

MOVING ROTHERHAM

Annual Evaluation Report

2025/26



Working to ensure that the conditions exist where everyone in Rotherham is able to move more, in ways that feel enjoyable and meaningful, to improve health, happiness and quality of life.





FOREWORD

I am pleased to share an evaluation and learning report which summarises some of the key findings from the work of the Moving Rotherham Partnership during 2025-26. This has been an important year during which we have been able to increase our capacity and focus on physical activity in Rotherham through becoming a Sport England Place Expansion partner.

In this year during the development phase of our Place Expansion funding, we have focused on learning more from the people of Rotherham - how they would like to move more, the barriers they face and the opportunities they can identify for ways we can change things together. The various organisations that work together as the Moving Rotherham Partnership have delivered a range of projects covering different focus audiences and settings from early years to grandparents, and from parks to GP surgeries and schools.

Importantly we have reflected and learnt about how organisations can work better together to create the conditions for change that enable everyone to be active. We want to share our findings so that you can use them to inform your work and support us in helping create a more active borough with opportunities for everyone to move more.

The Moving Rotherham Partnership will draw on these findings to develop a new Physical Activity and Sport Strategy for Rotherham, setting out our priorities over the next 5 years. It will inform our main award bid to Sport England and the action plan to drive and monitor delivery against the outcomes we set out to achieve. We are committing to delivering a further evaluation report next year to continue to share our learning.



Emily Parry-Harries

Director of Public Health for Rotherham
& Chair of Moving Rotherham Board

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ACTION PLAN

During 2025-26 an action plan was used to track against 5 strategic aims aligned to the Sport England Place Expansion outcomes (shown below in green). A series of workstreams (shown in purple) pulled together themes of work aligned to these outcomes. These workstreams included specific projects led by System Leaders partner organisations and with funding through the Sport England development award.



A theory of change model was developed prior to the development award funding to identify the range of inputs, activities, outputs and short, medium and long-term impacts of the overall Moving Rotherham programme. The key outcomes expected for the development phase 2025-26 are highlighted in orange.

»» EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

This evaluation aims to explore and discuss the cross-cutting learning from the Moving Rotherham workstreams and summarise important findings to inform work as it progresses.

The data has come from individual evaluations from each of the delivery partners who have been involved in the delivery of the workstreams. Each partner presented at an evaluation event to summarise their findings. The slides from this event are included in a separate appendix document. **(Appendix i)** Where partners collected survey results or patient data, this is analysed and also included in the appendix for further detail. Each partner also provided an evaluation report and the responses from these have been thematically analysed to draw out key cross-cutting themes and learning.



»»» ACTIVITIES & OUTPUTS

What has happened this year?

A wide range of activities, consultations, and evaluations were delivered. Delivery across the development phase combined creative physical activity in green spaces, a behaviour-change health coaching programme, extensive school-based consultation and system level inclusion work.

Activities were embedded in trusted settings including schools, GP practices, libraries, community hubs and local parks, reflecting strong partnership working and asset-based approaches. This work achieved significant community and stakeholder engagement leading to strong insight into barriers and enablers of physical activity. Thousands of people across the borough were engaged through this work. Collaboration across networks of partners brought a variety of training and development opportunities for system leaders, healthcare professionals, community members and other key stakeholders.





Partnership working has been central to the success of Moving Rotherham. A key strength in the borough is the existing networks and partnerships, and these strong relationships have been crucial to delivery.

At the start of this year, the various groups have been formalised to create a clear **governance structure**, whilst facilitating all partners to engage in meaningful ways according to their strategic reach, delivery and capacity. At its heart, Moving Rotherham's Big Active Network is the collection of all stakeholders with an interest in furthering the vision. A committed group of partners have formed a System Leaders group to meet more regularly to jointly deliver on the action plan and this is overseen by the Moving Rotherham Board which provides strategic oversight and a governance route through to Cultural Partnership Board and the Health and Wellbeing Board.



During this phase, **networks** across the borough have developed further through **stakeholder events** such as the Inclusive Active Network, Healthy Place Making, System Leaders meetings and through individual organisations collaborating e.g. School Games, Yorkshire Sport Foundation (YSF), Voluntary Action Rotherham (VAR), leisure centres, primary care organisations and Every Move Counts (EMC). Through the EMC programme, strong **relationships** were formed with GP practices, Primary Care Networks, and voluntary sector organisations. This strengthened clinical to community pathways, and it is through this partnership developing that sustainable physical activity can become embedded into routine healthcare service delivery.



