Active Families Programme Evaluation

August 2024

Active Families is funded by Herefordshire Council and delivered by

Stride Active (Herefordshire) CIC

Herefordshire Council

STRIDE ACTIVE

Active Families Evaluation Data

Evaluation Overview

Stride Active commissioned Tiller Research Ltd to undertake an evaluation of the outcomes of Active Families. This evaluation reviewed case notes and impact measures data collected by the programme team between October 2021 and July 2024.

Profile of Active Families Participants

As of 9th July 2024, Active Families had worked with:

- 427 clients
- 264 Under 18s
- 143 Adults
- 20 Declined to provide their date of birth
- 63% female / 37% male
- Over half (53%) of the participations lived quintiles 1 and 2 (most deprived areas of the county)
- 74% White British (17.5% did not state their ethnicity)

Pathway:

- 317 had followed the MI Support pathway
- 110 had followed the Signposting pathway

Status:

- 372 clients had completed their involvement with Active Families. Of these, at least 91% were known to have achieved at least some of their goals prior to sign-off from the programme, with 81% having fully achieved their goals (Table A).

Table A: Active Families Achievement of Goals (N=372)

Client Status at Sign-Off	Overall (n)	Overall (%)	Adult (n=132)	Under 18 (n=221)
Fully Achieved their goals	**302**	**81.2%**	**80.3%**	**81.0%**
Part Achieved their goals	38	10.2%	8.3%	11.8%

Not Achieved their goals	9	2.4%	3.8%	1.4%
Not Known	23	6.2%	7.6%	5.9%

Qualitative Impacts of Active Families

Anonymised programme case notes were thematically analysed to identify the impacts experienced by participants. Five distinct themes were identified:

Theme One: Increased Physical Activity

- Clients have become more physically active following engagement with Active Families. This included increased walking for pleasure, walking instead of travelling by car or bus, swimming, playing sports, or using games and exercise equipment at home;
- Some families now engage regularly in walks together in local beauty spots, parks, or recreation grounds. Activity trails helped to entertain children in family walks;
- A few people had learnt or improved a specific physical skill, such as swimming, skipping with a rope, scooting, or 'throwing-and-catching', or had joined a club with coaching (e.g. martial arts, dance, swimming lessons);
- Active Families supported parents with children who were too young to join sports clubs. Parents were supported to find active games and activities, or to use the free swim passes. Parents said that some activity bag items were particularly suitable for little hands or were tactile and brightly coloured and had quickly become a favourite toy;
- Some clients reported feeling more motivated to be active since taking part in the programme.

Theme Two: Increased information and knowledge about accessible, affordable and local physical activities

- Practitioners provided participants with information about activities local to them which matched their interests and abilities;
- Cost was a barrier to activity for some families and had caused some parents to reduce or stop their children's participation in fee-charging sports and activity clubs. Information about available discounts, free passes and low-cost or no-cost activities from Active Families was warmly welcomed;

- Practitioners gave participants with health-related barriers information about suitable and safe physical activities, building their confidence to participate;
- Parents were given information and resources to help engage their children in physical activities, including active games and walking;
- For signposting clients, the provision of information was often sufficient for them to engage with and maintain participation in one or more new activities;
- The support of practitioners empowered some clients to undertake further research about local activities by themselves and to explore the different options available to them.

Theme Three: Benefits of Play

- The activity bag and activity sheets provided by Active Families increased families' motivation to play games. This also inspired creativity, with some inventing their own games using the equipment and/or buying additional equipment to add to their activity bag;
- Children, and sometimes adult family members, reduced the amount of time they spend recreationally online because they were spending more time playing games;
- Participants often spent increased time outdoors playing games, with siblings and families commonly playing together. The outdoor toys within the activity bags (e.g. frisbee, balls) encouraged participants to go outside, either using their gardens or taking the toys and games to local parks, friends' or relatives' gardens, or away on holiday;
- Many items in the activity bag were suitable for indoor play, as were lots of ideas on the activity sheets. These indoor play options were an important intervention as wet weather was a key barrier to being active, and some families lacked suitable outdoor spaces;
- Some families reported that their children now played independently offline more often, using their imagination and creativity. Some parents noted that the increased activity had reduced screen time, and others observed that having an activity bag close at hand had reduced children's bad moods and episodes of boredom;
- Some families noted how the activities enabled and inspired by the activity bag had helped them to 'rethink' what being active meant, especially where formal sport options were unappealing or inaccessible due, for example, to cost or transport barriers.

Theme Four: Positive Social Impacts

- Some parents reported that their children now played together more often and that conflicts between siblings had reduced;
- Children were engaging friends and other family members in outdoor games using items from the activity bag and making up games together;
- Social anxiety and difficulty in groups were a barrier to activity for some children and parents. Active Families practitioners were able to suggest activities that could be done at home alone or with familiar people, instead of having to attend a group or public facility.

