

Together in Motion: The Impact of Community-Led Sport

Sport and physical activity powering Black and Minoritised communities to rebuild after COVID-19

Impact Report

The Together Fund
Delivered by Voice4Change England
Funded by Sport England
2022-2023

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In partnership with Sport England, Voice4Change England (V4CE) distributed £261,662.49 through the Together Fund to 28 Black and Minoritised Ethnic (BME)-led organisations across England. The fund used sport and physical activity to soften the uneven impact of COVID-19 and the widening health and social inequalities it exposed in racially minoritised communities.

These grants reached people that mainstream sport rarely does — elderly Asian women who had never exercised, non-English-speaking Pakistani teenagers, disabled children locked out of ordinary clubs, refugees, carers, and women seeking culturally safe, women-only spaces. Grantees are trusted, locally-rooted organisations who removed the financial, cultural and language barriers that keep these groups inactive.

Demand told its own story. 108 organisations applied, requesting more than £1 million — almost four times the funds available. In response to the Cost of Living crisis, Sport England provided further investment that enabled V4CE to distribute an additional £55,499.96 to 25 of its 28 existing recipients (three declined) and extend their projects from 12 to 18 months; pairing the grants with a programme of capacity-building workshops grew attendance by 148% across two rounds.

The fund delivered outcomes across five areas:

Access to sport for the most excluded groups

Better physical and mental health and wellbeing

Reduced isolation and stronger social ties

Stronger, more confident grassroots organisations

A capacity-building offer that outlasts the grant

3,288 direct beneficiaries reached in the first delivery year alone.

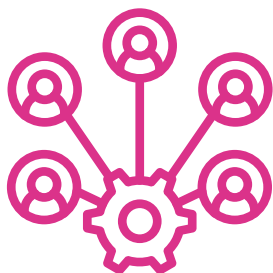


Wow, I never knew sport can be so fun!"
– Project participant, Alridha Foundation,
London

This report sets out who the fund reached, where the money went, what grantees achieved, and - drawing on the programme's own monitoring - the lessons and gaps that should shape the next round.

THE FUND AT A GLANCE

One funding round, delivered in two waves — an initial £261.7k of grants, then a further £55.5k that extended projects and deepened organisational support.



28

BME-led
organisations
funded



3.9x

Oversubscription vs
funds available



108

Applications
received



21

Capacity-building
workshops delivered



3,288

Direct Beneficiaries



9

Regions and
cities reached



£9,345

Average grant



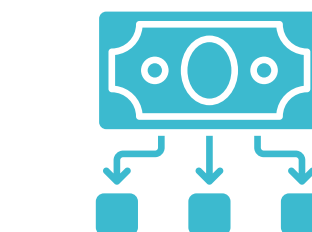
25

Projects
extended with
top-up



+148%

Workshop attendance
growth



£55.5k

Additional funding
distributed

£261,662.49

in grants distributed

HOW THE FUND WAS DELIVERED

TIMELINE



It gave me the confidence to run a project successfully and taught me how to tackle problems.

– *Bengali Sanskriti Club*



The exercise has helped me lose weight. I've started doing the exercises at home. I feel better and motivated – I get out once a week, and this is how."

– *Beneficiary, Centre for Equality & Diversity, Dudley*

WHO WE REACHED

The Together Fund kept a deliberate focus on four audiences most affected by inactivity and inequality: **people with long-term health conditions, disabled people, lower socio-economic groups, and culturally diverse communities.** Most projects worked across several of these at once.

Primary beneficiary group	Share of Projects
Children and young people	46%
Women and girls	32%
Elderly	11%
Disabled people	11%
Men	4%
Migrants, refugees and asylum seekers	4%

Communities served included Bengali, Pakistani, Afghan, Yemeni, Black Caribbean, African, Jewish, Asian elders, Bangladeshi, Muslim women and girls, refugees and asylum seekers, SEND and neurodiverse children, carers, and women fleeing abuse — 20+ distinct communities in all.

Culturally safe

Female-only classes, multilingual volunteers and sessions in participants’ own languages made activity possible where mainstream provision could not

Genuinely local

Grantees are of, and trusted by, their communities.

Barrier-removing

Free sessions, transport, equipment and childcare tackled the practical blocks that keep these groups inactive.

WHERE THE MONEY WENT

28 of 108 applications were funded — a 26% success rate in a heavily oversubscribed round. Grants spread across seven regions, with the balance revealing clear geographic gaps.

