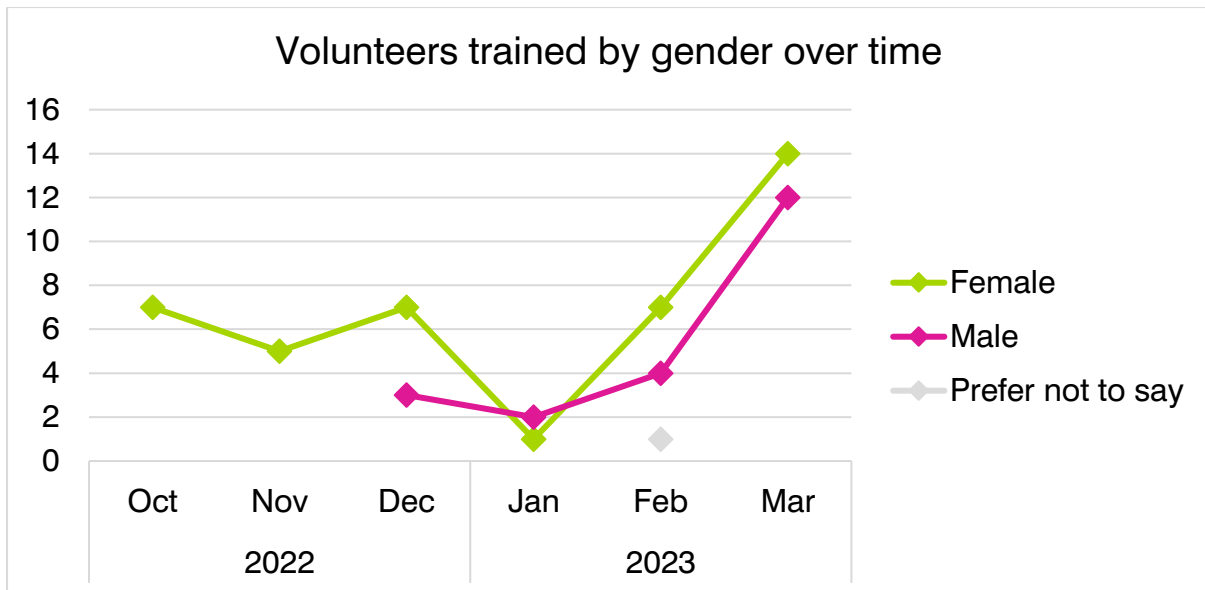
This unanticipated outcome was achieved, as identified in [Aim 1](#).

UNANTICIPATED OUTCOME 11 – BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF THE BARRIERS TO VOLUNTEERING FACED BY PROJECT BENEFICIARIES.

This unanticipated outcome was partially achieved. As an additional outcome from the research to the original scope, it wasn’t prioritised to explore beyond the Stoke-on-Trent focus group. It was an exploration that featured as a very small and unplanned part of the project, and more work needs to be done to explore it further (see [What would we do differently?](#)).

Indicator: Qualitative data

The project design for Walking Connects featured a high volunteer recruitment target with expectations for legacy work after the project through beneficiaries leading walks, taking community street reviews, and engaging in local groups work. Although the project identified and inducted several enthusiastic and dedicated volunteers in Stoke-on-Trent to support this legacy work, other areas have seen barriers to successfully deploying volunteers after involvement in training sessions. Furthermore, early analysis indicated that a higher number of women versus men were volunteering (see chart below). As such, the focus group with Stoke-on-Trent beneficiaries was used as a tool to identify these barriers and discuss solutions, with an added prompt around gendered barriers to volunteering.



Participants felt strongly that over-commitment, work fatigue and a socially isolated beneficiary pool were barriers to volunteering on Walking Connects. Participants said:

“My barrier for many, many things, particularly as I’m getting older, is commitments and pacing yourself.”

-- Transcript - Hanley Park focus group 2932023 --

I myself don’t feel ready yet, I feel I want a break from my past [work] to give myself a chance to get used to things before I will commit.

-- Transcript - Hanley Park focus group 2932023 --

“Other barriers for people are they are severely lonely, and they’re isolated, and they are making that effort getting out.”

-- Transcript - Hanley Park focus group 2932023 --

Participants talked about a number of barriers that they perceived men face to volunteering. There was a consensus amongst the group that the barriers were formed through a lifetime of societal pressures, referring to: difference in retirement ages; differences in safe social spaces; differences in approaches to social isolation; and differences in professional roles and duties.

Project overviews – Stoke-on-Trent

- 159 beneficiaries participated in 51 led walks.
- 21 volunteer Community Street Reviewers and 17 volunteer Walk Leaders

Project overviews – Lancashire

- 99 beneficiaries participated in 25 led walks.

- 20 volunteer Community Street Reviewers and 20 volunteer Walk Leaders

Project overviews – Bolton

- 38 beneficiaries participated in 12 led walks.
- 18 volunteer Community Street Reviewers and 14 volunteer Walk Leaders

Project overviews – Wigan

- 55 beneficiaries participated in 21 led walks.
- 13 volunteer Community Street Reviewers and 4 volunteer Walk Leaders

Learning and reflections

The Walking Connects project was a new way of working for the Living Streets team. On other projects, departments have worked in silos, with specific skillsets being brought in from other departments on an ad hoc basis, rather than planned in from the beginning. Walking Connects developed an inter-disciplinary way of working across departments. The project team was designed to have Impact and Evaluation, Communications, Development and Engagement support through a dedicated coordinator role designated for these tasks within the project team. As part of the staff reflective process the Impact and Evaluation coordinator conducted individual interviews with all the project staff and conducted a thematic analysis to create the narratives for the reflection questions below. Full details of the analysis can be found in the [Appendix](#).

What went well?

The project team felt that the strongest part of the project was the partnership working between Living Streets and local organisations in each area. The team expressed that the concept of tackling loneliness through transport is incredibly complex and multi-faceted, and that it would have been impossible to face without partnership working. Multiple experts were needed to enable the project to reach the correct audience, in the best locations, in order to reach its intended outcomes. Living Streets' role in this was to provide the “walking environment” specialism and the ability to identify and collaborate with key partners in each local area. Each coordinator formed different partnerships in the areas they worked in:

- In Stoke-on-Trent the coordinator mobilised contacts in the voluntary and social prescribing sector to connect with the right people.
- In Lancashire the coordinator connected with existing charities such as the Canal and River Trust and Age UK to identify key locations for events; as well as Wyre Council in Fleetwood to build trust with beneficiaries.
- In Bolton the coordinator worked with the council and leisure teams to identify gaps in the walking for health programme, and how the project could enable an “introduction step” for people with limited mobility, before moving onto other walks.
- And in Wigan, the coordinator worked closely with the Safer Streets team to target community street review work.

