



# Project Case Study Motivated Minds

2023



Produced by the Active Essex  
Insight & Evaluation Team

# About Motivated Minds

Motivated Minds is a Basildon-based Community Interest Company (CIC) that delivers preventative and therapeutic wellbeing support and works to reduce the stigma surrounding mental ill health from The HAPPY Hub, a "one stop wellness shop" and community venue in Basildon's Eastgate shopping centre.



Over 3,000 people have been supported by Motivated Minds, who run a food bank, weekly social groups, counselling and other mental health and wellbeing support for adults and young people.



The HAPPY Hub is run with the help of a large team of volunteers: 48 in 2022-23. Motivated Minds has supported 22 volunteers into employment in the past two years (2021-2023).



Motivated Minds offer a range of physical activity opportunities including accessible seated yoga, a popular walking group, cycling activities, gym support, and a Personal Challenges programme.



Motivated Minds' work has been recognised by the Royal Society for Public Health, the UK Enterprise Awards, Active Essex's Sports Awards, and the Volunteer of the Year Awards.

## Physical Activity in Basildon

The latest figures from Sport England's Active Lives Survey (2021-2022) reveal that 27.8% of Basildon residents get less than 30 minutes of physical activity per week.

Motivated Minds engage customers from Inner Basildon and across the Borough to combat this inactivity, offering a range of free and low-cost physical activity opportunities to people of all ages.

## LDP funding

**2020-2023: £165,826**

Initial funding provided £130,256 for Business Development support and £35,570 for the physical activity project Kick Start 360 (which was rebranded to 'WELL YOU' in July 2023).

**2023-2025: £110,362**

A two-year funding extension was granted in Spring 2023. This included £90,754 to continue to employ the Business Development Lead and £19,608 towards continuing to employ a Physical Motivator, who encourages customers to be more active and embeds physical activity across the services that Motivated Minds offer. This funding extension was granted to support Motivated Minds as they scale and replicate their business model into new Levelling Up target areas.

## Other partners and funders

In 2022, the LDP provided 14.8% of Motivated Minds' income. Other income came from fundraising activities, the HAPPY Hub shop, and a range of national funders and local partners including: the National Lottery (Reaching Communities grant); the NHS; ActivAte (Active Essex's Holiday Activities and Food programme); Essex County Council; Basildon Borough Council; Eastgate Shopping Centre; Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Essex (Violence & Vulnerability Community Safety [VVCS] grant); and Peabody.

## 2022-23 in numbers

246

average food bank parcels provided for the local community each month

281

attendances at Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) clubs for children and young people

400+

individuals engaged in physical activity and movement sessions

2,400+

average monthly visits to the HAPPY Hub (up from 1,800 in 2021-22)

8,300+

Facebook followers



# Customer testimonials

“ Over the time I've been with Motivated Minds the services have got bigger and wider in the community, supporting many. This service has been a lifesaver to me and I hope many more people get to hear about the services provided. ”

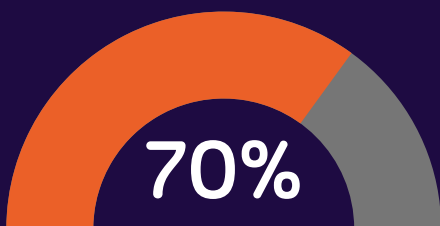


“ When I first came, I had no point to life. Motivated Minds have given me the tools to build myself up and improve my skills, and I am looking to improve further. I've gone from not working to working full time. ”