Theme Five: Improved Health and Wellness

- Many participants commented that they had enjoyed the new physical activities. Some who had received signposting reported having attended a class, using their free swimming passes or having engaged in other activities suggested to them;
- A few participants reported tangible improvements to their physical health and wellness, such as weight loss, increased energy, or improved sleep;
- Some participants had noticed improved mood in themselves and/or their children as their activity levels increased.

Feedback from Teachers

Contacts from schools that have been involved with Active Families were asked to provide feedback via a structured free-text response questionnaire. Six responses were received.

Motivations for getting involved

Schools typically viewed Active Families as a way of complementing their wider support for families. Three key motivations for getting involved were identified, which all addressed a need previously identified by the school:

- Supporting healthier lifestyles for children and families;
- Providing support to families;
- Addressing rural disadvantage in relation to access to activities.

Impact of Active Families

Schools reported that Active Families had successfully engaged families, and they had observed increased activity levels as a result. Although increases in physical activity were

noted, the greatest impact identified by schools was an increase in families spending more time together, which was viewed as positively impacting relationships and the wellbeing of all family members:

- Increased family time:
  "Time has been identified and prioritised for the family to work together."
  "Families making a point of being more active - being outside more."
  "Our families now are spending less time on electronic games and more time getting active as a family."

- Increased awareness of activities, and confidence to engage:
  "Families looking at what is available in their local area and engaging all with support"
  "Our… families very much enjoy the activities and ideas provided through the Active Families Programme"

Enablers of success

Schools were asked to provide feedback on the Active Families delivery model. Two key areas were identified as enabling the successful outcomes reported:

- **Proactive, positive support**
  Active Families provides support over a 12-week period, which was identified as important for families to successfully work through any barriers or concerns they might have. Positive encouragement and flexible, responsive support to overcome barriers to participation were viewed as central to the success of the programme
  "The contact between families and the Active Families worker has been key. The family has had the opportunity to share any concerns or questions, and to celebrate successes."
  "Our parents very much appreciate [the Active Families Co-ordinator's] positive and encouraging approach and flexibility, when working with them."
  "I think the design is perfect in that there is the initial meet and then further contacts that are done at set times in a way so as to support and encourage families to get active… and to ask for support with this if required. This enables families to... feel supported, heard and unjudged."

- **Visible, engaging resources**
  The activity bags were a tangible resource that demonstrated alternative activity options and enthused families who were less active
  "Having resources available for the parents to see worked well."

Sustained Impacts of Active Families

A sample of families were contacted 3-6 months following their sign-off from Active Families. They were asked about changes that had been experienced as a result of their involvement with the programme. Responses were thematically analysed, and two distinct themes were identified:

Theme One: New Habits Sustained

In the majority of cases, families had continued at least some of the new habits that they had developed during their involvement with the programme. These habits related to increased physical activity in a range of contexts: participation in organised physical activity, discovery of new activities, increased family time centred on informal physical activity, and simply going out more:

- **Increased participation in formal physical activity** was reported, such as joining the gym, playing football and joining a dance club;
- **Discovery of new activities that include a physical activity element** was widely reported. Often this included continued use of the Active Families activity bag and increased outside play more widely, but also included non-sport activities with a significant physical activity element, such as musical theatre;
- **A sustained increase in family time** was reported by many families. This included making an effort to 'do more stuff together' such as playing games or going for walks. As well as increasing physical activity, this was reported to have increased wellbeing by helping siblings and parents bond, reducing conflict, and increasing the frequency of shared positive experiences;
- A significant increase in 'going out' was reported, most commonly visits to the park, playing outside, and family walks.

Theme Two: Thinking Differently

A key factor in sustained increases in physical activity was a reported change in how families now thought about physical activity. Linked to this was frequent mention of greater creativity and imagination, and greater consideration being given to the physical and mental health of family members:

- Almost half of follow-up participants noted that at least one family member was now **thinking more creatively** about physical activity. This was commonly linked to the experience of the activity bag, which had introduced a range of games and creative ideas. Some families were still regularly making use of the bag, whereas others had gone on to create their own activities and games, their imagination having been sparked by their experience. A common change had been to think first about what is fun and then create an activity, rather than starting with thoughts of physical activity. Recognising that fun games and activities could be created without the need for expensive equipment was also mentioned;
- Around a third of participants reported a shift to **building physical activity into daily routines**. This included walking and cycling wherever possible, such as

travelling to school, and choosing to take the stairs instead of the lift. Some participants reported new dogs providing extra encouragement for daily walks.

- Around a quarter of participants reported an increased awareness of their physical and mental health. This included eating less junk food, and wanting to maintain activity as they feel better having become more active. This suggest a high level of motivation to maintain increased levels of physical activity.

Impact Data

At the start of their involvement in Active Families, participants were asked:

- the number of days in the previous week they participated in sport;
- to complete the Short Active Lives survey (SALS), which estimated their total active minutes in the previous week;
- for adults only, to complete the WHO-5 Wellbeing Index;
- from January 2023, participants were also asked to complete the IPAQ activity questionnaire.