In line with this, the team also highlighted the success of the project staffing structure, emphasising that having a team with internal experts (for Communications, Impact and Evaluation, Development and Engagement) accelerated project success and promoted opportunity for internal knowledge sharing. Having dedicated staff members for these different areas of the project enabled cross departmental working and development of internal systems, building organisational legacy from the project. Having a broad project team also enabled new funding opportunities to be identified and acted upon quickly, for example the team noticed a common “memory” theme being requested from their walks, opening opportunities to apply for funds with a heritage theme.

Although the beneficiary target was not reached (350 against a target of 400), the volunteer and accessibility training targets were met, and the team collectively agreed this was a strong element of the project.

Other than these common themes, individual team members also commented that the following worked well for them:

Creative and Flexible working

Project Manager

- "We created this quite bespoke approach...it takes more work to do something new and a bit different, but I think that really highlighted the value of flexibility, of approaching things a bit differently or having different teams coming together and bringing insights to the work and so I think that was a real highlight of the project as well."

Inclusive Approach

Engagement Coordinator

- "The parts I'm really proud about are the way that in our team we've been developing our affinity group project, which is where we've supported communities to come together around the shared identity and so we were able to bring that perspective to the coordinators and the work they were doing."

Building Community

Project Coordinator - Stoke on Trent

- "I'm also quite proud of this foundation group of people that we seem to have built and it's still there, even though I'm not running the walks any more and they're being volunteer led, they're still being consistent and it's not dropping off."

Local Partnership Legacy

Project Coordinator - Lancashire

- "One of my groups will continue to walk because it was alongside a UK charity and that's a sort of regular part in the week."

National Partnership Legacy

Project Coordinator - Accessibility Trainings

- "Building links with transport providers across project areas, building opportunities to advocate again the work of the charity"

Community Street Reviews

Project Coordinator - Bolton and Wigan

- "Community groups, schools and so on, were really surprised about the offer of the Community Street Reviews... they found team a really positive experience and quite an eye opener..."

Impact Stories

Communications Coordinator

- "I've seen my role in this team as telling the stories of the stuff that's happening on the ground... now that the walks are coming to an end it's so nice to see those stories coming out."

Project Development

Development Manager

- "I think we really have developed a very fundable model of working with older people in the community. That can be scaled up and down. It can be relevant to different areas."

Themed events

Project Coordinator - Bolton and Wigan

- "In hindsight, it would be nice to maybe do some more history walks, if we had extra scope to."

WHAT WOULD WE DO DIFFERENTLY?

The project team felt that the intended aims and outcomes of the project were overly ambitious given the timeline, target audience and context set. Some key themes were identified from the team around what could have been done differently to achieve more impact:

1. Adapt the timeline.

The timeline of the project raised challenges, starting in June and eventually ending in July (after the extension window provided by the funders was agreed). On the ground, this meant that project opening work like recruitment, research and communication design were done over the “key walking months” of June, July, August and September. The processes to deliver walks (staffing, registration forms, and evaluation metrics) were not set up until October, which the team felt contributed to the fact that the beneficiary target was not met. Having an acceleration of activity over the winter months posed challenges in sign up, with the target audience reluctant to engage at a time when they were at higher risk of exposure to slips on untreated pavements or to inclement weather, increasing risks of illnesses. Coordinators felt that they saw an increase in engagement and sign up over the spring months, however budget constraints at this stage led to a decrease in events run. Overall, the team suggested the project would work better if run alongside a school year – with “desk work” like recruitment, research and process management done September-December, gearing up to an acceleration in activity and events from January-August.

2. Consider area context.

Part of the project scoping exercise used data from Age UK and ONS to map areas most in need of walking interventions to target loneliness. The team was proud of this work, taking the project to the areas that statistically needed it most. However, there was more consideration that could have been made in this selection process, particularly looking at what was going on already in those areas to target loneliness. In Stoke-on-Trent, there was a gap in the market, where no walking for health groups were established for this audience. The team felt this led to the overwhelming success of the project in this area. However, in Lancashire, Bolton and Wigan there were walking interventions set up already, meaning conflicting interests had to be managed with local partners to ensure effective delivery. These conflicting interests meant freedom of delivery was harder in these areas, and less beneficiaries were engaged as a result. In future, the team recommends identifying areas who meet the same “most lonely” and “most deprived” metric, but are also missing walking interventions already, to maximise impact.

The area context also raised challenges to our coordinators because none of them were geographically based in the areas they delivered in. This raised a number of challenges, including: transport logistics (particularly around train strikes); lack of trust from beneficiaries towards an ‘outsider’ (particularly a Yorkshire staff member delivering in Lancashire); lack of area knowledge (particularly with regards ethnic

group tensions in Stoke-on-Trent). In future, the organisation would look at ways to tackle this through considering hiring local staff or drawing on partner/ volunteer knowledge at an earlier stage.

3. Redefine focus from quantitative to qualitative achievements.

The project was effective at **reaching the target audience** of lonelier people in the community. The team were highly empathetic to the target audience needs, taking an inclusive approach to delivery and communications. There was a strong sense from the team that the targets for the project lacked sensitivity on the target audience, given the high beneficiary target (400) and short period of time to deliver in (15 months). The team felt that priority should have been given to **repeat attendance** of beneficiaries on led walk events, rather than **number** of beneficiaries engaged. Repeat attendance would enable trust building between the organisation and beneficiaries, opening opportunities to build legacy through volunteer training and local group set up. A repeat attendance focus would also have enabled more beneficiary take up for qualitative data sources, particularly externally with third party evaluator focus groups and case study interviews.

There was also concern raised by the team on the age parameters of the project (55+), given ONS research that “loneliness can occur at any point in life” (Office for National Statistics, 2018) and increasing evidence that younger age brackets are most likely to feel the most lonely (Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, 2022). The team thought that a more inter-generational approach could have reached the loneliest people in the community and helped achieve the outcomes more effectively.

4. Improve internal systems.

The project accelerated internal system improvements for Living Streets, however the team still felt more can be done here. A full internal report has been done to feedback these recommendations to our project development team, including considerations around:

- Project monitoring plans
- Volunteer recruitment processes
- Beneficiary data processing
- Project feedback loop
- Staffing (managing turnover, sickness, and associate usage)
- Financial management and expenses
- Project exit strategy

5. Redefine the scope of the Accessibility Trainings

The Accessibility Training element of the project was very well received by transport professionals; however uncertainty was expressed from the project team on how it fed into the wider aims of the project. A more cohesive approach could have been:

- a) to engage Transport for All trainers in our volunteer training sessions (with an extended invite to local transport professionals as appropriate)
- b) Alzheimer's Awareness "Train the trainer" sessions with key personnel in transport organisations to cascade to their staff as logistically available.

Other options included offering an online version of the course that could be accessed remotely by transport operators, but concerns were raised around the "bolt on" impression this gives to staff on completing the training: whereas having it integrally built into a whole staff training programme would lead to maximum impact.