**100% of customers surveyed by Motivated Minds said they would recommend the services to other people.**



**said their mental health had improved since engaging with Motivated Minds**



**said their future outlook had changed since they received support**

# Physical Activity

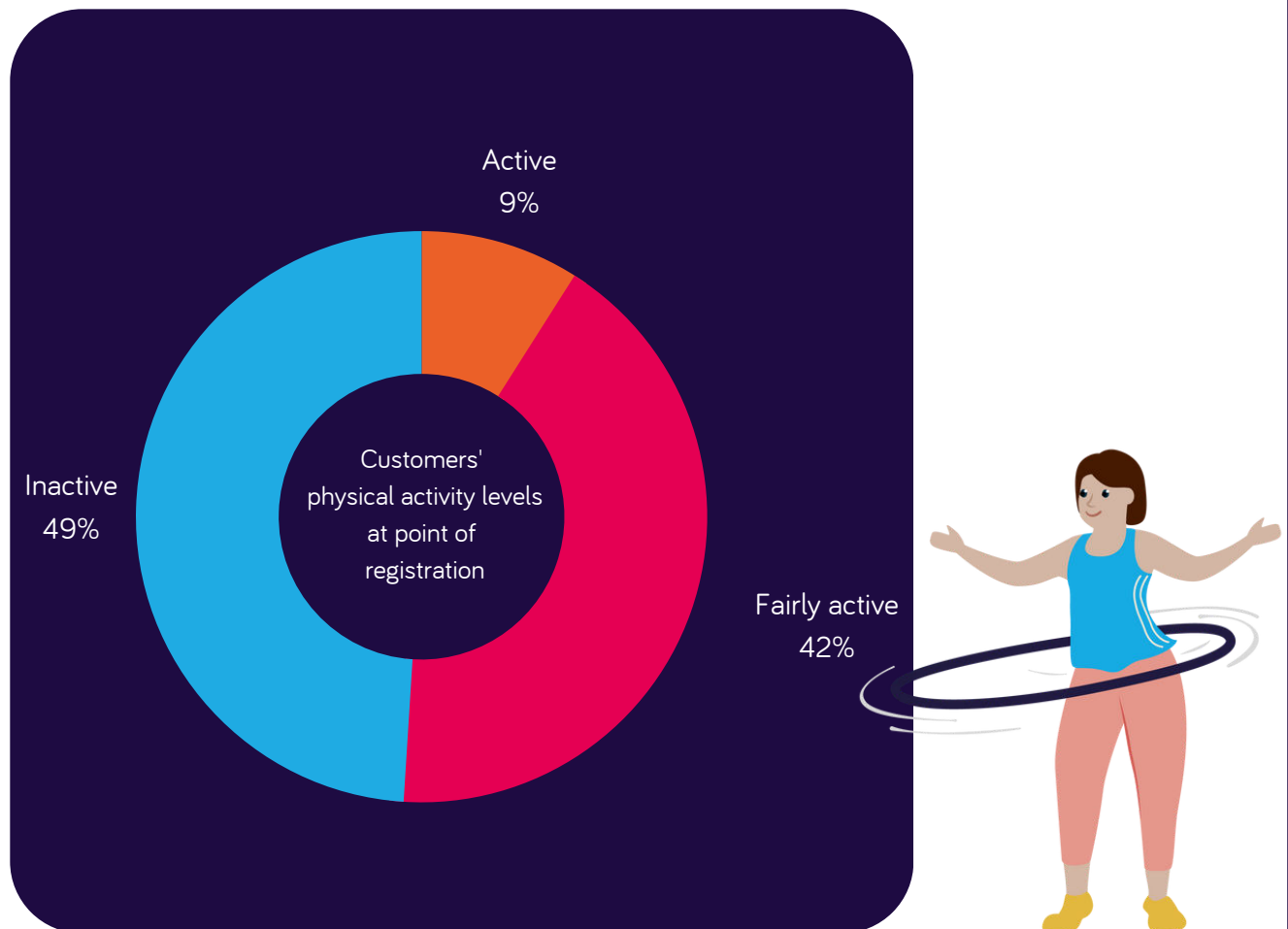
Motivated Minds' physical activity model supports gentle behaviour change, introducing inactive customers to physical activity such as seated exercise, walking, and yoga to gradually build their confidence. Motivated Minds also provide a range of activities to support customers who are already active to increase their levels of physical activity.

**77%**

of customers who engaged with Motivated Minds' physical activity programmes said that they had a positive effect on their overall physical health

"Being more active is key to building resilience and coping strategies to support an individual's wellbeing so physical activity is central to our offer."

- Motivated Minds



# Physical Activator

To support the delivery of their Physical Activity programmes, Motivated Minds employ a Physical Activator. This post is part-funded by the LDP and was recently extended for a further two years.