HEALTHY PLACE MAKING WORKSHOPS



Healthy Place Making workshops were held with a wide range of stakeholders from different Council departments and other sectors. These focused on housing developments and town centre regeneration and the opportunities for embedding physical activity. Best practice was shared, relationships developed and opportunities identified to work together in the future.

There are many examples of how individual partners have contributed to the wider system ambitions. Rotherham's network of leisure centres delivered by Places Leisure at Aston cum Aughton, Maltby, Rotherham and Wath, are key community assets demonstrating outstanding partnership working and hosting a wide range of programmes that support prevention, rehabilitation and long-term health condition management. They are embedded within local neighbourhoods, trusted by residents and well placed to reach people who many not otherwise engage in physical activity. For example, the Rotherham leisure centre complex partnered with Rotherham United Community Trust (RUCT) to launch a new football group with the Russell Street Mosque and stayed open late during Ramadan to offer sports sessions and an opportunity to breakfast together for the local community.



Rotherham Council's Sport and Leisure undertook a coordinated, borough-wide programme of infrastructure development and participation network expansion across Rotherham. This included the production of a new **Playing Pitch Strategy**, the development of a portfolio of up to seven 3G artificial grass pitches, the refurbishment of park tennis courts and the growth of running and cycling networks. The work was delivered over an extended period through a combination of strategic planning, capital investment and community engagement activity- operating across a range of settings including formal sports facilities, public parks, academies and local communities. The approach has been place-based and partnership-led, targeting areas of greatest need and focusing on increasing capacity and access to physical activity opportunities. The work targeted key audiences of children and young people, residents on low incomes and individuals living with long-term health conditions. Strong relationships have been built with clubs, national governing bodies of sport, community organisations and internal Council teams, creating a connected delivery system that aligns infrastructure with participation outcomes.



The Council's Sport and Leisure officer commissioned Eleven Design to develop some **branding options** for the Moving Rotherham partnership. A System Leaders workshop was also held to discuss how to develop a marketing campaign and the communication channels needed.

Various partners have led successful **campaigns** to raise awareness of physical activity opportunities, including the Leisure Centre's Kickstart the year ahead, Rotherham United Community Trust 100 years project and facilitating the BBC to film and raise awareness of Powerchair football fundraising.



It has been helpful to draw on **learning from the Children's Capital of Culture Festival Year marketing evaluation**. They saw a significant national and local coverage of positive news stories about Rotherham, with a noticeable improvement in positive responses online such as through comments on Facebook posts. It was beneficial to have a non-Council branding for a partnership delivered programme with its own unique identity. Facebook was successful in reaching parents who in turn supported children and young people's engagement.

The engagement through surveys from **schools to parents** has shown that many don't know about physical activity opportunities in their local area and would expect to receive that information from school, but schools currently aren't providing it. This provides an opportunity to improve reach and visibility.

We heard through community engagement and the inclusive network how **visible representation** i.e. 'seeing people who look like me', is really important for inclusive engagement and reach and to normalise physical activity for everyone.



FLUX

ROTHERHAM

FLUX delivered **40 creative outdoor physical activity sessions** across **3 locations** in Greasbrough, Masbrough and Rawmarsh, led by a team of **6 artists**. They successfully engaged **810 people** across early years groups, families, older adults, young disabled adults, care home residents, global majority communities, childminders, and schools. Sessions were co designed and delivery-based consultation was embedded within activities to better understand perceptions of green spaces and barriers to physical activity. A large network of relationships was built with libraries, community groups schools, RMBC teams, councillors, and supported housing providers.



Yorkshire Sport Foundation (YSF) engaged **5 priority communities**: Greasbrough, Rawmarsh, Masbrough/Bradgate, East Herringthorpe and East Dene. **104 people** were involved in consultation to identify key barriers and facilitators to engaging in physical activity. **(Appendix ii)** YSF reflected on the existing programme Active Through Football which focuses on sustained community engagement and working co-productively to identify community assets, increase activity levels and create sustained behaviour change. The programme has had **737 attendees** with over **1000 repeat attendances**. Demonstrating how investing in upskilling local people to deliver activities and focussing on fun and social activities that embrace activity without it always being the primary focus and are key to successful community engagement.