Where possible, these measures were repeated at the point of sign-off from Active Families. The sample sizes of participants who completed the relevant measure at both timepoints are:

- Days participating in sport: 276 (194 under 18s, 72 adults);
- SALS: 184 (137 under 18s, 47 adults);
- IPAQ: 89 (74 under 18s, 15 adults)
- WHO5: 27 adult participants

In addition, a sample of participants were contacted 3-6 months after their sign-off from Active Families, to understand the extent to which changes experienced during their involvement had been maintained. The sample sizes of participants who completed follow-up measures are:

- Days participating in sport: 69 (57 under 18s, 12 adults);
- SALS: 65 (53 under 18s, 12 adults);
- IPAQ: 30 (24 under 18s, 6 adults)
- WHO5: 6 adult participants

This section reports the changes experienced by those participants who completed the measures at both baseline and follow-up. Additional analysis is provided on the sample of participants contacted at follow-up. For all measures, the distribution of data was examined in order to select an appropriate parametric or non-parametric statistical test.

Participation in Sports

At baseline, 54% of Active Families participants had taken part in sports during the previous seven days (*M*[1] = 1.79 days, *SD* [2]= 2.25). At sign-off, this had risen to 90% who had participated in sport on at least one day in the previous week (*M* = 3.84 days, *SD* = 2.47). **This increase in participation in sports activities was found to be statistically significant and of a medium effect size (*Z*[3] = -11.37, *p*[4] <.001, *r* [5]= -.48).**

Adults (n = 72)

The number of days per week that adults participated in sport grew from a median average of 1 day per week at baseline to 4 days per week at sign-off. The proportion of adults participating in sport at least one day a week increased from 53% to 90%, with 67% of adults increasing their level of participation between baseline and sign-off.

This was a statistically significant increase in physical activity and a medium effect size (*Z* = -5.72, *p* <.001, *r* =- 0.48)

Under 18s (n = 194)

The median average number of days participants aged under 18 years took part in sport at baseline was 1 day. This grew to a median average of 4 days per week at sign-off. The proportion of under 18s participating in sport at least one day a week increased from 55% to 89%, with 65% of under 18s increasing their level of participation between baseline and sign-off.

This increase in physical activity was statistically significant and of medium effect, (*Z* = -9.52, *p*<.001, *r* = -0.48).

Follow-Up Data

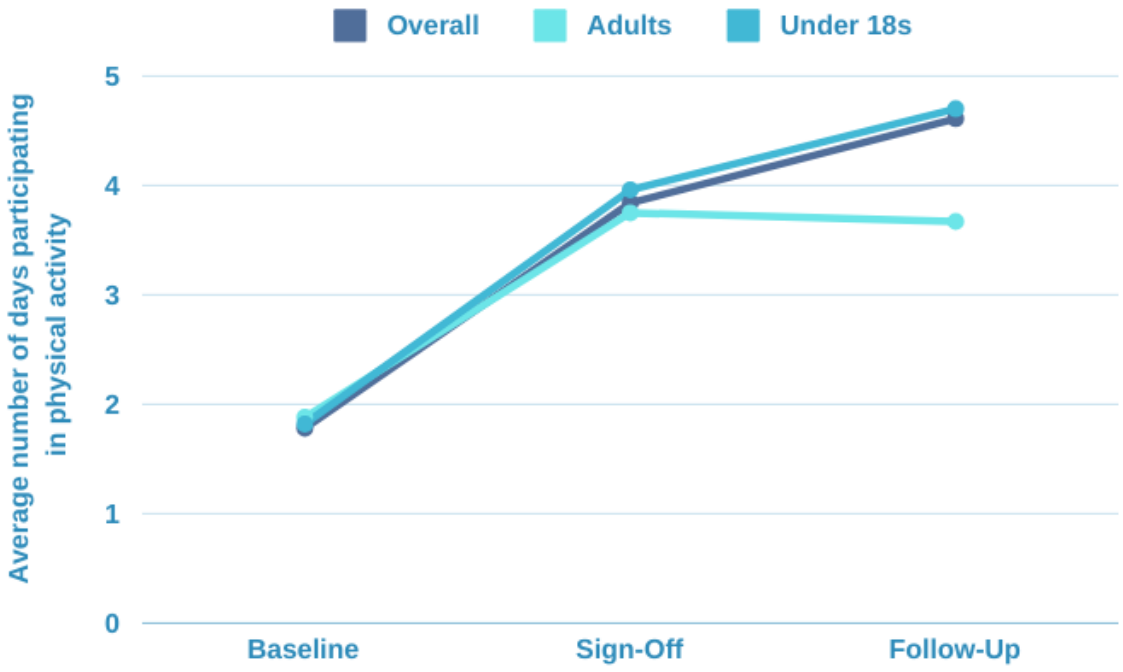
The available follow-up data shows a different pattern of maintenance for under 18s than for adults, as illustrated in figure 1. The mean number of days that adults participated in sport at follow-up (3.67) was slightly down from sign-off (3.75), but still significantly higher than at

[1] *M* = mean average
[2] *SD* = standard deviation
[3] *Z* = Wilcoxon Signed-Ranks Test result
[4] *p* = significance value. *p*<0.01 means that there is a greater than 99% probability that the observed result is not due to chance, *p*<0.001 means that there is a greater than 99.9% probability that the observed result is not due to chance
[5] *r* = effect size. *r* = 0.1 is considered a low effect size, *r* = 0.3 is considered a medium effect size, *r* = 0.5 is considered to be a large effect size.

baseline (1.89). However, the average under 18 participation had increased from 3.96 days at sign-off to 4.70 days at follow-up, again significantly higher than at baseline (1.83).