The Physical Activator promotes physical activity, supporting inactive customers to move more and encouraging those who are already active to build up their activity levels even further. They lead several programmes, integrate physical activity into Motivated Minds' programmes for children and young people, maintain and purchase physical activity equipment for The HAPPY Hub, support the smooth running of exercise sessions, and engage customers online in the supportive Healthier You Facebook group.

The funding extension will enable the Physical Activator to continue this work, explore new exercise programmes, and support the launch of physical activity groups for other communities as Motivated Minds expands to new locations.

“

When I first came down to Essex having escaped from decades of domestic abuse I felt worthless and really didn't even know if I wanted to carry on living. I saw The HAPPY Hub and after a few times going past I decided to call in and was helped by the good people at Motivated Minds.

I met the Physical Activator on my first of many Walks 4 Wellness around the Park and they did the one thing that no amount of money could ever compare to: they were kind to me, and for that I will never be able to repay them. All I can do is aspire to help someone in the future the way they helped me.

-Walk 4 Wellness participant

“

It is incredibly rewarding to see the development of our customers' wellness journeys. Although each customer is on their own journey and at different stages, the range of initiatives and programmes that we run support our customers to achieve their potential and ultimately improve their physical and mental wellbeing.

We feel that we're only getting started, and have seen an increase in customers wanting to join our get active programmes.

It has been an honour to help and support our customers and I look forward to the next chapter.

-Physical Activator”

# WELL YOU

Motivated Minds' flagship physical activity programme WELL YOU (originally 'Kick Start 360') was first funded by the LDP in 2020. The programme sought to target physical inactivity in the community. It had five key aims:

- 1 To engage inactive individuals struggling with poor mental health in physical activity
- 2 To make people more aware of the opportunities in their local area and to encourage them to continue their participation in physical activity and sport beyond the life of the project
- 3 To help individuals to become less socially isolated and better integrated with their local community
- 4 To improve the mental and physical health of individuals, meaning that they are less likely to need support from the NHS
- 5 To enable individuals on low incomes who are also struggling with poor mental health to access bicycles and local cycle paths

The WELL YOU activities have been so popular that they are now part of Motivated Minds' core offer. The team say that they have seen "huge change" first-hand, witnessing real improvements to their customers' mental and physical health. Many customers now make the physical activity sessions part of their weekly social routine.

**253** people have participated in physical activity as part of WELL YOU

**1,646** attendances across WELL YOU programmes



# Exercise Buddies

One of Motivated Minds' Volunteer Pathways is dedicated to their Exercise Buddy programme. On this Pathway, volunteers are trained to motivate others, supporting both physical activity and connection within Motivated Minds' community of customers.



**The Exercise Buddy programme recorded 91 attendances in 2022-23**

## MEN'd

**In 2023, MEN'd began collaborating with Essex Pedal Power Basildon**

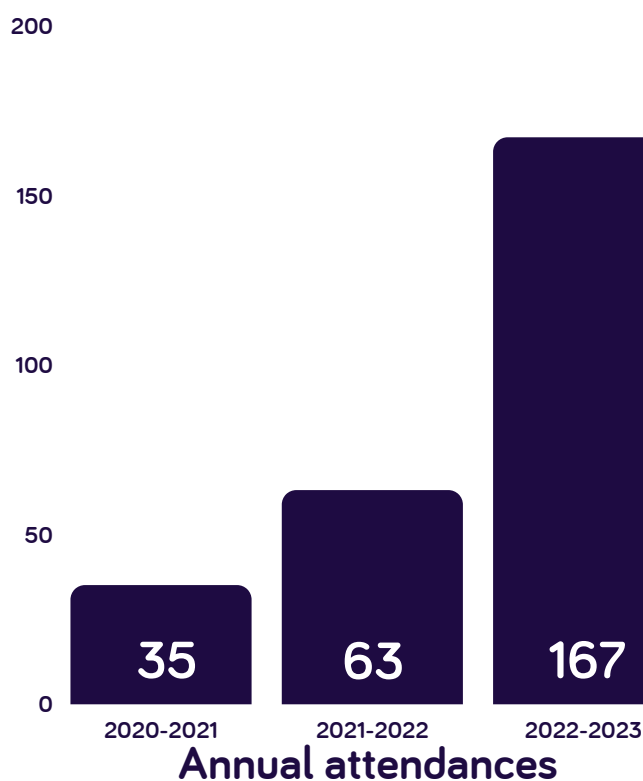
MEN'd is a group of men who meet each week to learn or improve their bicycle maintenance skills. The men repair their own bikes together or work on bikes that have been donated to The HAPPY Hub. In addition to facilitating physical activity, MEN'd provides a valuable safe space for men to explore and discuss their mental health.