Every Move Counts (EMC) was established as a new team of **3 Health Coaches** and a **Team Leader** to deliver a structured **12-week individual behaviour change programme** to adults with long term health conditions. **375 referrals** were received and a **60.3% engagement rate** was achieved. Participants were **mostly female (63%)** and from the **most deprived quintile (41.4%)**, demonstrating good reach to patients typically less engaged in physical activity. (**Appendix iii**) Delivery took place in community venues and via the telephone to increase accessibility for housebound patients. During the programme, the referral process was adapted to increase number of referrals through self-referrals as well as widening the referral criteria.

Additional 1:1 support in the borough is offered through Rotherham leisure centres' exercise referral programme. This offers 1:1 support for people with long term health conditions for 12 weeks followed by an onward journey to Active Health sessions and access to mainstream leisure facilities. Referrals have been received from National Diabetes Prevention Programme, Active Together (cancer pathway), Healthwave (weight management service) and some GP practices. This programme has been successful in engaging patients in the most deprived areas, with **32.1% of participants** from the 20% most deprived areas.

The pulmonary rehabilitation programme has been a continued success across Rotherham leisure complex and Maltby leisure centre, expanding to also run at Aston, with referrals from Breathing Space NHS secondary care pulmonary rehab services. Other **long-term health condition specific exercise classes** also exist in the borough, such as those delivered by Functional Fitness.

Voluntary Action Rotherham who delivers the Rotherham Social Prescribing Service, commission the Places Leisure centres Active Minds programme. Referrals are received to support patients with access to leisure centres and 1:1 support from an instructor as they need. In the last quarter, 18 new Active Minds referrals and 8 new Severe Mental Illness referrals were received.

Active Minds Programme

Our 12-week project

Every Move Counts delivered **training** in GP surgeries to increase healthcare professional's confidence in having conversations about physical activity. **3 GP practices** joined the **Active Practice Charter**, reflecting growing system commitment to promoting movement. This aimed to change the culture in GP practices and health care settings and give healthcare professionals the skills and confidence to have conversations about physical activity.



The Inclusive Active Network delivered a **cross-sector stakeholder event in July 2025**, with **45 attendees**, to initiate a borough wide **Inclusive Activity Network** and to understand the current physical activity offer in the borough. Activity alliance presented data and research, and 2 organisations presented examples of delivering activities to disabled people.

Activity Alliance were partnered with to deliver their Leading Inclusion Programme in which they delivered **3 workshops** to **17 stakeholders**, to empower organisations to embed inclusive practices across their work and help people gain tools and insights to drive positive change, so that disabled people have equal opportunities to be active. An **Inclusive Activity Pledge** has been developed for partners to demonstrate their visible commitment.



CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE ENGAGEMENT



A strength in consultation this year has been engaging a diverse range of children and young people (CYP) across the borough. School games, FLUX, Children's Capital of Culture (CCoC) Ambassadors and RUCT all delivered CYP consultation, targeting different groups and through a variety of creative engagement methods.

SCHOOL GAMES

Through School Games, **12 schools completed the Creating Active Schools assessment**, PE leads were engaged and a growing number of schools developed an Active Schools Development programme. **1,756 children** in Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 completed a survey asking their views on physical activity. An additional **244 parents** of Key Stage 1 children completed the survey. **37.5% of respondents were in the most deprived quintile**, and **47.5% of respondents reported they had or were not sure if they had additional needs**, highlighting a success in reaching students who may have less access to physical activity opportunities. (**Appendix iv**)

CHILDREN'S CAPITAL OF CULTURE.

CCoC delivered interactive and creative sessions with under 18s in Council Youth Cabinet, with the CCoC Youth Programming Panel and other youth groups. They reached **8 youth groups** and had 70 responses. CYP in this consultation were spread across LGBTQ+ groups, CYP not in school, high deprivation areas, SEND groups and **63.5% of participants reporting additional needs**. The creative activities were particularly effective at engaging CYP in consultation who had little interest in sports or physical activity. (**Appendix v**)

FLUX ROTHERHAM

Of the FLUX creative outdoor physical activity sessions in green spaces, over **600 CYP** were participants, ranging from early years to older teenagers.



RUCT targeted two key groups: **CYP not accessing mainstream education** and **CYP accessing mosques**, as well as faith leaders speaking on behalf of their communities. Engaged with **10 active participants** within alternative education provision, **68 CYP** via an online consultation with mosques, and an inter-faith steering group with leaders and representatives from **14 different faith organisations**.



