

active FAMILIES

Jointly funded by Sport England: Tackling Inequalities & the Government's Covid-19 Outbreak Management Funds.



STRIDE
ACTIVE

AUGUST 2022



Funding administered by



Overview

Active Families is a programme that supports families to become more active throughout Herefordshire. Starting in October 2021, our Active Families Co-ordinator has been supporting adults, children or the whole family to re-engage or start physical activity following the Covid pandemic.

The programme has been jointly funded by Active Herefordshire & Worcestershire (Tackling Inequalities Fund from Sport England) and Herefordshire Council (Government's Covid-19 Outbreak Management Funds).

The Covid pandemic and consequential lockdowns had a significant affect on children and young people, but also their families as well. Whilst we're now operating in a post-pandemic world, the longer-term impact is still very present. This, combined with a cost of living crisis, means families are in need of more support, especially accessing physical activity.

We are now 10 months into the programme and continue to learn about the needs of families, including their motivations and barriers to becoming more physically active. This report will highlight our progress to date and the learning we're developing.

Our current levels of engagement are as follows:



How we work

We have been supporting 102 families across Herefordshire through working with targeted schools. Schools have been selected based on their geographic location (areas of deprivation) and levels of obesity, identified through National Child Measurement Programme data. Schools are able to refer families/children, or families can self-refer.

9

schools engaged



| Clients from | Quintile |
|---------------------|----------|
| St Thomas Cantilupe | 2 |
| Riverside | 1 |
| Gorsley Goffs | 3 |
| Lea | 3 |
| Bosbury | 2 |
| Holmer | 3 |
| Trinity | 3 |
| Leominster | 1 |
| Westfield | 1 |

Of the schools engaged, 5 have been identified as having high levels of overweight/obese children according to the most recent National Child Measurement Programme (NCMP) data.

We engage families by saying 'hi!'

To engage families via self-referral, our Active Families Co-ordinator promotes the programme through information stands on school sites. This might be on the school gates during pick-up/drop-off time, or at events such as sports days. Families are able to have an informal conversation and 'sign-up' at the stand. Activity wall planners have been produced to give families something to take home should they wish to contemplate their engagement.

The Active Families Co-ordinator also meets with school staff, such as the Headteacher, PE Co-ordinator or Pastoral Leads. School staff refer families to the programme who they feel would benefit from early help.