### MEN'd group members say:

The group is really friendly and we look forward to catching up each week and solving the problem of fixing bikes. It is a very productive few hours and I leave with a sense of purpose and motivation.

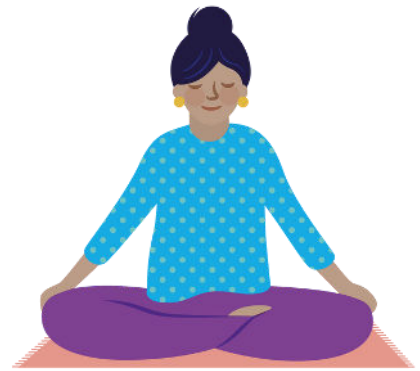
I joined the MEN'd group six months ago. I suffer from depression and learn and join in with the group. I love this group and it helps me in so many ways. Our volunteers are so kind and helpful and I am learning about bicycle repairs and being a part of a group.



# Yoga and Mindfulness

Each week, Motivated Minds staff run a seated yoga club at The HAPPY Hub, which is followed by a mindfulness session. The seated yoga classes offer a gentler, more accessible kind of physical activity.

The mindfulness sessions are complemented by digital mindfulness resources on the Motivated Minds website and across their Facebook pages. The HAPPY Hub shop, which generates income for the company, sells a range of mindfulness productions including aromatherapy oils, journals, colouring books, and fidget toys (both online and in store).



**471 attendances in 2022-23**

“I have really come out of my shell since joining this yoga session and other programmes at The HAPPY Hub. I look forward to visiting the Hub each week and I make my plans around it.”

- yoga participant

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# Walk 4 Wellness

Walk 4 Wellness predates the LDP funding - it was one of the first activities that Carla ran when she started Motivated Minds. The programme has been continued thanks to the money that Motivated Minds received. It is the most popular activity on offer.



**715 attendances in  
2022-23**

**100+ new participants  
since 2020**

Weekly walks depart from The HAPPY Hub each Monday and Thursday, whatever the weather, providing physical activity and socialising opportunities for The HAPPY Hub's customers.



**The Walk 4 Wellness programme had 21 new sign-ups between January and July 2023**

Many people who join the walks look forward to them each week and find that the programme offers them both the chance to get active and the friendly motivation to keep active. For one walker, the programme provides a form of outdoor exercise that feels safe:

“ I enjoyed the walks for the exercise and the social aspect of making new friends. Also it is much easier to feel motivated to walk as part of a group and safer - I would not feel comfortable walking in the park on my own. ”

**The social aspect of the walks is also important for many others who take part:**

“ I enjoy meeting friends and then going on our walks ... We all enjoy each others' company and it is very rewarding for our mental health that we are keeping active. I love my weekly walks! ”

“ Part of my week is attending the walking group and meeting up with my friends from this group each week, it is part of our social life. I also enjoy having lunch at the cafe in The HAPPY Hub - I look forward to it each week. ”



## Walk 4 Wellness - M's story

For one walker, the Walk 4 Wellness programme has been transformational.

"M", a man in his sixties who was living alone, first attended Walk for Wellness in 2017 in a wheelchair after his doctor told him that he needed to lose weight to qualify for a back operation.

The next week, he returned – this time using his crutches to walk from the car park to the meeting point. He enjoyed the social side of Walk 4 Wellness, chatting with the group and forming friendships with two other male attendees of similar ages.

M continued to join the led walks over the next few weeks, using his crutches to build his stamina. As the months passed, M and his two new friends would continue walking loops of the park long after the Walk 4 Wellness group had completed their walk. The three walkers even started to meet up and walk together on other days, outside of the Walk 4 Wellness programme.