»» COMMUNITY VOICE & CO-DESIGN

Across the Moving Rotherham partnership, community voice and co design have been central to shaping both strategy and delivery, ensuring activity is grounded in lived experience and the local context of the borough.

FLUX Rotherham, through their delivery-based consultation, actively adapted delivery in response to what communities enjoyed and requested. Every Move Counts embedded participant feedback into programme design, refining messaging, simplifying referral processes and expanding demand for home based and accessible activity options, with outreach insights directly influencing where and how promotion took place, such as promotion through libraries.

The voices of children and young people across the borough were amplified through CCoC, School Games and RUCT consultation with a diverse range of CYP. The established relationships that these organisations have with CYP in the borough enabled trusted and open conversations.

The Inclusive Activity Network brought stakeholders together to co produce early priorities and action plans, while also highlighting the need to further expand involvement from people with lived experience of disability.

These approaches demonstrate a **strong, shared commitment across partners to listening, co design and adapting** provision in direct response to community insight.



»» WHO DID WE REACH?

Overall, the programmes achieved **broad reach** across communities, with engagement strongest where **trusted relationships**, existing infrastructure and senior level support were already in place.

FLUX Rotherham reached 810 people, including **families, early years settings, home educated children, supported housing residents and older adults**, with particularly strong engagement from **grandparents and childminders**. The majority of participants (over 600) were **children and young people**, alongside smaller but meaningful reach into adults in **supported housing, global majority groups and disabled young people**.

People with **long-term conditions and/or disabilities** were successfully reached across several programmes, although this typically required intentional targeting, rather than relying on existing engagement within physical activity networks. The Every Move Counts programme was specifically designed to engage people with **long-term health conditions**. While initially focused on a narrower clinical cohort, it expanded its referral pathways over time, enabling engagement with a broader range of participants, including many with **complex and multiple health conditions**.

The Every Move Counts programme successfully reached groups often under-represented in physical activity programmes, including **females, people aged 55-59 and residents in the most deprived communities**. However, even targeted programmes identified persistent gaps. The programme was less effective in reaching **digitally excluded, housebound individuals, people with language barriers and those not connected to health or community services**, highlighting the need for adaptations such as telephone-based support and translation.

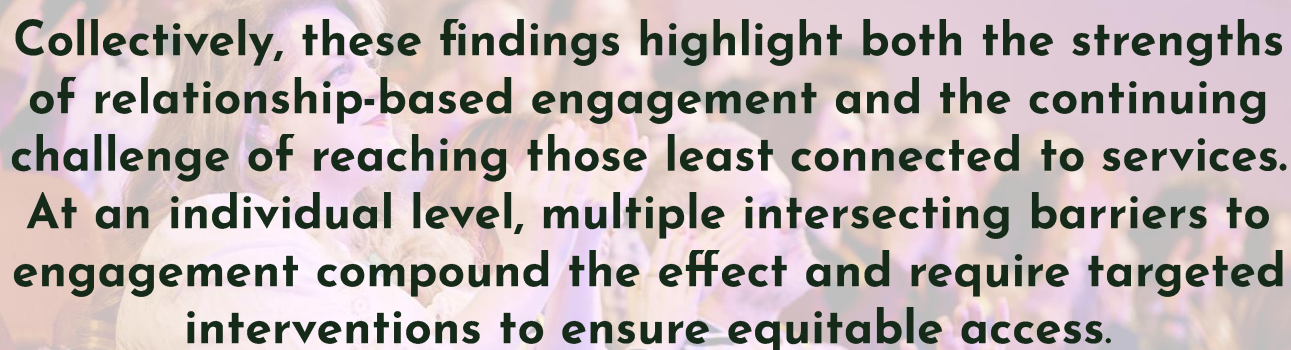
Rotherham leisure centres also demonstrated growing success in inclusive provision, particularly through their inclusive swimming programmes, which engaged over 80 **children and young people with SEND** across Aston-cum-Aughton and Maltby sites. This reflects the potential of adapting mainstream provision to better meet diverse needs.

Both School Games and CCoC consultations reported high proportions of respondents with **additional needs**, indicating good reach into this group. However, CCoC highlighted that **SEND children and young people often required additional support to engage meaningfully**, with implications for future planning around resourcing, accessibility and inclusive engagement methods.