This sample of follow-up data indicates strong maintenance rates of increased levels of physical activity following sign-off from Active Families.

Figure 1: Average number of days participating in sport



Short Active Lives Survey

The Short Active Lives Survey (SALS) is Sport England's recommended physical activity measurement tool. The SALS questionnaire identifies the number of minutes of weekly moderate or vigorous physical activity an individual undertakes. This is then assigned one of three classifications based on the UK Chief Medical Officer's Physical Activity Guidelines, which are different for adults and young people aged 5-18 years:

- Adults:
  - Active: 150+ minutes per week
  - Fairly Active: 30 – 149 minutes per week
  - Inactive: less than 30 minutes per week

- 5-18 year olds:
  - Active: 420+ minutes per week
  - Fairly Active: 210 – 419 minutes per week
  - Less Active: less than 210 minutes per week

Adults- Moderate and Vigorous Physical Activity

Levels of moderate and vigorous physical activity undertaken by adults increased from a median average of 60 minutes per week to a median average of 200 minutes per week (Table B). 81% of adults increased their time spent participating in moderate and vigorous physical activity between baseline and sign-off. A Wilcoxon Signed-ranks Test indicated that this increase was a significant and large effect, $Z = -5.063$, $p<.001$, $r = -0.52$.

Table B: Minutes per week of moderate or vigorous physical activity (Adults, n=47)

Element	Median mins (range) Pre	Median mins (range) Post	Test statistic (significance)	Effect Size
Total	**60 mins (0-720)**	**200 mins (0-1100)**	***Z* = -5.063 (*p*<.001)**	***r* = -0.52 (large)**
Walking	0 mins (0-720)	150 mins (0-900)	*Z* = -4.838, (*p*<.001)	*r* = -0.50 (large)
Cycling	0 mins (0-225)	0 mins (0-600)	Not significant	N/A
Sport / Fitness Session	0 mins (0-120)	0 mins (0-210)	*Z* = -3.386, (*p*<.001)	*r* = -0.35 (medium)

The most notable change was in the amount of walking undertaken, with 74% of adult participants walking more at sign-off than they did at baseline, and 94% of adult participants undertaking some walking at sign-off (Table C). There was also a significant increase in the amount of time spent undertaking formal sport and fitness sessions (e.g. playing team sports, attending exercise classes), with 34% of adult participants engaging in these types of activity at sign-off compared with 4% at baseline.

Table C: Change in Activity Participation Levels (Adults, n=57)

Element	% participating (Pre)	% participating (Post)	Change in participation (pp)	Proportion of cohort with increased participation
Walking	47%	94%	47pp increase	74%
Cycling	17%	15%	2pp decrease	11%
Sport / Fitness Session	4%	34%	30pp increase	31%

Adults- Classification of Physical Activity Level

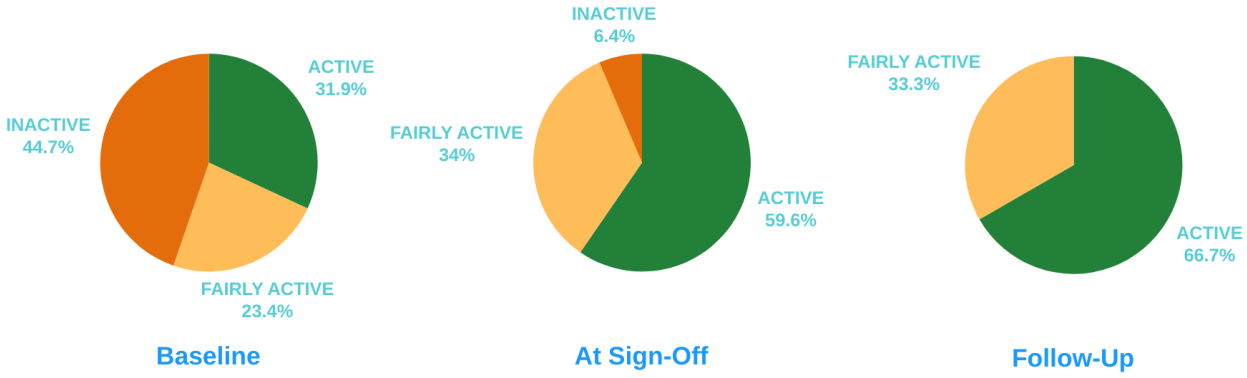
At baseline, 45% of adult participants were classified as 'inactive'; this had fallen to 6% by sign-off (see figure 2). The proportion of adult participants classified as 'active' increased from 32% to 60%.