6. Add to loneliness evidence base through the project.

The project plan featured "knowledge increase" outcomes on:

1. How to reach and support older/ lonely people (Outcome 5)
2. The impact of led walks versus Community Street Reviews (CSRs) (Outcome 6)

If a future project was delivered with similar focus on loneliness, more definition needs to be given to these outcomes. Some suggested questions to structure this research piece are detailed:

For "How to reach and support older/ lonely people"

4. What part of an activity is most likely to engage an older/ lonely person? (Obtain feedback around "why did you sign up?")
5. How do we better convert reach into engagement?
6. Who didn't we reach on this project? Do we need to reach them? How do we do this?

For "The impact of led walks versus Community Street Reviews (CSRs)"

1. Why do beneficiaries engage in Community Street Reviews?
2. Is there a draw from minority groups towards walking-group-based activity versus access-to-walking based activity? What does the disaggregated data show on this?
3. How are the recommendations from the Community Street Reviews acted on?

There was also an unanticipated outcome around increased understanding of the barriers to volunteering, particularly for male beneficiaries. There is scope to look at this further with minorities, especially given the volunteering demographic profile for the project was less proportionately inclusive than the overall beneficiary demographic profile.

CONCLUSION

The Walking Connects project was viewed as having high importance by the Living Streets staff team involved in delivering it, the beneficiaries who attended the

activities, and the partner organisations that supported the work locally and nationally. Of the 5 aims set, 3 were exceeded, 1 was achieved and 1 was partially achieved. Of the 7 outcomes outlined, and the further 4 identified after the project initiation, 7 were achieved and 3 were partially achieved (see outline below). Recommendations on how to sustain the impact of the project have been included in this report and more detailed recommendations have been shared internally.

The project has been a celebration of creative working, flexible approaches and internal and external collaboration for Living Streets and has given the organisation perspectives on how to work in future. It has proven the effectiveness of new ways of working and new internal systems that will allow Living Streets to be even more effective in the future. Most importantly, it successfully identified the most lonely in the project areas and played a part in alleviating those feelings of loneliness through walking-based activities. The project's strong positive impact on the mental wellbeing and physical activity levels of participants has proven a model that Living Streets is seeking funding to extend and to scale.

Aim/Outcome	Exceeded/ Achieved/ Partially Achieved
<u>Aim 1 – Engaging 400 older people at risk of loneliness through walking activities</u>	Partially achieved
<u>Aim 2 – Reaching up to 1,600 older people at risk of loneliness through information resources</u>	Exceeded
<u>Aim 3 – Training up to 40 volunteer walk leaders and 55 Volunteer Community Street Auditors to assess and make recommendations about their local walking environment</u>	Exceeded
<u>Aim 4 – Facilitating access to 55 places for transport planners and operators on Accessibility Trainings</u>	Exceeded
<u>Aim 5 – Establishing four Local Groups – community-focused volunteers who create conversations around issues that encourage more people to walk, no matter their age or lived experience.</u>	Achieved
<u>Outcome 1 – Older people report improved feelings of social connectedness and reduced loneliness through participation in walking activities</u>	Achieved
<u>Outcome 2 – Walk leaders are recruited and trained to lead local walking group</u>	Achieved
<u>Outcome 3 – Communities make recommendations for improvements to their streets and local walking environment through training and participation in Community Street Reviews (CSRs)</u>	Achieved
<u>Outcome 4 – People have better access to public transport as transport operators and planners improve understanding of accessibility issues through training</u>	Partially achieved

<u>Outcome 5 – Increased evidence for the impact of walking outreach activities on loneliness to improve understanding of how to reach and support older people</u>	Achieved
<u>Outcome 6 – Better understanding of the relative impact of walking-group-based activities and access-to-walking based activities on loneliness</u>	Achieved
<u>Outcome 7 – Community action is sustained by establishing Living Streets Local Groups as a legacy for lasting impact on local walking environments</u>	Partially achieved
<u>Unanticipated outcome 8 – Older people report that their wellbeing has improved through participation in walking activities</u>	Achieved
<u>Unanticipated outcome 9 – Older people report that they stay or become more active through participation in walking activities</u>	Achieved
<u>Unanticipated outcome 10 – Increase the diversity of our project profile by working with older beneficiaries from deprived communities</u>	Achieved
<u>Unanticipated outcome 11 – Better understanding of the barriers to volunteering faced by project beneficiaries</u>	Partially achieved

Appendix

Impact report – visual



WALKING CONNECTS

2022-23

Delivered
109
led walks...

...to
350
beneficiaries



“After the walks I feel alive, refreshed, more positive and able to get on with things. The walks give me a purpose and an activity to help me get used to retirement.” - Walk participant, Stoke

55 Walk leaders trained

29 Street reviews delivered

4 Local Groups established



58 volunteer Community Street Reviewers

60 Transport staff trained

3 million
people reached via project communications

“Sometimes I just don't feel like leaving the house and can stay at home for days by myself. But once I am out of the rut and back walking with the group, I can immediately feel the benefit. I feel happier.” - Walk participant, Lancashire

Collaborated with
104
local organisations

8%
decrease in loneliness in beneficiaries

65%
increase in total minutes walked by beneficiaries

A positive wellbeing change from below the national average baseline to above the national average.



Brenda's Story

WALKING CONNECTS: BRENDA'S STORY

Brenda - aged 68 - from Hanley, recently retired and was struggling with the adjustment to this new stage in her life.

She was getting bored and feeling depressed staying within her “four walls” at home so wanted to find an activity to get out and about and meet new people, but that didn't require a big commitment. As she had been a foster carer, cared for her family and worked with children for many years, she wanted to find an activity that gave her some time just for herself.

Brenda joined the regular [Walking Connects](#) led walks in the Stoke-on-Trent area.

Walking Connects, funded by the Department of Transport, inspires people over 50 in Bolton, Wigan, Lancashire and Stoke-on-Trent, to get out and about on engaging led walks and provides the opportunity to voice their need for changes to their local walking environment.



The Walking Connects led walks gave Brenda the opportunity to embrace her newfound freedom in retirement, while promoting better mental and physical wellbeing, as well as creating a space for her to make long-lasting friendships.

“At the walks, I feel wanted, welcomed, connected and included. My mental health has improved, I want to do more and feel motivated to do things when I get home. Now I am starting to feel excited about retirement. The thought of walking in a group gets me up and ready for the day. I look forward to it, enjoy seeing different faces and look forward to meeting people. I go back and tell my family how my day was and what I did. My daughter has seen a huge improvement in my mood, she thinks I am more cheerful and chatty!”

Walking Connects have given Brenda something to structure her new retired lifestyle and routine around. Meeting new people and attending the history talks at the Dudson Museum has allowed her to learn new things and socialise with other people her age and in similar life circumstances.

“After the walks I feel alive, refreshed, more positive and able to get on with things. The walks give me a purpose and an activity to help me get used to retirement. I also like walking in a group because it makes me feel safer. That was a barrier to walking before. This walking group helps me to feel relaxed and safe.”