Over time, M built up his levels of physical activity until he walked every day and lost three stone. He had his operation, recovered well, and continued to walk with the group, maintaining his friendships with the people he had met at Walk 4 Wellness. Motivated Minds staff met M again at a local Parkrun event in February 2023 where he thanked them for their support, adding: “If it had not been for Walk for Wellness I would be dead. I would have died alone in my flat. I was so depressed and lonely.”

In addition to demonstrating the health and mental wellbeing benefits of physical activity, M's story shows that something as simple as a short walk with others can be genuinely life-changing and even lifesaving. Walk 4 Wellness helped M to build healthier habits that he has sustained – and expanded – beyond the programme.



# Personal Challenges

In 2023, Motivated Minds relaunched their popular Personal Challenges programme. Staff meet customers where they are and work with them to increase physical activity.



Each month, the Physical Activator sets a challenge and supports Motivated Minds customers to complete a version of it that feels achievable for them while encouraging them out of their comfort zone. For example, March's challenge was a swim challenge. Those who took part could earn a certificate whether they swam a long distance or went for a quick dip in the sea.

Motivated Minds incentivise physical activity by offering certificates, trophies and monthly prizes to those who take part. Participants can also track their progress in a free Active Passport, which includes space to set an ambitious target, get an achievement stamp once they meet it, and write down some reflections each month.

**152 sign-ups  
between  
January and  
July 2023**

“

I went from 5,000 steps a day to 15,000!  
I could see a real difference. I was chuffed  
to see my progress from beginning to end.

”

- Personal Challenge participant



**2023's Personal Challenges  
include:**

- stand up paddleboarding
- a family fun day
- swimming
- a coastal walk
- a Christmas Santa Run

# Personal Challenges - Wendy's story

For May's Personal Challenge, a group climbed the Welsh mountain Yr Wyddfa (Snowdon) to raise money for Motivated Minds. They raised over £1,900 in sponsorship. Among the mountain climbers was Wendy, who has enjoyed better mental and physical health since joining Motivated Minds as a volunteer.

“

Overcoming and completing Snowdon was a massive achievement for me. I suffer from anxiety but wanted to take control, as it was beginning to affect my physical health. From someone that is generally active, I needed support to get me back into a routine.

I joined Motivated Minds as a volunteer and began helping on the walks and attended the weekly yoga group. This helped me build up my confidence enough to sign up to the personal challenges programme where I have taken part and achieved a number of personal challenges including cycling and then Snowdon.

It was not easy but I'm immensely proud of myself and it has helped me in so many ways.

”





# Future plans for physical activity

Motivated Minds hope to build on the successes of their WELL YOU programmes in 2024 with new activities, increased support, and ongoing collaboration.

## TAI CHI

Motivated Minds recently launched a Tai Chi pilot that they hope to expand on in 2024. The sessions are led by one of the volunteers who is a professional Tai Chi instructor.

The Tai Chi sessions are 30 minutes long and consist of slow, gentle movements and controlled breathing. Motivated Minds hope to continue to offer Tai Chi as an alternative to their Yoga and Meditation sessions.

## FISHING

After a successful pilot in 2023, Motivated Minds plan to launch a men's fishing group. The sessions will teach participants fishing techniques and provide access to equipment and information about fishing locations.

Like MEN'd, the men's fishing group will provide opportunities for social interaction, sharing personal experiences, and peer support.

## WELLNESS PRACTITIONER

A new Wellness Practitioner will complement the WELL YOU physical activity programmes with mental health support.

The Wellness Practitioner will be responsible for conducting mental health assessments and will work with participants to set goals related to their mental health needs. The Wellness Practitioner will also provide short-term one-to-one mental health support.

## ESSEX PEDAL POWER

Motivated Minds will continue their collaboration with Essex Pedal Power in 2024. Through this partnership, they have already given away 20 bikes to customers in need.

Pedal Power Basildon host their monthly community sessions and weekly pop-up workshop at the HAPPY Hub and have piloted a confidence-building led ride in collaboration with Motivated Minds.