The Pearson's chi-squared test showed that the difference in adult activity levels at the two time points was statistically significant and of large effect
(χ^2 *(df=2, N= 47)* = -18.36, *p*<.001, *V*[6]=0.44).

The follow-up sample of adults completing SALS was too small to undertake statistical tests. However, strong maintenance of activity levels were observed. Baseline inactivity of the follow-up sample was similar to the overall sample, and so this indicates that sustained increases in physical activity were achieved.

[6] *V* = effect size. Between 0.07 and 0.21 is considered a small effect size, between 0.21 and 0.35 is considered a medium effect size, >0.35 is considered to be a large effect size.

Figure 2: Classification of adult participant physical activity levels



Under 18s- Moderate and Vigorous Physical Activity

Levels of moderate and vigorous physical activity undertaken by Under 18s increased from a median average of 120 minutes per week to a median average of 225 minutes per week (Table D). 85% of under 18s increased their time spent participating in moderate and vigorous physical activity between baseline and sign-off. A Wilcoxon Signed-ranks Test indicated that this increase was a significant and large effect, Z = -8.451, p<.001, r = -0.51.

Table D: Minutes per week of moderate or vigorous physical activity (Under 18s, n=137)

Element	Median mins (range) Pre	Median mins (range) Post	Test statistic (significance)	Effect Size
Total	**120 mins (0-960)**	**225 mins (0-1200)**	***Z* = -8.451 (*p*<.001)**	***r* = -0.51 (large)**
Walking	30 mins (0-840)	120 mins (0-900)	*Z* = -7.148, (*p*<.001)	*r* = -0.43 (medium)
Cycling	0 mins (0-420)	45 mins (0-450)	Z = -5.46, (*p*<.001)	*r* = -0.33 (medium)
Sport / Fitness Session	0 mins (0-120)	0 mins (0-300)	*Z* = -4.932, (*p*<.001)	*r* = -0.30 (medium)

The proportion of under 18s undertaking moderate or vigorous walking increased from 57% at baseline to 87% at sign-off (Table E). The proportion cycling rose from 47% to 66%. Those taking part in formal/organised sport and fitness sessions rose from 26% at baseline to 44% at sign-off.

Table E: Change in Activity Participation Levels (Under 18s, n=137)

Element	% participating (Pre)	% participating (Post)	Change in participation (pp)	Proportion of cohort with increased participation
Walking	57%	87%	30pp increase	70%
Cycling	47%	66%	19pp increase	47%
Sport / Fitness Session	26%	44%	18pp increase	28%

In addition, participants increased the amount of time spent undertaking each type of activity. 70% of under 18s increased the amount of walking they undertook each week, just under half increased their time cycling (47%) and just over a quarter increased time spent at sport or fitness sessions (28%).

Under 18s- Classification of Physical Activity Level

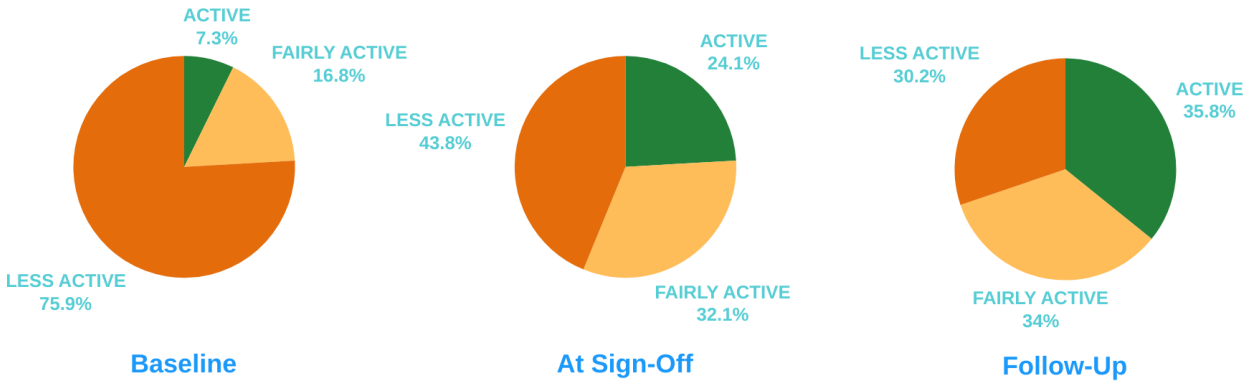
Just 7% of under-18s were classified as 'active' at baseline, meeting the recommended level of an average 60 minutes per day of moderate or vigorous physical activity. This had risen to almost a quarter (24%) at sign-off (figure 3). An additional 32% of under-18s were undertaking an average of between 30 and 60 minutes of physical activity a day at sign-off, classed as 'fairly active'.

The proportion of under-18s classified as 'less active', and so undertaking less than an average of 30 minutes physical activity a day, fell from 76% at baseline to 44% at sign-off.