At the time of writing, Brenda has joined 12 walks and has made 30 new social connections. She feels her mood is much better, she is happier and more hopeful, energised, motivated and physically fitter.

*Brenda's name has been changed as she wished to remain anonymous

Jacob's Story

WALKING CONNECTS: JACOB'S STORY

Jacob* – aged 61 – from in Stoke-on-Trent, suffered a serious back injury after an industrial accident at work and was experiencing many health problems as a result.

Over time his physical injury effected his mental health and at times he experienced some 'dark moments'. His condition also meant he lost some social connections as he was no longer working, and at times felt isolated.

Jacob started attending the mid-week Walking Connects walks at Hanley Park and some walks to Central Forest Park, back to the Dudson Museum.

Walking Connects, funded by the Department of Transport, inspires people over 50 in Bolton, Wigan, Lancashire and Stoke-on-Trent, to get out and about on engaging led walks and provides them an opportunity to voice their need for changes to their local walking environment.



After attending the walks regularly, he decided to step forward to be trained as a Walk Leader and has since started leading his own walks in the Stoke area.

“Walking in a group gives me something to look forward to. My mental health has really improved since joining the walks each week. I look forward to leading walks now I

have received the Walk Leader training.”

Jacob has reported an increase in social connections and an overall improvement in his physical and mental health. He feels more positive, hopeful and looks forward to leading walks to do the same for others.

He hopes this project continues to help other people in the area in the same way it has helped him.

At the time of writing, Jacob had attended 14 walks and met between 15-25 new people each week, some of whom have become good friends. He has expressed an improvement in his social connectedness, a profound improvement in his mental health and feels physically better.

'I've now attended around half a dozen of the Walking Connects walks at Hanley Park and the Dudson Centre and I would like to state on the record that they have been an absolute godsend, a pleasure for me personally and excellently organized. I personally have suffered with mental health problems and the group and connection with others has enormously helped and drastically improved my condition. I now look forward to every Wednesday when they take place. Thanks to everyone involved in providing this opportunity, long may it continue! Please share my feedback and experience; even if they help just one more person, that would be a great outcome”.



*Jacob's name has been changed as he wished to remain anonymous

Tackling Loneliness in Lancashire

TACKLING LONELINESS IN LANCASHIRE



Walking Connects Coordinator, Charli Brunning, tells us how her led walks have made a lasting impact on participants experiencing feelings of loneliness in Lancashire.

Since July 2022, I have been working across Burnley, Blackburn with Darwen and Fleetwood, on Walking Connects, a project funded by the Department for Transport. The project uses walking, specifically led walks, as a tool to help reduce loneliness and isolation among adults over 50.



Over 1.4 million adults over the age of 65 across the UK have reported feeling lonely. **Loneliness** focuses on the quality, rather than the quantity of emotional connections an individual has, whereas **isolation** refers to lack of contact, community involvement or access to services. Loneliness causes feelings of isolation from others, and not belonging. Chronic feelings of loneliness can have deep impacts on

physical and mental health, as well as overall quality of life.

We have seen several retired adults joining us on our walks across the Walking Connects areas. Many have reported that the walks help boost their confidence and find purpose during this significant life change.

“I feel a lot less confident since I retired six years ago. I also had a hip replacement three years ago. I’ve been wanting to join a group walk for a long time, and today I did just that, alongside my friend. I’ve loved getting out in the fresh air and chatting to new people. Even though my friend is going away skiing next week, I think I will still come along to the walk”.

- Sue, 71 - Fleetwood.

“I don’t like walking so much, but I do love chatting, and that’s why I come to the led walks; so I can meet new people and chat away, otherwise I’d be at home, with no one”.

- Ruth, 76 - Blackburn



Nearly half of older people say that television or pets are their main form of company. Another benefit of group walks is the opportunity to meet new people, and form long lasting friendships with those in similar life circumstances. Having a cuppa and some biscuits after our walks is also a lovely way to keep conversation flowing, and warm up during the harsh winter months in the Northwest of England.

“Coming on walks gets your blood pumping, you’re doing good things for your body, your brain is active, and you get to speak to new people. Another bonus is that you’re not having to stay indoors with the heating on”.

- John, 68 - Blackburn

Some of the favourite walks I’ve organised have been in partnership with the Canal and River Trust, where we would set off on a 30-minute walk up and down the tow path, watching the boats going by and admiring the local wildlife. As the aim of the project is to reintroduce people to physical activity, short and accessible 20-to-30-

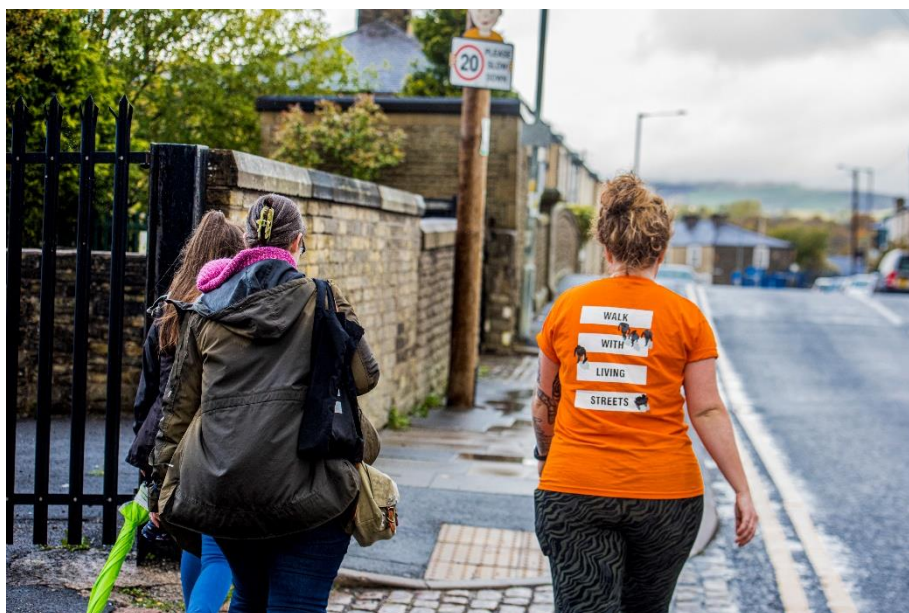


minute walks are the key in Walking Connects. The walks create a comfortable environment to a group of likeminded people with similar abilities and gives them the support of a group setting in which to thrive. As little as 10 minutes of brisk walking is enough to increase our energy levels, improve our mood and our mental alertness. Regular participation in group activities also increases our self-esteem and can reduce the onset, or the effects of anxiety and depression.

There’s something very special that Walking Connects has created and I am proud to say that I have been part of it. I hope to see the walks continue to flourish and bring years of happiness and connectedness to those previously dealing with daily feelings of loneliness in Lancashire.

“Sometimes I just don’t feel like leaving the house, and can stay at home for days by myself, but once I am out of the rut, and back participating in my activity groups (walking, tai chi, 10 pin bowling), I can immediately feel the benefit. I feel happier.”