The Inclusive Active Network plays a key system-level role by working with **stakeholders across the borough** to improve engagement among **people with disabilities**. A key learning is the need to ensure that the voices of **people with lived experience** are central to programme design and delivery, supporting more responsive and inclusive approaches.

Across the programme, there was successful engagement of CYP, particularly through existing infrastructure such as **Schools Games, FLUX, Council-led established groups and RUCT**. Partners noted that engagement was stronger with stakeholders who were already committed to physical activity, or where there was already an established working relationship. School Games had the most successful engagement in schools where there were already **senior leadership members actively involved**.

The programmes engaged a diverse range of CYP, with high levels of **CYP reporting additional needs** in School Games and CCoC surveys, strong engagement of **SEND YP and YP with disabilities**. RUCT consultation successfully reached an often-under-represented group of CYP - **those not in mainstream education and those accessing mosques**, although engagement was strongest where prior relationships with RUCT existed.



Collectively, these findings highlight both the strengths of relationship-based engagement and the continuing challenge of reaching those least connected to services. At an individual level, multiple intersecting barriers to engagement compound the effect and require targeted interventions to ensure equitable access.

»» IMPACT

What did we find out and what difference has this made?

Short-term learning & impacts

The Moving Rotherham partnership has generated significant system wide learning and local impact by combining community insight, behaviour change support and strengthened partnership working to improve physical activity across the borough. The work has increased visibility of physical activity, strengthened cross-sector coordination and relationships, enhanced engagement in trusted community settings, and generated rich consultation insight and important key learning themes.

Through FLUX, RUCT and CCoC trusted relationships were built with diverse communities, ensuring the voices of children, young people, families and older adults were listened to. This community feedback has identified a strong appetite for **creative, non-competitive, playful and outdoor physical activity**. It also identified **gaps in confidence** about how to play and be active with young children, and in **knowing what opportunities are already available**.

The Inclusive Activity Network strengthened connectivity across the borough, revealing **gaps in provision for disabled people**, fostering **new partnerships** between stakeholders and resulting in a shared commitment to inclusion. The development of the local pledge allows organisations to publicly commit to embedding inclusive approaches across their work, listening to and acting on the voices of disabled people, working collaboratively with partners across Rotherham and contributing to a more inclusive and active borough.

YSF delivered a final report (also included in the appendix document) (Appendix vi) which describes the key features they identified as important in working collaboratively with communities from the conversations they had with community organisations and stakeholders.

The Council's Playing Pitch Strategy has improved our **understanding of local facilities** and demand for sport. This will support prioritisation of improvements and developments of community infrastructure that supports sport and physical activity.

Overall, these programmes have **enhanced visibility of physical activity opportunities**, improved coordination across sectors, and begun to shift towards more aligned system laying strong foundations for sustained, inclusive approaches to increasing physical activity in Rotherham.

Many partners used delivery-based consultation so have directly impacted on individuals through increased physical activity and behaviour change work **improving individual confidence and ability to engage in physical activity**.

Across programmes, partners have targeted key groups where physical activity is lowest for consultation and delivery. FLUX and YSF consultation focussed on Greasbrough, Rawmarsh, Masbrough/Bradgate, East Herringthorpe and East Dene. YSF noted from their community consultation that **residents specifically identified gaps** such as women-only swimming, gentle or chair-based exercise, inclusive sessions for disabled people and spaces where people feel safe and free from judgement. These are the areas where exclusion from physical activity is most visible. Active for Health also showed that when activity linked clearly to health needs and was delivered appropriately, longer-term engagement improved.

Similarly, FLUX identified **walking programmes** as an important and scalable method of engaging people who are less physically active. **Creative activities** were another key tool used by FLUX and CCoC to engage with people who had less interest in physical activity and to build up confidence in social physical activity.

Every Move Counts demonstrated impact at both individual and system levels. At a system level, it strengthened clinical to community links and provided training to healthcare professionals to **increase system capability and confidence** in having conversations about physical activity. On an individual level a significant majority of participants felt that the programme helped them to engage in physical activity '*a great deal*'; helped them **achieve increased activity levels** of more than 60 minutes of physical activity per week, and noticed 'some' or 'significant' **improvement in mood** or emotional wellbeing since completing the programme. Similarly, the pulmonary exercise programme resulted in **reduction in anxiety levels**, and **increased life satisfaction of participants**. One participant reporting '*feeling alive again*' and his wife saying, '*he is like a new man*', after 10 weeks on the programme.