The Pearson's chi-squared test showed that the difference in activity levels of under 18s at the two time points was statistically significant and of medium effect (χ^2 *(df=2, N= 137)* = -47.37, p<.001, V =0.27).

The follow-up sample of under 18s showed that activity levels had risen even further since baseline. The follow-up sample had baseline activity levels similar to the overall cohort of participants under 18. Although this additional increase in activity was not statistically significant, it demonstrates strong maintenance of increased physical activity levels following sign-off from Active Families.

Figure 3: Classification of under-18 participant physical activity levels

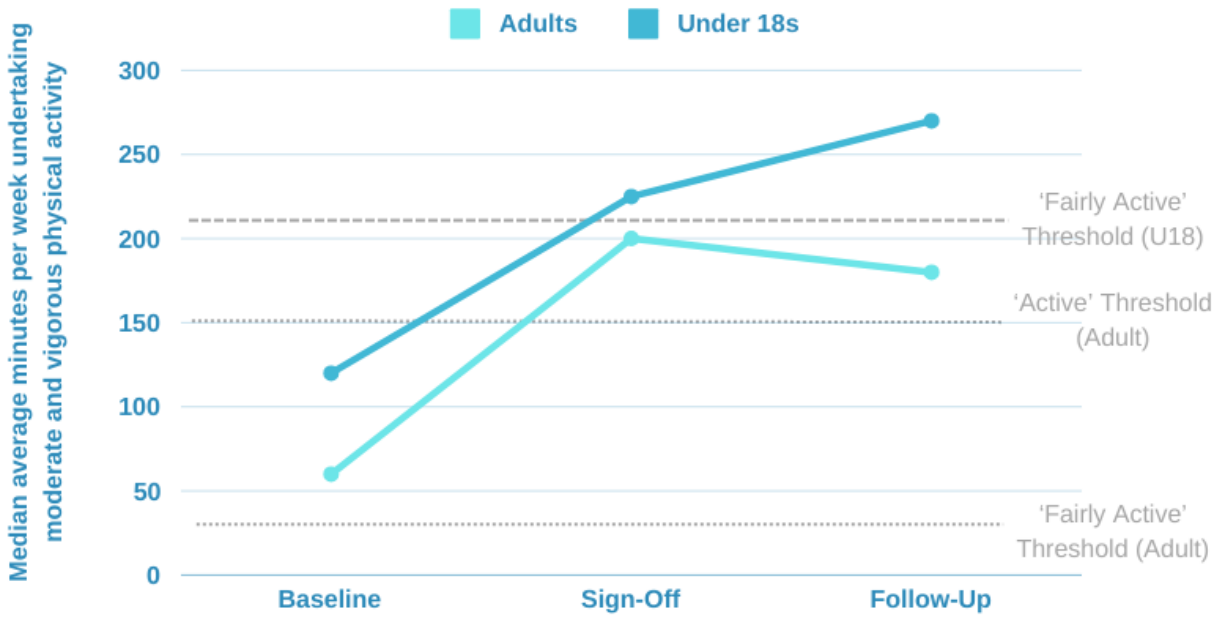


SALS Summary

Analysis of SALS indicates that Active Families had a significant and sustained impact on the physical activity levels of participants.

Median average minutes of moderate and vigorous physical activity for adult participants increased from 'fairly active' to 'active' between baseline and sign-off, and remained at 'active' at follow-up (figure 4). The median average for under 18s increased from 'less active' at baseline to 'fairly active' at sign-off, and remained at 'fairly active' at follow-up.

Figure 4: Median average minutes per week of moderate and vigorous physical activity



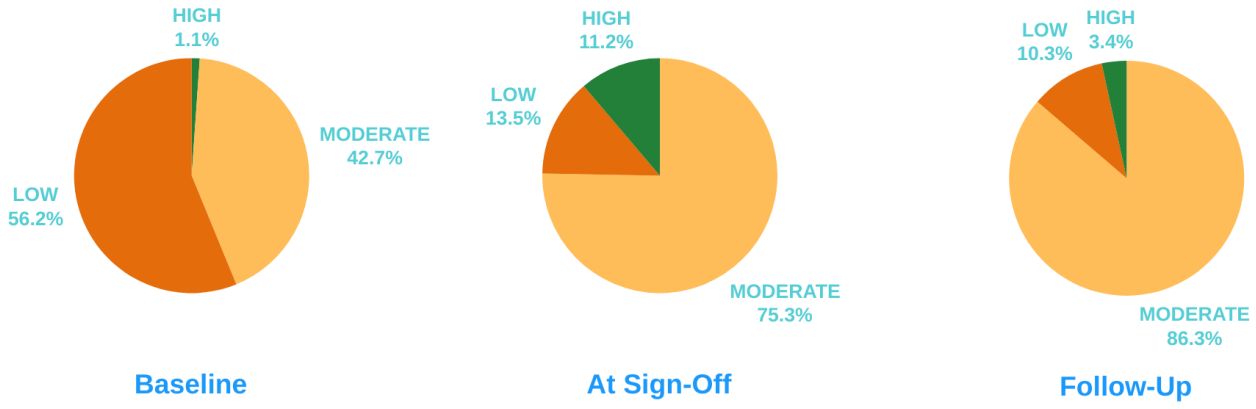
International Physical Activity Questionnaire (IPAQ)

The International Physical Activity Questionnaire (IPAQ) is an alternative measure of physical activity, which calculates the metabolic equivalent time of physical activity (MET minutes). Active Families participants have completed this measure since January 2023. By the beginning of July 2024, 89 participants had completed the IPAQ at baseline and sign-off.