# Business Development

LDP funding enabled Motivated Minds to hire Simon, a skilled and experienced Business Development Lead, who supports Managing Director Carla (and other staff) with the day-to-day running of the business. The Business Development Lead also works to improve the efficiency of the business, creates new initiatives, and contributes to key company objectives such as securing funding and new partners and increasing income generation to ensure the business' financial sustainability.

**£44,600**

income generated in 2022-23 through The HAPPY Hub shop, CommuniTEA Cafe, and other services

The Business Development Lead ensures that Motivated Minds is able to continue to deliver and improve their services for the local communities they serve. Simon also supports the organisation as it prepares to expand its reach into new communities requiring mental health and wellbeing support, freeing up Carla's time to allow her to focus on building relationships with key system leaders and to begin conversations with potential partners in new areas. Simon engages with local and national stakeholders, implements Motivated Minds' business plan and social value strategy, and embeds corporate social responsibility.

Carla says:

“Since having Simon in post, myself and the directors of the company have been able to focus on our own responsibilities. Having a fully integrated and competent Business Development Lead has taken enormous pressure off.



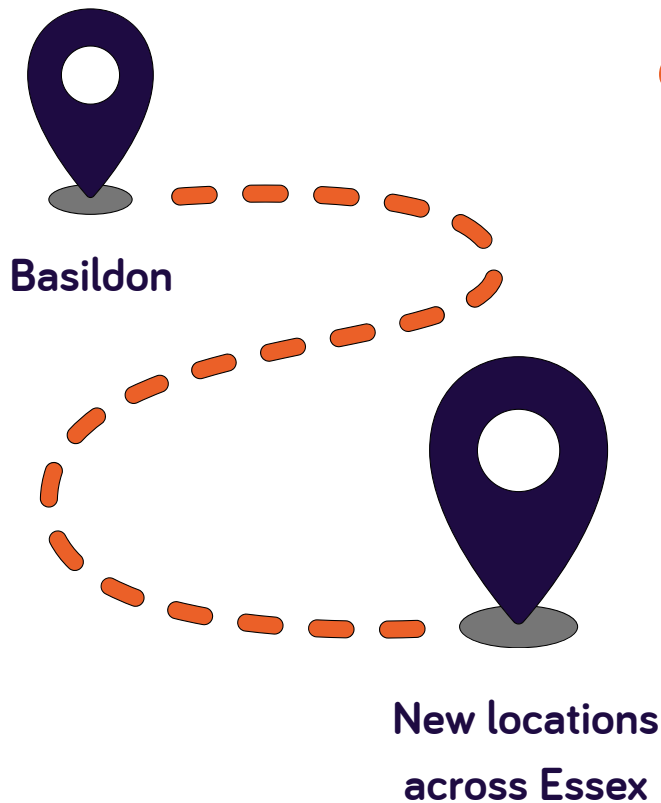
This support has never been more apparent than in early 2023, when I was forced to take a period of absence from the business due to sickness. Simon led the organisation and kept the business operating while I recovered. If this support was not in place, the organisation would not have been able to support its customers and local community or be as cohesive with stakeholders.

”



# Expansion

With the continued support of their partners and funders, the Motivated Minds team have ambitions to build on the HAPPY Hub model and expand their work beyond Basildon as part of Essex's Levelling Up work.



“My team is the strongest it's ever been. I'm really looking forward to the expansion and taking The HAPPY Hub to new areas.

”  
-Carla, Managing Director

“There's huge potential to continue to support the community and to continue to grow as an organisation. We're just getting started!

”  
-Simon, Business Development Lead

Motivated Minds also hope to develop a resource pack, a mobile HAPPY Hub model for cross-county delivery, and a HAPPY Hub mobile phone app.



# Learnings

Motivated Minds have learned a lot from their work with and for the Basildon community. These learnings might be useful for other organisations who work (or want to work) in a place-based way.

## Trust

Developing trust takes time but is key to working well with a community. It is important to be fully embedded in the community, understand its needs, and use this knowledge to inform delivery.

## Partnership working

Working with local partners is valuable for both the organisation and the community it serves. Partnership working makes it easy to pool resources, share knowledge, and cross-refer members of the community.