Who we've engaged

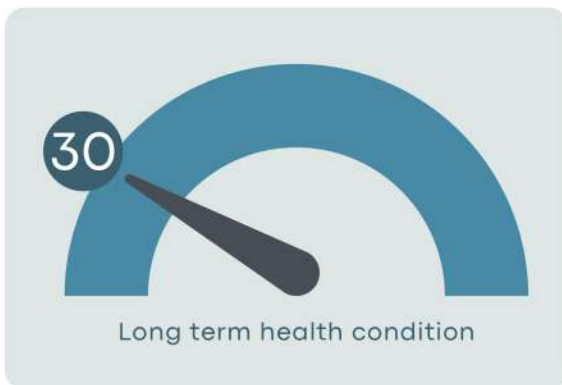
Participant breakdown

75 children
82 adults



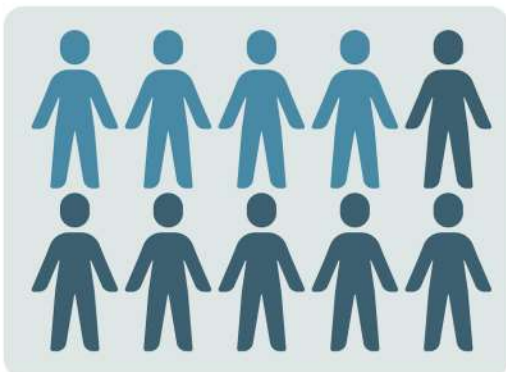
31% male

69% female



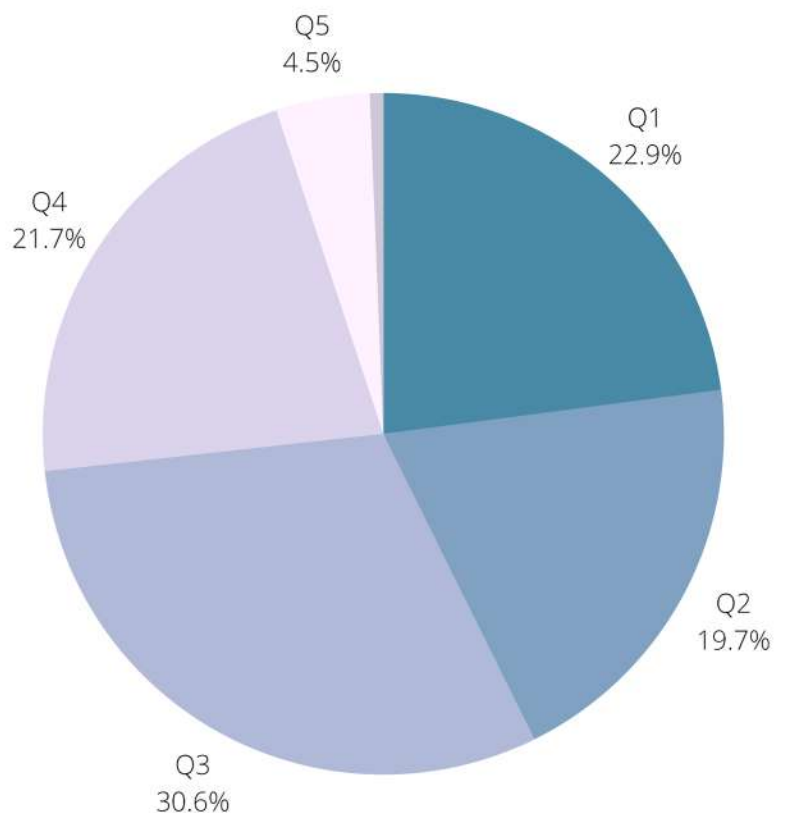
19% of participants disclosed they have a long term health condition. However, there is a reluctance to share this information, or not fully understand what constitutes a long term health condition, so it is anticipated that this is not a true reflection.

Almost one quarter of participants are from the most deprived areas in the county.



More than 4 in 10 participants (42%) reside in quintiles 1 and 2.

78% of participants are White British, whilst 4% identify as Asian / Asian British - Indian. The remaining participants chose not to identify their ethnicity.



Why families engage

Families seek support from Active Families for a variety of reasons, including improving health and fitness, reducing sedentary behaviour and enhancing family relationships.

To find things to do as a family and for myself too!

Something to get children outside more, away from TV and gaming, to run off excess energy

I want to lose weight and feel healthy again

To build confidence to be able to attend bigger groups (struggling with anxiety)

To know what is going on in local area, low cost and local

For health, want to be healthy, since lockdown not been as active

Mental stimulation, fitness for me and weight loss for my child

Free stuff we can do as a family

For the children to become more active and healthier

To encourage independence within my child

To get children away from tech

To find clubs children can join locally

Do things together

Weight loss for my child

Activities for child with cerebral palsy

Something we can do that doesn't cost anything

Lose weight and meet other people

Health condition diagnosis made me want to get active to improve my health and to get kids off computer

Do things as a family because we always do separate activities

Socialise

To get out as a family and increase our fitness levels

Things to do as a family that are free as cost is an issue

For many, Active Families provides early help or preventative opportunities. Families, for the most part, are not accessing statutory services for help. Since our 6 month report (March 2022), more families have cited the need to find free physical activities as their reason for engaging with the programme, as opposed to Covid-19 recovery. This aligns with the cost of living crisis.

How we've helped

We have found that the majority of families who are receiving 1-1 support are not choosing to access physical activity opportunities in the community. Instead they want a low/no cost option that can easily be embedded within everyday lives. As a consequence, we have distributed more activity bags than we initially anticipated.

Through review meetings with families, over a period of time, we have been able to identify the impact of the activity bags, particularly on increased physical activity levels.

"Love the bag - my son takes it over the park and plays with it for hours."

Parent, Leominster Primary School

"Loves the bag - uses it every day. She takes it out to play in cul-de-sac and her friends play with it too for about an hour. She loves the book, chalk, skipping rope and ball, she has played with it all."