REGION	APPLICATIONS	GRANTS	SUCCESS RATE	LOCALITIES
South East	60	10	17%	London
North West	16	5	31%	Bolton, Manchester, Wigan
East Midlands	10	4	40%	Derby, Leicester, Northampton
West Midlands	9	5	56%	Birmingham, Dudley, Sandwell, Smethwick, Wolverhampton
East of England	5	3	60%	Norwich, Peterborough
North East	3	1	33%	Cleveland
Yorkshire & the Humber	4	0	0%	–

The gap to close. No grants reached Yorkshire & the Humber, the North East was thin, and the South West produced no applications at all. Low application volume — not low need — drove this, making targeted outreach and application support in these regions the single clearest fix for the next round.



The headline finding: £1,008,620 was requested against the funding available — a 3.9× oversubscription that is the strongest evidence in this report of unmet demand for culturally-rooted sport funding.

CAPACITY BUILDING & WORKSHOPS

Money alone doesn't build resilient organisations. Alongside the grants, V4CE ran **21 workshops across two rounds, drawing 237 attendees**, plus a welcome event, 1-to-1 support and a resilience survey shaping the offer around what grantees asked for. Between rounds, sessions were shortened from 2.5 to 1.5 hours, moved to the afternoon, opened more widely and backed with booking reminders — lifting attendance by 148%.

Topics (chosen from a grantee needs assessment): Understanding inequalities, safeguarding and DBS, community engagement, project management, demonstrating impact, fundraising and digital fundraising, partnership working, managing money, strategic planning, monitoring for impact, social media, grant application tips, governance, resilience planning, and influencing policy.

ROUND 2 WORKSHOP	BOOKED	ATTENDED
Grant application top tips	109	25
Strategic planning	85	20
Monitoring for impact	115	19
Networking & partnership	88	15
Resilience action pla	83	15
Digital fundraising	70	1

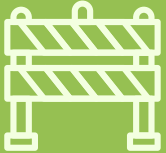
The honest picture: Bookings ran well ahead of attendance, with capacity and technical issues most often cited — a signal to record sessions and offer catch-up, not to cut the offer.



Really good workshop – would like more workshops in this format.”
– Workshop participant

WHAT WENT WELL

Four patterns recurred right across the 28 projects: barriers came down, health and wellbeing improved, the fund reached people mainstream sport misses, and the organisations themselves grew stronger.



Breaking Down Barriers

Culturally safe, women-only and language-appropriate delivery unlocked participation. Centre for Equality & Diversity negotiated with Afghan and Yemeni community leaders and ran female-only classes with multilingual volunteers; Idaraya Life built a women-only gym for those whose faith and culture rule out mainstream facilities; Islington Bangladesh Association delivered gender-separated sessions in participants' own languages; and The Flowhesion Foundation reached non-English-speaking Pakistani boys and girls.



Health & Wellbeing

Activity improved fitness and lifted mood. Global Vision Initiative's Saturday football raised participants' cardio fitness and spilled into weekly group walks and jogs; HHH and Masjid Al Quba used boxing to build confidence and ease anxiety; and Citizen Development and the Senior Citizens Asian Group got inactive elders moving and out of isolation.



Reaching the most excluded

Grants reached groups ordinary provision leaves out. Carers Forward, Let's Unite for Autism, Oasis of Love and Young & Inspired served disabled and neurodiverse children and adults; Peterborough Asylum & Refugee CA reached refugees and asylum seekers; and The Halo Project supported women and children fleeing abuse.



Stronger Organisations & Legacy

Delivering well changed what small groups believed they could do next. Global Vision's chair joined the board of Manchester's Black Identity Football Fund; Centre for Equality & Diversity secured a £6,000 Awards for All grant to continue; Derby West Indian CA left participants with road-safety and bike-maintenance skills that outlast the project; and Bengali Sanskriti Club reported a real lift in confidence and profile.



CASE STUDIES

Six projects — spanning the North West, East, West Midlands and beyond, and reaching youth, women and girls, disabled people, elders and refugees — show the range of what the fund made possible.

GLOBAL VISION INITIATIVE – MANCHESTER (YOUTH FOOTBALL)

Weekly 5-a-side lifted fitness and became a springboard: the project produced a Barclays-backed documentary on BAME communities' needs in Manchester, and the group's chair was appointed to the board of the Black Identity Football Fund. From local delivery to regional voice and a seat at the table.

BENGALI SANSKRITI CLUB – PETERBOROUGH (WOMEN & ELDERS)

Football, walking, yoga and swimming tailored to cultural and physical needs gave women and older people activity they would otherwise never access. Additional V4CE funding let the work continue.

"It boosted our image and gave me the confidence to run a project successfully."