- John, 70: Blackburn



Citations:

https://www.ageuk.org.uk/globalassets/age-uk/documents/reports-and-publications/reports-and-briefings/health--wellbeing/rb_june15_lonelines_in_later_life_evidence_review.pdf

<https://www.ageuk.org.uk/our-impact/policy-research/loneliness-research-and-resources/loneliness-depression-and-anxiety-exploring-the-connection-to-mental-health/>

<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/explore-mental-health/publications/how-look-after-your-mental-health-using-exercise#:~:text=Even%20a%20short%20burst%20of,can%20reduce%20stress%20and%20anxiety.>

Creating safer streets for older people in Wigan



Our Walking Connects team held a Community Street Review in the Scholes area of Wigan in partnership with the Safer Streets Team, Wigan Council. The event was also attended by Lisa Nandy, MP – shadow Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.

Walking Connects aims to inspire over 50s to get out and about on engaging led walks and provides the opportunity to voice their need for changes to their local walking environment.

We should all be able to walk on safe and accessible streets that are free from clutter and pollution. A poor walking environment can have a huge impact on how much people want to walk in their area. Issues such as feeling unsafe, experiencing cluttered and poorly kept pavements, and lack of seating can particularly effect older people choosing to walk.



The day started with our Walking Connects Project Coordinator, Liz Neary, hosting a training session for a group of local residents (most of them over 50), equipping them with all the tools to set out on the Community Street Review.

A new, creative approach to how we collected evidence for the review was taken by inviting artist, Pierre, from [Mindful Photo Lab](#) along. Pierre provided the team polaroid cameras to help them document their observations visually. This gave them an extra way of expressing themselves without the use of words, making the review more accessible and fun!



The issues observed along the review included:

- Safety (traffic danger)
- Littering.
- Lack of safe crossing points meant long walking detours to get to and from local bus stops.
- Uneven and broken paving meant getting around on a wheelchair, walker or wheeled shopping trolley was difficult.
- General lack of aesthetically pleasing environment, such as a lack of greenery.

After the review, the group sat down with a cuppa, looked over the photos and notes and compiled a list of improvements and things they liked from the walking environment. Pierre then guided the team through an exercise in which the team wrote a manifesto of change for the area, outlining how Scholes would look in a utopian world.



The presence of local MP, Lisa Nandy, (Shadow Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities) meant that residents could voice their findings to someone with the influence to make changes. Lisa fully recognised the issues described, and supported the suggestions offered.

A full report is being compiled and will be shared with Wigan Council to work towards making improvements for walking in and around Scholes.

Lisa Nandy, MP

“It was a pleasure to drop in on the Walking Connects Street Audit workshop to meet the staff and participants, and to hear their experiences directly. Working together with communities to build a positive vision for their neighbourhoods is exactly what we need to see with communities and civil society empowered to make the changes they want to see in their areas.”

Amy Foster, Living Streets Local Engagement Coordinator

“I’m really thrilled with how the day went. I loved how Pierre, put participants at ease and gently encouraged them to capture their neighbourhood as part of a conversation on change and hope for the future. The photos opened discussions around who designs our streets and what happens when we shift the perspective and make space to capture the community from a new point of view.”

Leticia, Wigan Council for Safer Streets

“It was a great experience to be part of the Community Street Review delivered by Living Streets during the week of action organised by Safer Streets in March 2023. The event planning, organisation and delivery was excellent, which was acknowledged by residents and team members. The whole concept provides an opportunity to step back and pay attention to issues that perhaps are unnoticed when passing by in a regular basis. This exercise also offers an opportunity to be out in the fresh air, exercise and share with others, it was a holistic experience to all residents! I look forward to receiving the report as well as working with Liz and Amy soon.”



Comparator Evidence – Main source

	National	Blackburn with Darwen	Bolton	Burnley	Stoke-on-Trent	Wigan
Anxiety	2.95	2.75	3.2	2.91	2.32	3.54
Life satisfaction	7.24	6.99	6.96	6.97	6.83	7.11
Happiness	7.38	6.94	6.97	7.06	7.31	7.19
Worthwhileness	7.5	7.3	7.38	6.99	7.36	7.49
Loneliness (% of sample)						
	National	Blackburn with Darwen	Bolton	Burnley	Stoke-on-Trent	Wigan
Often / always	4.20%	-	-	-	-	-
Some of the time	13.70%	13.10%	16.31%	16.40%	18.30%	14.00%
Occasionally	19.00%	23.60%	14.50%	19.20%	21.50%	18.00%
Hardly ever	29.80%	27.50%	30.10%	27.80%	21.30%	26.10%
Never	33.20%	29.40%	34.00%	30.60%	30.80%	36.20%
Levels of activity (% of sample)						
	National	Blackburn with Darwen	Bolton	Burnley	Stoke-on-Trent	Wigan
Inactive: less than 30 minutes a week	32.00%	38.50%	32.30%	31.00%	36.70%	35.00%
Fairly active: 30-149 minutes per week	11.80%	-	12.70%	14%	14.90%	13.00%
Active: at least 150 minutes a week	56.20%	54.20%	55.00%	55.20%	48.30%	52.00%

Source detail

Nov 20-21 Active Lives survey results
See Appendix: [Comparator Area charts](#)

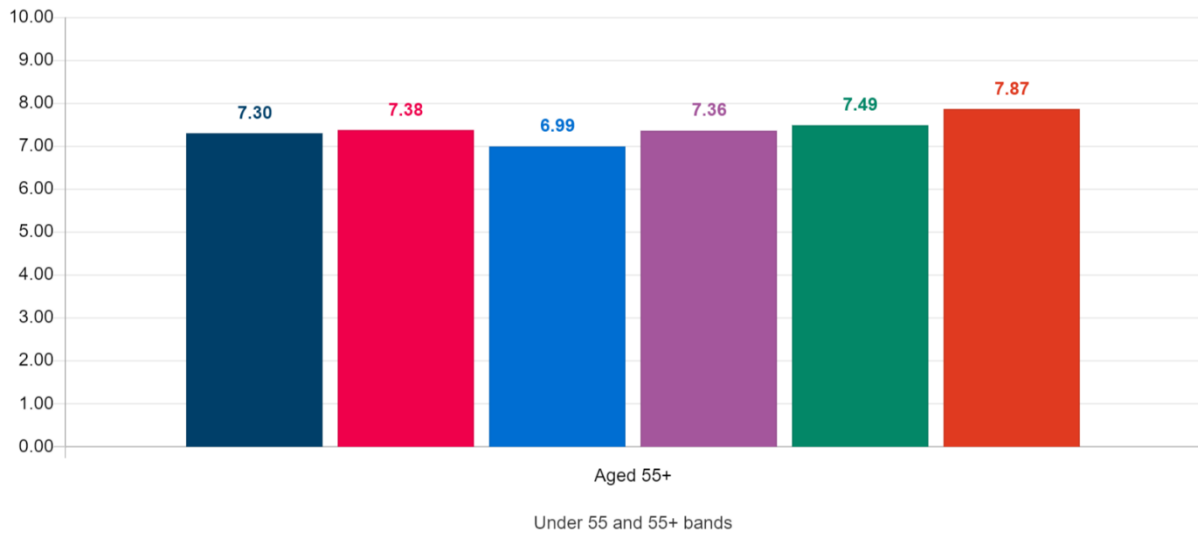
Comparator Area charts

Wellbeing

Worthwhileness: To what extent are the things you do in your life worthwhile? : Worthwhileness average score (0-10)