Median physical activity levels increased from 495 MET minutes per week at baseline to 1,440 MET minutes per week at sign-off. A Wilcoxon Signed-ranks Test indicated that this increase was a significant and large effect, $Z = -7.89$, $p<.001$, $r = -0.59$. The proportion of participants classified as having 'low' activity levels fell from 56.2% at baseline to 13.5% at sign-off (figure 5).

The follow-up sample showed strong maintenance of activity. Median MET minutes fell slightly to 1,371 MET minutes per week, still well above the baseline level. Interestingly, the proportion of participants classified as having 'low' activity levels had fallen even further between sign-off and follow-up.

Figure 5: IPAQ Classification of participant physical activity levels



WHO-5 Wellbeing Index

The WHO-5 measure includes five items, each of which are self-assessed on a categorical scale interpreted as 0-5. The total is multiplied by four to create an overall percentage. A WHO5 score below 52% indicates poor psychological wellbeing.

Of the 27 adult participants in Active Families who completed the WHO-5 measure at both baseline and sign-off timepoints, just over half (52%) scored above the wellbeing threshold at baseline. Following participation in Active Families, wellbeing improved, with 81% of participants scoring above the wellbeing threshold at sign-off. The results of the *t*-test show that this difference is statistically significant, with a strong effect size, (t (26) = -4.44, p<.001, d [7]= -0.86).

Table F outlines the responses to each of the five individual items. The most notable change was to the statement 'I have felt active and vigorous', which had a median response of 'less than half the time' at baseline, improving to 'most of the time' at sign-off. All of the other items saw a modest improvement, except for 'I woke up feeling fresh and rested' for which no significant change was observed.

Table F: WHO-5 scores at baseline and sign-off from Active Families adult participants (n=27)

Item	Median Response Baseline	Median Response Sign-Off	Test statistic (significance)	Effect Size
I have felt cheerful and in good spirits	3 (more than half the time)	4 (most of the time)	*Z* = -1.70, (*p*<.05)	*r* = -0.23 (low)
I have felt calm and relaxed	3 (more than half the time)	4 (most of the time)	*Z* = -2.99, (*p*<001)	*r* = -0.49 (medium)
I have felt active and vigorous	2 (less than half the time)	4 (most of the time)	*Z* = -3.67, (*p*<.001)	*r* = -0.50 (large)
I woke up feeling fresh and rested	2 (less than half the time)	2 (less than half the time)	*not significant*	*N/A*
My daily life has been filled with things that interest me	2 (less than half the time)	3 (more than half the time)	*Z = --2.81, (p<.01)*	*r = -0.38* (medium)
WHO-5 total score (%)	**52%**	**68%**	***t(26) = -4.44, (p<.001)***	***d* = -0.86 (strong)**

The sample of follow-up WHO5 data was too small to undertake statistical analysis. However, all six participants completing a follow-up WHO5 measure reported wellbeing equal to or higher than at sign-off, and higher than at baseline. The median WHO-5 total

[7] Cohen's *d* = effect size. < 0.5 is weak, 0.5<0.8 moderate, 0.8<1.2 strong, 1.2<2 very strong, ≥2 extremely strong.

score for the sample of follow-up participants was 74%, compared to 52% at baseline and 68% at sign-off.

Evaluation Results Summary

The outcome measures show that Active Families has made a positive difference to the adults, children and young people who have participated. Physical activity levels of the participant cohort increased significantly during their involvement with the programme.

The available follow-up data indicates that these positive changes were largely maintained following sign-off from the programme, with the average level of physical activity of under 18s actually increasing further. The qualitative feedback indicates that this may be due to now thinking differently about physical activity, having discovered activities that they enjoy and want to continue doing:

- At least 81% of participants had fully achieved their goals by sign off, with an additional 10% part-achieving their goals. With an outcome not recorded for 6% of participants, this indicates that the vast majority of participants were successful in making the desired changes that prompted their participation in Active Families;
- Levels of physical activity increased significantly, with 81% of adults and 85% of under 18s increasing their time spent undertaking moderate or vigorous intensity physical activity between baseline and sign-off. There was a particularly large increase in informal activity such as walking and active games;
- The proportion of participants taking part in sport increased from 54% at baseline to 90% at sign-off, with 67% of adults and 65% of under 18s increasing the time they spent participating;
- The proportion of adults meeting the recommended weekly level of activity increased from 32% to 60%, and for under 18s (for whom recommended activity levels are much higher) rose five-fold (from 7% to 36%);
- The proportion of adults classified as ‘inactive’ fell from 45% at baseline to 6% at sign-off. The proportion of under-18s classified as ‘less active’ fell from 76% at baseline to 30% at sign-off;
- The wellbeing of adult participants increased significantly, with the proportion meeting the WHO5 wellbeing threshold up from 52% to 81%;
- Follow-up data collected 3-6 months after sign-off shows that increased levels of physical activity have been maintained. The follow-up sample had a position at both baseline and sign-off that was comparable to that of the overall participant cohort, indicating strong maintenance of positive outcomes for Active Families participants.