CENTRE FOR EQUALITY & DIVERSITY – DUDLEY (MUSLIM WOMEN & GIRLS)

Ten activities from swimming to boxing, delivered female-only with multilingual volunteers after negotiating with Afghan and Yemeni community leaders. The group then secured a £6,000 Awards for All grant to keep going — a funded project that became a sustained one.

CHANGING LIFE DIRECTIONS – BOLTON (BME DISABLED WOMEN)

Demand for gym access and exercise classes outstripped resources: beneficiaries had complex needs beyond physical health and were reluctant to be signposted elsewhere, so the group added sessions and staff — then had to pause most classes once funding ended, keeping gym access open. The clearest case for follow-on funding.

CARERS FORWARD CIC – BIRMINGHAM (DISABLED CHILDREN)

Ball games, obstacle courses and team play paired with healthy eating for children whose health conditions keep them out of sport — with siblings and young carers included and a wider support network built around them.

IDRAYA LIFE CIC – WIGAN (WOMEN FROM MINORITISED COMMUNITIES)

A free, safe women-only community gym for those whose faith and cultural needs rule out mainstream facilities, plus swimming lessons — opening physical activity to women who had none. Removing the barrier, not working around it.



CHALLENGES

A credible impact report names the hard parts too. Four challenges recurred across the portfolio — and each points to a concrete change for next time.

DEMAND OUTRAN CAPACITY

Small, community-led teams were quickly stretched. Changing Life Directions found need far outstripped resources — beneficiaries had complex needs beyond physical health and resisted signposting, so the group added sessions and staff, then scaled back when funding ended. A recurring pattern for sole-worker and volunteer-run organisations.

THE SUSTAINABILITY CLIFF

Momentum is fragile once a grant ends. Several groups can only continue if they raise new funds — Blooming Blossoms is fundraising to carry on, and Changing Life Directions paused most classes. Where continuation happened it took extra effort, as when Centre for Equality & Diversity won a follow-on grant.

BOOKED DOES NOT EQUAL ATTENDED

Workshops filled up but attendance lagged, with capacity and technical issues the reasons most cited. One session drew just one attendee from 70 bookings — strong appetite, weak conversion — a signal to record sessions rather than cut the offer.

GEOGRAPHIC GAPS

No grants reached Yorkshire & the Humber, the North East was thinly represented, and the South West produced no applications at all. Low application volume — not low need — drove this: a reach and outreach problem V4CE can address directly.



THE RESILIENCE SURVEY

TO KEEP GOING:

- Recordings and guides for those who can't attend live
- 1-to-1 application support, for V4CE and external funds
- Regular sharing of tailored funding opportunities
- Training that can be passed on to volunteers and partners

TO BUILD RESILIENCE:

- Peer support — local connections and an online resource hub
- Regional and national working groups for shared learning
- Help with rising costs and accessing government support
- Fundraising strategy, governance and volunteer management

These organisations don't just need grants — they need sustained, flexible support that recognises how thinly stretched sole workers and volunteers already are

A million pounds of demand was met with roughly a quarter of it. The clearest recommendation of all is scale — more funding, reaching more regions, with the wraparound support that keeps grassroots organisations standing.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Together Fund proved the model works: put trusted, community-led organisations at the centre and sport becomes a route to health, connection and confidence. Five priorities — drawn straight from the programme's own monitoring — would make the next round go further.

TARGET THE GAPS

Run active outreach and application support in Yorkshire & the Humber, the North East and the South West. The absence of awards there is a reach problem V4CE can fix — not a sign of low need.

RECORD AND RESOURCE THE LEARNING

Bookings hugely outstrip attendance. Record every workshop, share guides, and offer 1-to-1 catch-up so the appetite already there converts into skills.

FUND THE FOLLOW-ON, NOT JUST THE START

Projects like Changing Life Directions show demand that outlives a single grant. Build in phased, longer-term or transition funding so momentum isn't lost when the money stops.

BACK PEER NETWORKS & SHARED INFRASTRUCTURE

Grantees repeatedly asked for peer support, an online resource hub and regional working groups. These reduce isolation and give the sector something to build on beyond any one grant.

DESIGN MONITORING IN FROM DAY ONE

Informal, in-the-moment feedback often evidenced impact better than formal forms. Plan light-touch, proportionate monitoring at the outset so the story is captured as it happens.

THE 28 GRANTEES

Every organisation the Together Fund supported, with its award and the project it delivered. Grants ranged from £5,050 to £10,000; 25 of these projects were later extended with additional funding.