Consultation by FLUX with CYP with disabilities identified an important theme of **fear** being passed on from adult carers, but that YP with disabilities **enjoy the social element** of being outdoors together. This further highlights the **opportunities for training and confidence building of adult caregivers** to help young people engage with physical activity, particularly in outdoor spaces.

School Games generated valuable insight at scale, which will enable schools to tailor their physical activity and sport priorities based on pupil feedback as well as identifying key barriers and facilitators to physical activity for CYP in the borough. Overall, **56.1% of respondents fully actively travel to school**, with the percentage increasing in older children from 44.9% in Key Stage 1 to 60.5% in Key Stage 3. Respondents overall felt they did a little **more physical activity since primary school** (6.3 on a 1-10 scale). However, there was a **broad variance** of respondents ranging from much less to much more. Most common reasons cited for doing less physical activity included **time, opportunities** and energy or **motivation**. Notably, these were similar to the reasons for doing more with the top three facilitators to increased levels of physical activity in secondary school being opportunities, independent and energy or motivation. Other key barriers to physical activity highlighted were **confidence, screentime** and **boring**.

Interestingly, '**don't know where**' was highlighted as an important barrier to physical activity reported by nearly 40% of Key Stage 1 parents. Key Stage 1 parents responded that their key sources of information about physical activity are **school and online**. This demonstrates a key opportunity to improve primary schools' engagement and communications with parents, as well as a need to enhance the online visibility of the physical activity offers across the borough. For 70% of Key Stage 1 parents, the key facilitator to engaging in physical activity was making things **less expensive**, and this sentiment has been mirrored across consultations including with YSF and FLUX.

RUCT identified demand for **non-competitive beginner-friendly** session with focus on **social participation**, promoting opportunities to come with a friend or meet new friends.

FLUX identified a key barrier to engagement in green space physical activity as a lack of confidence among adult caregivers. While opportunities for outdoor activity may be available, caregivers felt uncertain about **how to use green spaces safely** or in a way that supports children physical activity. A key consideration for future delivery is targeting training or confidence building sessions to enable adults to support children to be physically active more confidently in outdoor spaces.

Across programmes, consultations identified a shared understanding of barriers and facilitators to physical activity were identified. In addition to the insight from School Games surveys, further barriers including **cost, transport, safety, confidence, litter and seasonal challenges** were consistently identified, alongside clear facilitators such as **free, accessible, sociable and non-competitive activities**.

Medium- and longer-term impacts of the programme are expected to emerge over time, extending beyond immediate impact of participation or engagement numbers. Consultation activity has consistently emphasised sustainability, with learning from delivery, and community feedback actively informing longer-term planning. This work is shaping the development of the borough's new 5-year physical activity strategy, embedding principles of inclusion, accessibility and community led design into future policy and investment bids. In addition, the programme has contributed to increased system wide capability, particularly through the training delivered to professionals and partners.

»» CHALLENGES

Several challenges were identified across the planning, delivery and evaluation phases of the work.

Engagement and **consistency** across partners varied. Not all partners attended the scheduled monthly coordination meetings, which limited their awareness of wider delivery activity and reduced opportunities for collaboration. Similarly, not all partners consistently updated their action plans, requiring additional follow-up and support through 1:1 meetings. Despite this, the use of regular action plan reviews provided a strong structure for maintaining accountability and progressing delivery.

In addition, a number of **programme-specific challenges** were identified, including initially restrictive referral processes within Every Move Counts, poor weather impacting engagement in outdoor activities for FLUX Rotherham, and the practical challenges of analysing and interpreting large-scale datasets generated through the School Games. Overall, despite these challenges, strong progress was achieved.

Capacity constraints among key stakeholders meant that consultation activity often engaged partners with **existing strong relationships**, such as schools already well connected to School Games and youth groups with established links to CCoC. Whilst having the benefit of good engagement and high numbers of reach, it potentially limits or **misses the perspectives of less engaged** organisations and communities. **Time pressures** were frequently cited as a barrier, affecting programme delivery, the depth of consultation and, in some cases, limiting opportunities for cross-sector collaboration. The variation in start dates across different workstreams made it difficult to align activity and establish a consistent pace from the outset.

Aligning timelines across infrastructure development and community delivery has required careful consideration, in addition to managing community expectations relating to time to build periods. This is particularly true of active travel projects where building a vision, can lead to expectations that are slow to reach delivery due to the processes and build time involved.