Parent, Holmer Primary School

At a 12 week review, a parent reported that her daughter enjoys the bag, especially the ball and bean bags, she takes the bag out to play with friends. She plays a target game with her friends. She still plays with the bag 4x60mins each week, it has encouraged independent play.

Parent, Riverside Primary School



In addition to providing activity bags, we have also helped families access opportunities in the community, notably through our partnership with Halo Leisure. Working with Halo has enabled many families to access children's free crash course swimming lessons, as well as reduced rate memberships, specifically for the Active Families programme.

Alongside this, we have also supported adults and children to access community physical activities. Children have joined a range of clubs, including cheerleading, dance, gym, Kung Foo, football, netball and boxing, to name a few. Meanwhile adults have enjoyed a wide range of local classes, gym, swimming, running and walking.

Family case studies

Couch to 5K continues

'One Mum has told us that her and her daughter (teenager) want to do a Couch to 5K together as they both enjoy being outside in the sunshine. She told us that it was talking with the Active Families Co-ordinator that prompted the conversation with her daughter. They plan on starting this as the weather improves.' (Taken from 6 month report)

And they did! Mum started her physical activity gently due to health; her goal was to lose weight and to be fitter. As discussed, she took each week of the Couch to 5k programme as a stage, only moving on when she felt ready; some stages (weeks of couch to 5k programme) she remained on for a few weeks. Within 3 months she was exercising daily and it has now given her the confidence to take up the membership offer to join Halo, enjoying the gym and swimming sessions with her daughter. By the sign off appointment (at 12 weeks) she had achieved her goal of losing 1 ½ stone and becoming active.

"I have joined Halo and now know all the gym can offer me. If I hadn't had the conversation [with Active Families] I wouldn't have signed up to gym. It's motivational having someone to talk to. I didn't think I could ever run for 30 minutes!"

'Thank you for the joy the bag has brought'

This family was signposted by the pastoral team at their children's school. Dad wanted activities for children and himself to get more active and for weight loss. The activity bag has gone down well; they play games using the bag, they love the ball and play dodge ball with Dad. When there is nothing to do they get the bag out for 5-30 minutes at a time. Velcro catch is played lots and they have set up their own scoring/ rule system! The bag has allowed them to create games that provides joy and exercise. They have placed the activity bag in a larger bag and have created a 'random pick' game where they pick an item without looking and play with that.

Mum, Dad and the children are all active daily for at least 30 mins using the bag. Dad says he really appreciates the joy the bag has given. He is getting his exercise playing with them.

Rediscovering Play!

A recent health condition diagnosis prompted the want to get active and also find activities to do together as a family. Mum shared that her children had spent a lot of time on the computer in lockdown and wanted to reduce this by finding ways to be active at home that didn't cost anything. Immediately after her Active Families appointment Mum booked swimming lessons for the children and for herself. She also wanted to start walking more and used her Active Families activity wall planner to record her activity. Mum made it her mission to take the children for longer walks at the weekend and within 6 weeks the family were walking for up to 90 minutes once a week, as well as shorter walks for Mum in the week. The family received their AF bag at this point too. At the next review point (1 month later) Mum had lost 10lb being out with her children and playing games. She says she would not have purchased the items in the bag. She played games as a child and has enjoyed playing again: "we forget how to play with all this technology, we are really enjoying being active - it's great fun! Playing hopscotch is a family favourite and the children play outside now! Active Families has helped me with ideas of how to be active with my family. We make up our own games now."

The family use the activity bag to play 4-5 days a week for 10-30 minutes. One child has joined the Cheerleading club discussed during a review meeting.

"Being involved with Active Families has brought fun back into playing through using the bag, we all play and I have lost nearly 2 stone. The bag is going on holiday with us too!"

Re-energizing the family

Mum explained that tech/gaming and screen time had over taken during lockdown and she wanted ideas of things she could do at home to get the children outside and away from screens. They started by doing more walking as a family and received their Active Families bag 3 weeks later. Within 3 months the children had reduced gaming time/screen time! "They just pick up the bag and take it to the park, chuffed they have their own bag and their friends play too. Kids look healthier and have become more interested in doing activities and being outdoors." The children are now looking to starting boxing and possibly kung foo too. All of the family are walking more and cycling too.