ORGANISATION	LOCATION	AWARD	PROJECT
Alridha Foundation	London	£10,000	14 weeks of multisport – basketball, badminton, netball, yoga and volleyball – for 45 inactive, isolated young people aged 9–15 from minoritised backgrounds.
Bengali Sanskriti Club	Peterborough	£9,618	Football, walking, yoga, meditation and swimming tailored to cultural and physical needs, chiefly for Bengali women and older people.
Blooming Blossoms Trust	London	8,300	Fortnightly trampolining and weekly cultural dance for Jewish children aged 7–15, with parent-and-child events and inclusion of disabled users.
Carers Forward CIC	Birmingham	9,378.75	Ball games, obstacle courses and team play with healthy eating for children aged 5–11 with health conditions, plus siblings and young carers.
Centre for Equality & Diversity	Dudley	9,984	Ten female-friendly activities – swimming, Zumba, boxing, martial arts and more – for Muslim women and girls, open to the wider community.
Centre for Policy, Promotion and Prevention	Northampton	7,840	Walking, football, cycling and badminton to improve health and social inclusion among minoritised men aged 18 and over.
Changing Life Directions	Bolton	9,185	Exercise classes, gym access and social networks for BME disabled women and girls aged 16–24, with community champions and multilingual packs.

Table continued



ORGANISATION	LOCATION	AWARD	PROJECT
Citizen Development Community Centre	London	£9,989	Swimming and yoga for elderly Asian women new to exercise, targeting both physical and mental health.
Derby West Indian Community Association	Derby	£5,050	A weekly family bicycle club for the Black Caribbean community, teaching road-safety and bike-maintenance skills that outlast the project.
Global Vision Initiative	Manchester	10,000	5-a-side football every Saturday for 32 weeks, building confidence and healthier lifestyles among young people at risk of long-term conditions.
HHH	Leicester	10,000.00	Boxercise for women and girls aged 12–30 with no prior access to activity, building confidence and easing isolation after the pandemic.
Idaraya Life CIC	Wigan	9,755	A free, safe women-only community gym plus swimming lessons for women whose faith and culture rule out mainstream facilities.
Islington Bangladesh Association	London	7,684	30 weeks of gender-separated sessions — dance and Zumba for women, indoor football and tennis for men — delivered in service users' languages.
Let's Unite for Autism	London	9,675	30 weeks of multisport — dodgeball, basketball, football and yoga — improving the physical and mental health of SEN children aged 8–16.
Masjid Al Quba	Leicester	9,944	Boxing cardio for 65 young people aged 8–25 from minoritised communities facing bullying, anxiety or low confidence.
Oasis of Love International Centre	Wolverhampton	9,912	Cycling sessions using ten adapted cycles for people with disabilities and those needing extra safety and stability.

Table continued



ORGANISATION	LOCATION	AWARD	PROJECT
Oldham Greenhill Community SRC	Manchester	£7,684	A multi-sport holiday and weekend programme for young people aged 5–16, including those with SEND, to build confidence and fitness.
Peterborough Asylum & Refugee CA	Peterborough	£9,981	Swimming, walking, yoga, football, table tennis and fitness improving the health and wellbeing of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers.
Powered by CAN Limited	Sandwell	9,900	Cricket and basketball plus mentoring for 55 young people aged 12–18, building confidence, teamwork and resilience.
Salaam Peace	London & Leicester	9,849	Multisport sessions across two cities for physically inactive children aged 6–13, with health and wellbeing conversations built in.
Sandwell Youth in Action	Smethwick	9,314.88	32 weeks of weekly multisport for 30 girls aged 5–14, reducing isolation and building a positive relationship with activity.
Senior Citizens Asian Group	Waltham Forest, London	9,982	Fitness and chair-based sessions for 55 inactive elders, raising activity levels and reducing pandemic isolation.
Sheperdfold Ministry	London	10,000	Weekly team sports and fitness – football, basketball, tennis, Zumba and more – for women and young people in Hackney, with health education.
Society Alive	Norwich	8,107	Six months of multisport – rowing, cycling, treadmill, group walking and running – focused on women and families facing access barriers.
The Flowhesion Foundation	Bolton	9,827	Football, netball and boxing for non-English-speaking Pakistani boys and girls aged 11–16, building confidence and healthy habits.



ORGANISATION	LOCATION	AWARD	PROJECT
The Halo Project	Cleveland	£9,925	Swimming, self-defence, walking, cycling, dance and yoga for women and children who have fled abuse, easing loneliness and improving wellbeing.
The Happy & Healthy Trust	London	£9,525	Weekly swimming lessons over 25 weeks for 24 children, building water confidence and physical and emotional health.
Young & Inspired	London & Kent	9,826	Weekly swimming and kayaking for 60 young people with learning and behavioural disabilities, boosting confidence and motivation.