The theme with least progress was **communications**, in part due to lack of capacity and in part due to a decision to align other timeframes. It was difficult to identify and refine key target audiences without the findings from the consultation work. However, the evaluation now provides a more targeted and effective approach moving forward. At this stage there is also the scope to align to development of a borough-wide webtool to support activity finding alongside other community provision and information making a more holistic and useful website and the ability to align comms and promotion.

Digital exclusion remained a challenge, restricting engagement for some groups and presenting a need for more flexible marketing strategies.

On a systems level, a key challenge was developing a robust understanding of the National Evaluation and Learning Programme System Maturity Matrix and the associated **monitoring and evaluation requirements**. Although a dedicated post was initially allocated to lead this area, the project manager had greater system, network and physical activity knowledge and awareness so took on this responsibility to fully understand the required outcomes and theoretical frameworks, and to ensure they were embedded within both the Theory of Change and the delivery plan. This, as well as recruitment processes to put the programme manager in post, contributed to delays in the early stages of mobilising the programme.

Evaluation presented further challenges due to the need to balance **tight turnaround** times with multiple reporting requirements. This included meeting internal council processes, fulfilling reporting obligations, and aligning with the NELP Spring Evaluation. These competing demands created significant pressure. However, delays were not an option due to the fixed delivery period running until March 2028 and the need to maintain continuity for certain contracts, where funding for roles would otherwise have ceased.

»» CONTRIBUTION TO SYSTEM CHANGE

Overall, this work has contributed to establishing a more coordinated, borough-wide approach to sport and physical activity provision. It has strengthened partnerships across sectors, including sport, health, planning, highways, schools and community organisations. The schemes have created more aligned ways of working between strategic leadership and local delivery. This has increased organisational confidence and capability in delivering large-scale, integrated interventions, while embedding a shared focus on outcomes related to physical activity and health.

The Moving Rotherham Board has brought together a wide range of key organisations delivering at scale, many of whom are well positioned to influence policy, strategy, and system-level change. This has already resulted in tangible outcomes; for example, collaboration between RUCT and Places Leisure led to adjustments in leisure centre opening times to accommodate Eid, ensuring greater accessibility for individuals observing fasting.

The Healthy Placemaking Network has also supported system change through the development of smaller, focused task groups. These groups are driving collaboration across areas such as active travel, transport, regeneration, and green spaces, working collectively to create more inclusive and inspiring environments that encourage physical activity across different population groups.

In addition, strengthened links between Planning and Public Health have led to joint work on a “healthy checklist,” helping to ensure that the design and development of local spaces actively support and enable physical activity within communities.

Overall, this work has contributed to the development of new partnerships, more integrated ways of working, and increased confidence and capability across the system, helping to embed physical activity within wider strategic and operational practice.



»» LOOKING INTO THE FUTURE

Across the Moving Rotherham partnership, there is strong potential to scale and sustain future work that prioritises trust, accessibility, collaboration and system integration. On a systems level, this work has demonstrated the importance of adopting a whole-system approach that integrates infrastructure, participation and community engagement. Future delivery should continue to prioritise place-based investment, strengthen the alignment between strategic planning and operational delivery. It also highlights the need to maintain a clear focus on inclusion and reducing inequalities to ensure that investment benefits those who face the greatest barriers to being active.

Future work should centre trusted settings as anchors for delivery, recognising that participation is strongest where people feel safe and where relationships already exist, such as schools, community venues, faith spaces and healthcare settings. It should maximise use of existing networks while investing in new cross sector partnerships, strengthening collaboration across health, education, culture, sport and the voluntary sector. A strong commitment to community led co design should underpin any future programmes, ensuring that people with lived experience are meaningfully involved in shaping priorities, delivery models and evaluation.

Prioritising joined up clinical and community pathways, embedding activity into routine practice and referral routes will be vital to support sustainability and reduce reliance on short term engagement.

Flexibility must be built in throughout, with adaptable communications and delivery approaches that respond to the needs of different groups and actively address accessibility and inclusion. Creative and inclusive delivery models should be used to reduce barriers, build confidence and maximise enjoyment, while a clear focus on visibility and representation will ensure that a wide range of communities see themselves reflected in activity.