Analysis of qualitative feedback identified that Active Families has been particularly effective in helping participants to 'rethink' what being physically active means. Increased information and knowledge about accessible and local physical activities has led to increased activity levels. The support and resources provided to help test out options and find an activity that is a good fit for individuals and the family has been crucial in enabling participants to make sustained changes to their activity habits. This 'rethinking' had been maintained by the sample of participants contacted at follow-up, indicating that Active Families has been successful in enabling long-term change.

In addition to the positive impact on physical activity levels, benefits have been observed from play and increased family time, alongside improved wellbeing and positive social impacts.

School partners reported that Active Families participants demonstrated increased confidence to engage, with more attention placed on the family participating in activities together. Schools viewed Active Families to be an excellent resource for addressing needs they had identified in relation to family support, complementing their other work in this area.

Overall, Active Families has successfully delivered positive outcomes in line with the programme's aims. Moreover, the available data indicates that the programme has created the conditions for sustained change, resulting in positive long-term impacts.

Case study 1 – Adaptive physical activity for the whole family

Mum wanted physical activity that can be adapted and involve the whole family. Her daughter has a cognitive learning disability and at times Mum is unable to walk with her children due to a health condition and being on crutches. Throughout the review period Mum said that they had been playing with the items in the Active Families bag; the ball and using the chalk for hopscotch were favourites. They have been making target games using the bean bags and Mum noticed how the children were taking it in turns, which she described as “a miracle”! They did have some equipment at home, but it took time to set up before it could be played with, so the ball, bean bags and chalk have made physical activity and play much more accessible. Mum commented that her daughter wants to play more now they have an Active Families bag. The bag is hung in the hall so it is accessible for both children and they can choose their own equipment. Her nieces have started playing with the bag too. On average they play with the items in the bag for 3 x 60 minutes.

They have since given their garden a makeover so they have a clear grass area that the children can now play on. Mum said they have been taking pride of where they are playing and the children have helped to plant the grass seed and now mow the lawn!

When asked about the difference Active Families has made, Mum said that is has given her something to do with the children that she can adapt and get involved with too. Her daughter is keener to do things outside and make up games which has increased her imagination. A couple of times they have made up games that the other child does not want to play, so they have tweaked the game and asked ‘so what would you like to do?’ Mum said it has been nice to do something altogether and there has been a lot less arguments.

We asked Mum whether she noticed any differences in physical activity levels in her children. She replied “110%”! Her daughter now comes down from her bedroom, running around and enjoying making up games instead of being on her phone. Her son also involved other children in making up games too. The TV is watched “not as much which is massive!”

Case study 2 – Move more and sit less

Mum engaged with Active Families whilst pregnant. She wanted to help her boys move more rather than sit in one place watching movies.

At the first review, Mum said that the activity bag was being used for 3 x 30 minutes at home. Despite having other balls, they children love the one provided in the bag and it goes everyone with them. The boys even like to play with it in the playground after school with other children. As a family they have taken the A-Z walking game to the woods and Mum said it has helped them to learn English and they are happy to find things to put on the sheet. They have created football-based games and used shopping bags to throw the beanbags into.

At the 6 week review they were still using the ball every day, but mainly in the house due to the weather. Cones have also been used to create a slalom course for their scooters. Every day the Active Families bag is being used, doing 7 x 20 minutes at high intensity.

After 12 weeks, we asked if Mum had noticed any differences in behaviours and she said that the new ideas had motivated them, especially the A-Z game. The boys are more active.

We followed up with this family 6 months after first supporting them. Mum said that the ball is still used in the garden, throwing it against the wall and another girl (neighbour) now plays with them too. They are still using the activity bag 4 x 30 minutes and are spending more time outside. They are making up more games, using different ideas and are always trying to be active.

Case study 3 – Active travel to school

Mum approached us to help her daughter who she struggles to get to school due to separation from Mum. We focused on activities which she could play before or on her way to school. They have used the activity bag for 2x 60 minutes, using the bean bags and dice to make up point scoring games. She is also learning to juggle using the bean bags. They now do a treasure hunt on the way to school, searching for different things using the A-Z sheet. This has helped to take her mind off going to school.

Mum told us that is has been “definitely easier to get her to school, she still has bad days, but overall improvement on her coming in. Doing activities on the way takes her mind off.”

It has also helped her in other ways: “she’s not one to go out and play but she is now a bit more social.”

At the end of the summer term, we gave the family a new walk to school resource to help them in the new academic year.