Local Authority and County Council - Age

Nov 21-22



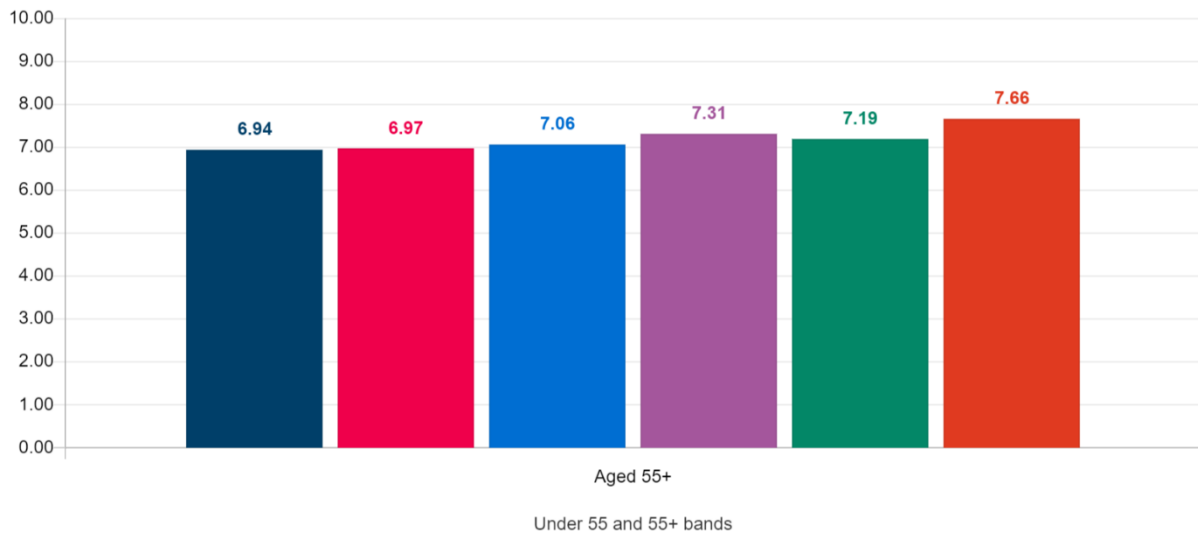
Worthwhileness: To what extent are the things you do in your life worthwhile? by Local Authority and County Council:

■ Blackburn with Darwen LA ■ Bolton LA ■ Burnley LA ■ Stoke-on-Trent LA ■ Wigan LA ■ Wyre LA

Happiness: How happy did you feel yesterday? : Happiness average score (0-10)

Local Authority and County Council - Age

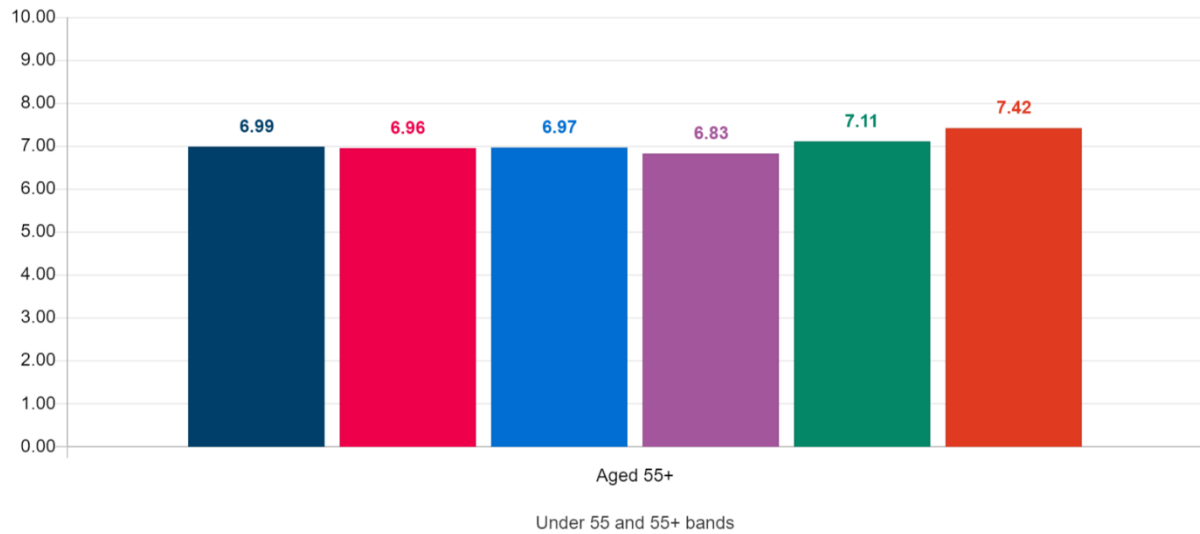
Nov 21-22



Happiness: How happy did you feel yesterday? by Local Authority and County Council:

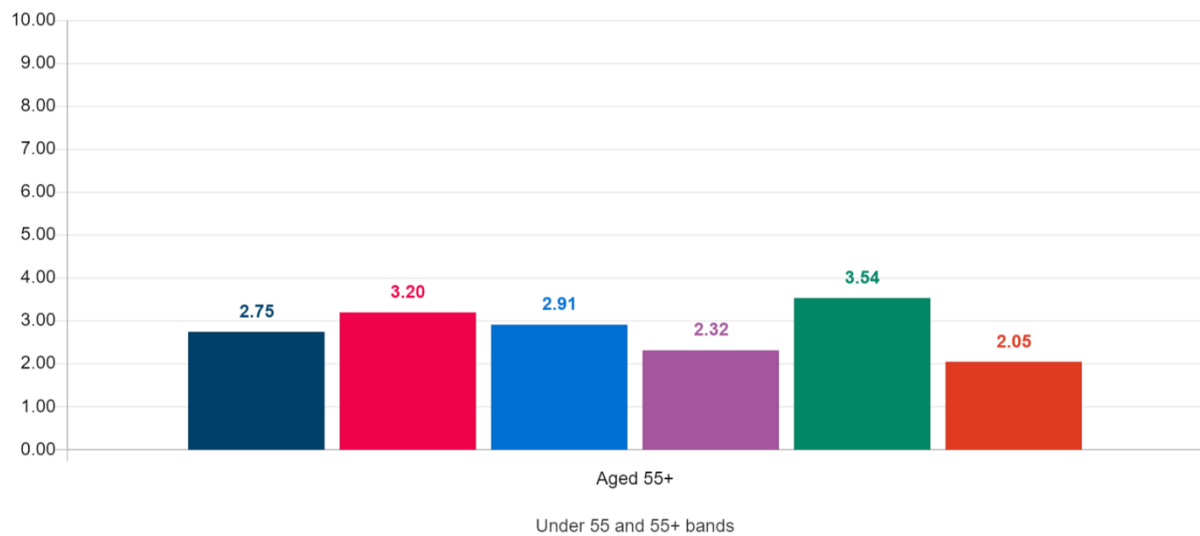
■ Blackburn with Darwen LA ■ Bolton LA ■ Burnley LA ■ Stoke-on-Trent LA ■ Wigan LA ■ Wyre LA