"For someone who is thinking about it [engaging with Active Families]do it! It re-energizes your family, helps you out of a slum when you are feeling overwhelmed and have lack of ideas."

Overcoming nerves and building confidence

The focus of this family initially began with Mum who said she was nervous to go to classes but wanted to try yoga-type activity. To begin with, she started walking more on top of what she does in her working day and using the Active Families activity chart and her Fitbit tracker to increase her walking. By the time of her 12 week review appointment, she joined Halo (using the Active Families reduced rate) and was also going to swimming and body balance class. When reflecting on her engagement with Active Families, she commented that it made her more aware of being active; since she she joined the gym, her son's activity has increased also: "It's also made me aware that I need to make an effort to do things."

Activity for the extended family!

We met Grandma on a stand at school; she wanted activities to keep her Grandsons busy. Initial discussions focused on increasing her walking alongside providing activities to do on a walk to engage the boys to walk a little further. She also received an Active Families bag.

At the 3 week review, she reported increasing her walking around the racecourse and she received signposting to a walking group. She takes the alphabet sheet out on walks with the children. One of the children has physiotherapy. His physio has now incorporated bean bags into the sessions, getting him to throw them into something, knowing he can now practice this at home too, as a result of having the activity bag. At home, they have made a frame to use outside, with holes in it, to throw bean bags into when the weather is dry. The children use the bag 3x a week for 30 minutes.

Four weeks later Grandma said: "Children love frisbee - outside all the time when weather is ok. Bean bags a great hit, they have created games using them. Granddaughter loves the chalk!" The family play with it regularly and go back to typically using it 2 hours a week and at weekends. The children have learnt to skip now!

At 12 weeks of engagement, the family noted a significant difference. "The support has been fab and encouraged us. It has given the children chance to play and play outdoors [...] it's inspired us to do more." The family now spend more time outdoors. Grandad commented he enjoyed watching the children play independently and joins in games. Grandma walks around the racecourse once a week now, on top of regular dog walks and feels more active and vigorous as a result. The wider family are now being more active too.

Reflections from our Co-ordinator



Sarah Volpe - Active Families Co-ordinator

The last 10 months has highlighted the importance of building supportive relationships with schools, physical activity providers and families. A flexible approach to physical activity is needed to engage the families for whom common barriers were time and finance.

Partnership working with school staff is strong, with referrals being used as a preventative measure or contributing to a form of early help. We have also received referrals from families who are also experiencing financial hardship or emotional difficulties. Our relationship with local physical activity providers and organisations helps us to be able to offer families the support they require to become more active.

Most remarkable has been the impact of the Active Families bags. This was evident in our 6-month report but is even more prevalent now through our understanding of their long-term use. The feedback has been phenomenal, these bags have become a household staple for physical activity through play. Many families reporting their success is due to the ease of 'pick up and go,' anytime activity for short bursts or hours of play. Fitting around family life, and most importantly, something they could do as a family and free! In most households the bags are used 2-7 times a week which has been consistent throughout the 12 week contact.

In many cases family members build confidence in being active through playing games as a family and walking more. This forms the first steps into activity and when confidence is gained, they then feel ready to start community activity. Some parents/carers experienced fabulous results with weight loss and feeling fitter through using the games and activities with the bag, commenting that they were shocked how active they are simply playing and having fun!

There is also a strong sense of wellbeing in the feedback from families, most notably the feeling of connectivity as a family which was so important to the families and a reason for their engagement with Active Families. Alongside this, families report feeling happier and having more energy which improves their mood and motivation to participate in more activity. Some parents express that their children are more confident as a result of developing their own games and showing their friends or family members how to play them. Many parents are pleased to see their children enjoying being outside and away from screens which had become a habit, particularly during the lockdowns.

Also remarkable is the number of additional individuals who are benefitting as a result, especially parents/carers. Due to the portable nature of the bag, many children take their bag to local parks to play with other children, also grandparents, grandchildren and other family members are getting active too. The bags are even being taken on holidays!



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Get in touch to find out more about Active Families

hello@strideactive.org