Individual partners have highlighted areas of their programmes that have the greatest potential for sustainable scaled up work. From FLUX, three scalable strands have emerged: confidence building for adult influencers to support use of outdoor spaces, creative and inclusive activity linked to the design and use of physical park spaces close to home, and creative walking programmes that can be adapted across the borough's extensive network of green spaces, offering a low cost, accessible form of physical activity with clear opportunities for cross organisational collaboration.

Every Move Counts demonstrates strong potential for scale through its 1:1 behaviour-change coaching model embedded within routine health pathways, with referral systems that could be expanded across all GP practices and further supported through targeted training for GP trainees to strengthen system wide recognition of physical activity.

The Inclusive Activity Network has already established a sustainable platform for long-term impact through inclusion training, shared learning and newly formed partnerships, providing a strong foundation for continued sector development.

School Games highlights the value of strengthening school to community connections, particularly by engaging parents and increasing completion of the Creating Active Schools framework, alongside using insight into high demand activities to better target provision.

YSF recommended future investment across trusted community connectors, reducing practical barriers such as transport, embedding activity into existing settings, all supported by improved local communication, including offline routes.

Finally, both Children's Capital of Culture and RUCT point to the importance of sustained, long-term engagement with under-represented groups, with recommendations for further targeted consultation through pupil referral units and young people not in employment or education.

»»» SUMMARY OF KEY LEARNING THEMES

1. Trusted settings and trusted relationships drive participation and engagement.
2. Requirement for varied communication methods including both online and offline options (support digital inclusion, accessibility of online/ telephone but increased impact from face to face). Need to be adaptable and flexible to different groups (marketing, comms and delivery all different).
3. Need to use existing networks as well as build new networks.
4. Embed opportunities or programmes into existing pathways and touchpoints.
5. Visibility and representation essential for all groups - older people, families, disabled people all want to see more people like themselves out doing activities
6. Need strong communication to increase visibility of local offer to the public and stakeholders.
7. Sustained work, longer-term activities (establishing commitments to weekly not one-off sessions) is critical to building confidence, engagement and lasting impact.

»» CONCLUSION

The development phase was successful in achieving the outcomes it set out to achieve:

Collaboration across sectors increased and strengthened. There is a strength of partnership working that can continue to flourish and build.

There was an **increased understanding of local facilities** and needs. There is now a Playing Pitch Strategy to describe the development requirements for meeting a range of sports needs across the borough. This could be expanded further to better understand the wider development requirements of public realm, green and blue spaces and other leisure providers, especially to facilitate better access to non-competitive everyday physical activity opportunities.

There was an **increased awareness of physical activity opportunities** through healthcare training and referral-based coaching, and through community-led activity. However, there is potential to expand awareness further through supporting schools to communicate opportunities to parents and through use of greater marketing and communication channels.

Community voice has been successfully gathered to **articulate the motivations and barriers to activity**. For parents there is a lack of confidence in how to facilitate early play and social physical activity outdoors. Creative activities were successful in engaging people who might not recognise themselves as active or motivated by physical activity. There was a desire for non-competitive, accessible and social local activity, such as walking groups.

The Every Move Counts referral programme has used health coaching to support inactive long-term conditions **patients start and maintain regular activity**. Places Leisure and other providers are also successfully supporting patients with health conditions to access and maintain regular physical activity. There is potential to improve referral pathways and connections to community activity provision, but patients who participated improved their wellbeing and activity levels successfully.

Training sessions have enable **healthcare professionals increase their knowledge and confidence** about physical activity and working with GP practices to use the Active Practice Charter has focussed staff on the potential benefits of physical activity for themselves and their patients.

Through training and network events **providers now better understand how to become more inclusive**, with the opportunity to openly and honestly discuss challenges and approaches and share ideas and best practice. Providers are keen to commit to a pledge to continue this approach and facilitate ongoing improvements.

Through school-based surveys, activity sessions, and other engagement opportunities, **children and young people's voices have articulated their motivations and barriers to activity**. For young people, time, opportunity and motivation provide both a barrier and facilitator to engagement. Screen time impacts on activity levels and motivations and therefore we must be mindful of the risk and opportunity this creates. There was a broad range of activities that appealed to children and young people, ranging from mainstream sports to less traditional physical activity, such as climbing, recreational cycling and parkour.

The Moving Rotherham Partnership will now use this evaluation to inform a new **5-year Physical Activity and Sport Strategy** with clear priorities for future work and ways of working. This will ensure the application to Sport England for main award funding for 2026-28 is aligned to this vision and approach and to the wider partnership capacity and programmes of work.