Life Satisfaction: How satisfied are you with life nowadays? : Life satisfaction average score (0-10)
 Local Authority and County Council - Age
 Nov 21-22



Life Satisfaction: How satisfied are you with life nowadays? by Local Authority and County Council:
 ■ Blackburn with Darwen LA ■ Bolton LA ■ Burnley LA ■ Stoke-on-Trent LA ■ Wigan LA ■ Wyre LA

Anxiety: How anxious did you feel yesterday? : Anxiety average score (0-10)
 Local Authority and County Council - Age
 Nov 21-22



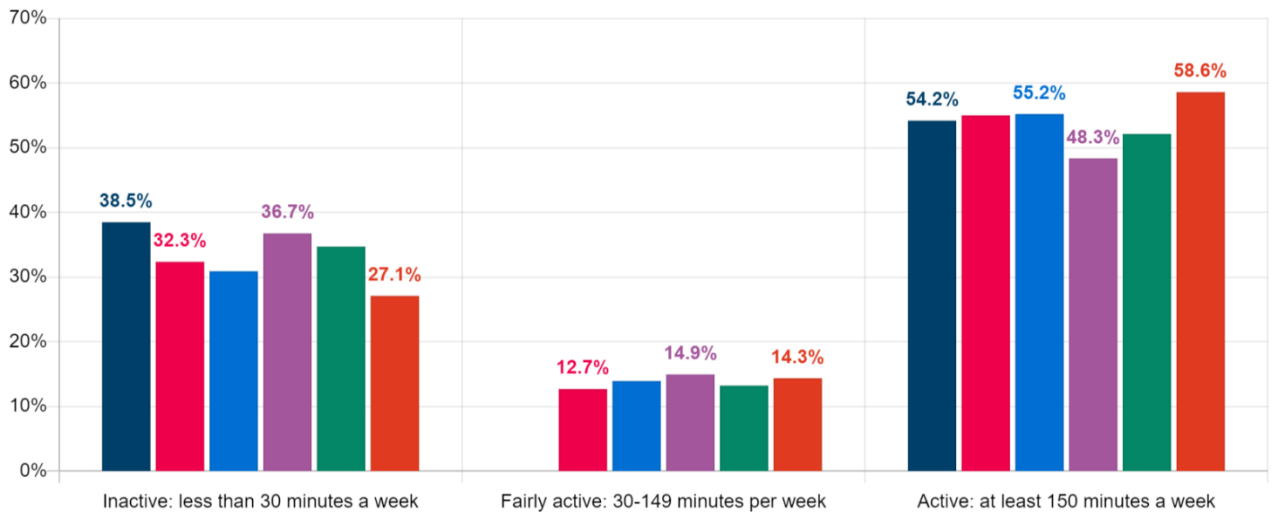
Anxiety: How anxious did you feel yesterday? by Local Authority and County Council:
 ■ Blackburn with Darwen LA ■ Bolton LA ■ Burnley LA ■ Stoke-on-Trent LA ■ Wigan LA ■ Wyre LA

Activity Levels

[Nov 20-21 Active Lives survey results](#)

<https://activelives.sportengland.org/Result?queryId=96602>

Levels of activity (Main - 3 categories)
 Local Authority and County Council - Age: Aged 55+
 Nov 21-22



Levels of activity (Main - 3 categories)

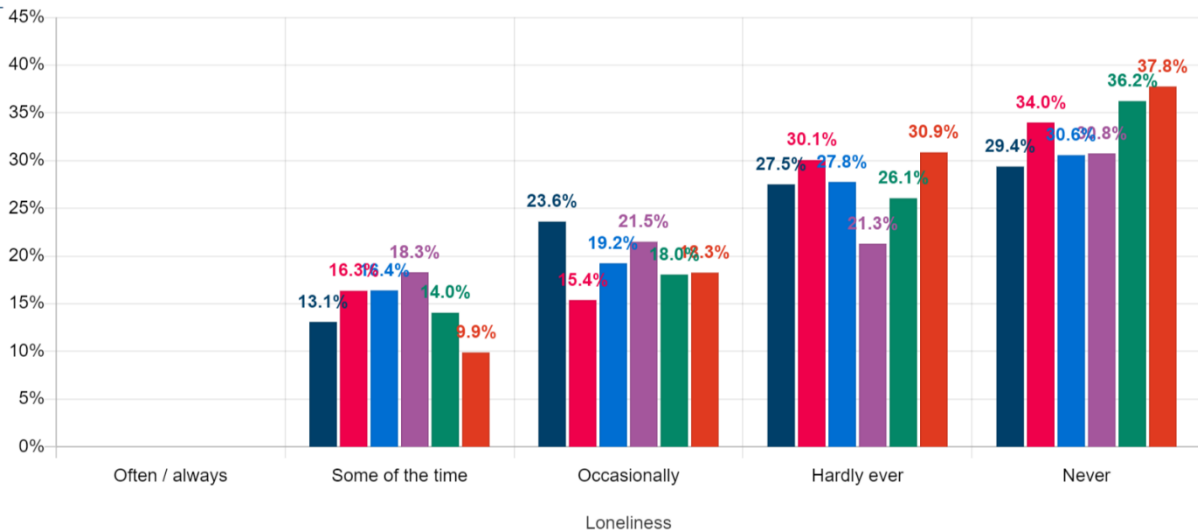
% Levels of activity (Main - 3 categories) by Local Authority and County Council:

■ Blackburn with Darwen LA ■ Bolton LA ■ Burnley LA ■ Stoke-on-Trent LA ■ Wigan LA ■ Wyre LA

Loneliness

Nov 20-21 Active Lives survey results

Loneliness
 Local Authority and County Council - Age: Aged 55+
 Nov 21-22

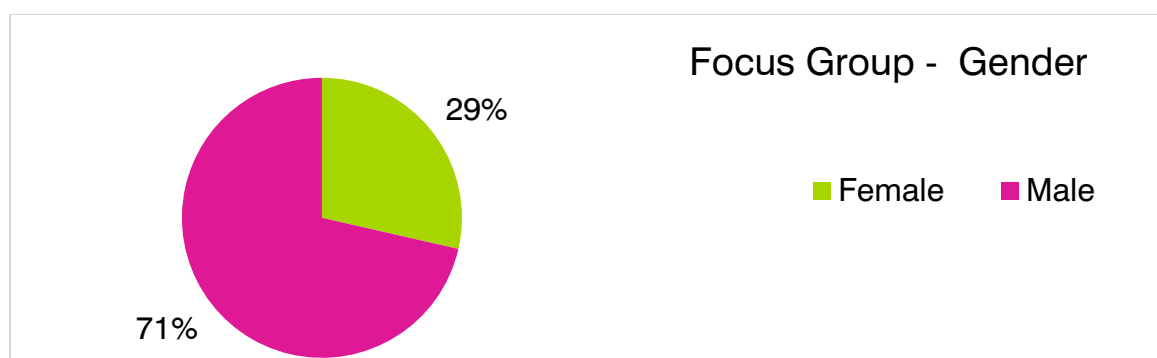
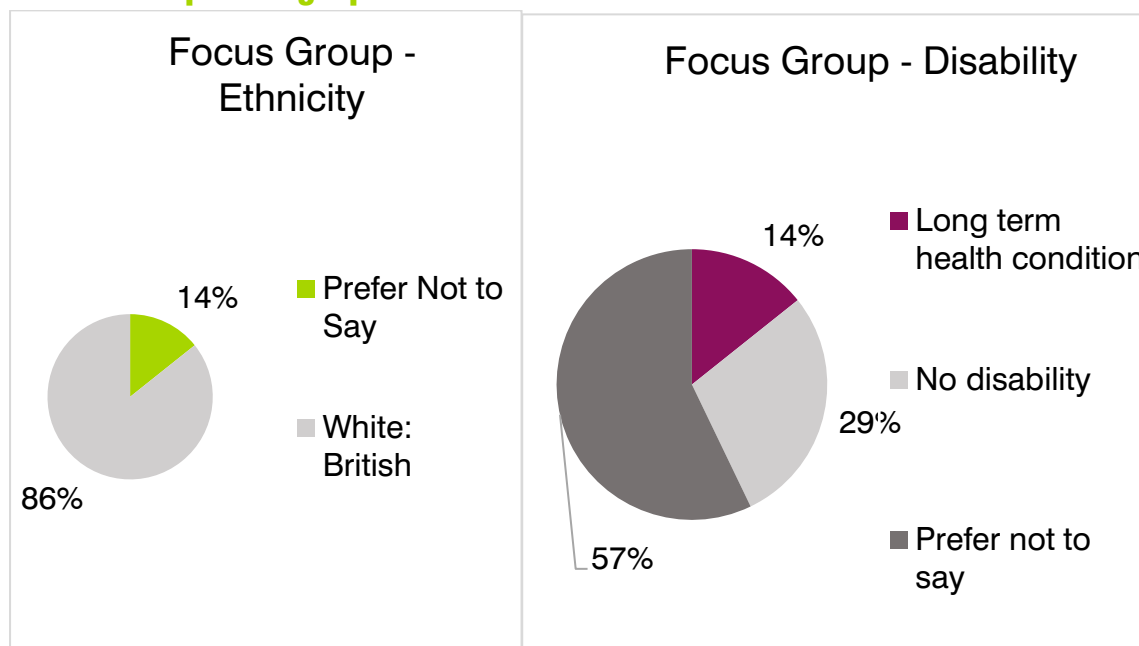


Loneliness

% Loneliness by Local Authority and County Council:

■ Blackburn with Darwen LA ■ Bolton LA ■ Burnley LA ■ Stoke-on-Trent LA ■ Wigan LA ■ Wyre LA

Focus Group demographic breakdown



Reach report – full breakdown.

WEBSITE	
WEBPAGE	PAGE VIEWS
Walking Connects homepage	1,439
Brenda's Story Case Study	130
Jacob's Story Case Study	52
Safer Streets, Wigan Case Study	208
Tackling Loneliness, Lancashire Case Study	85
Connecting older adults in Stoke, Blog	414
Fill your walk with colour, Blog	103
TOTAL	2,431
FACEBOOK	
POST SUBJECT	POST ENGAGEMENT*
Stoke Robin Walk	31
New Year Project Promo	25
Burnley Canal Walks	114
Blue Monday	35

Burnley Canal Walks	12
Blackburn Walks	17
Bolton Heritage Walk	30
General promo	16
Brenda's Story	14
Safer Streets Wigan	31
Tackling loneliness in Lancashire	15
TOTAL	340

*Total number of times that the user engaged with the post through reactions, comments, shares, views and clicks. This is more qualitative engagement than impressions which is the number of times someone saw the post on their timeline.

TWITTER	
TWEET SUBJECT	ENGAGEMENTS
General promo	23
World Mental Health Day	34
Robin Walk	17
New Year	11
Burnley Canal Walks	16
Blue Monday	27
BBC Radio 2 tweet (retweeted by Sara Cox)	107
Blue Monday - 2nd tweet	19
Connecting older adults in Stoke	23
Social prescribing day	34
Blackburn Walks	8
Wigan Safer Streets	50
Active lives	56
Mental Health Awareness Week	26
Loneliness week 1	14
Loneliness week 2	4
Loneliness week 3	11
Tackling loneliness in Lancashire	15
Stoke filming	15
TOTAL	510

*Total number of times a user has interacted with a Tweet. This includes all clicks anywhere on the Tweet (including hashtags, links, avatar, username, and Tweet expansion), retweets, replies, follows, and likes. This is more qualitative engagement than impressions which is the number of times someone saw the post on their timeline.

PRESS	
PUBLICATION NAME/DATE	CIRCULATION/REACH
BBC Radio Stoke - 24/01/23	30,500
BBC Radio Stoke - 24/01/23	30,500

BBC Radio2 - 20/01/23	3,564,000
BBC Radio Stoke - 18/01/23	30,500
BBC Radio Stoke - 18/01/23	30,500
BBC Radio Stoke - 10/01/23	30,500
BBC Radio Stoke - 05/02/23	30,500
BBC Radio Stoke - 27/02/23	30,500
BBC Radio Stoke - 27/02/23	30,500
Wigan Evening Post (Web) - 30/03/23	29,756
BBC Radio Lancashire - 22/10/22	52,667
TOTAL	3,890,423

If the same date is above twice this is not an error, many radio stations recycle content from earlier programmes in later news bulletins/programmes.

PRINTED MEDIA	
MEDIA TYPE	NUMBER PRINTED
Walk promo leaflets	2,550
Walk promo posters	150
Walking Connects Booklet	350
TOTAL	3,050

Please bear in mind that many posters were printed locally to the Project Coordinators, so Comms are unable to track these. There were also many digital formats of the leaflets and posters produced.

TOTAL OVERALL ENGAGED	3,896,754
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