

The Active Wellbeing Society - Birmingham Impact Report 2018-2022

Introduction

The Active Wellbeing Society was set up to support the wellbeing of citizens of Birmingham and promote a physically and civically active lifestyle and remove barriers to participation, especially for those that are the most vulnerable or disadvantaged. Our approach is grounded in meeting people where they are at and working with communities to tackle inequalities, build capacity and maximise opportunities towards improving wellbeing. We are committed to co-creation – working with, not doing to – and finding ways to support people in our communities to amplify their voices and take the lead.

We recognise that inequalities are highest where the need is the greatest, and that this is often the result of long-term wider systemic inequalities. Health inequalities don't exist in isolation and require a systematic and holistic response that goes beyond individual lifestyle interventions and resonates with the reality of everyday life. In Birmingham, inequalities are stark with 43% of people living in the top 10% most deprived households in the country. Deprivation is even higher amongst our younger population, with 51% of children (under 16s) living in the 10% most deprived areas.

Over the past 4 years, we have worked extensively with communities and partners to deliver meaningful engagement and interventions that disrupt and shift the balance of power so that communities have more of a say in their lives. We have moved from a narrow focus on physical activity to a wider wellbeing model that encompasses active citizenship to support and build community resilience and empowerment.

In response to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and ensuing lockdowns, we learnt how even more important it was to meet people where they are at, and that building relationships and trust are key through conversation, encouragement and shared experiences. We also learnt that this may take time to do and before people feel able to connect socially and get active, they may have other needs that need supporting to feel more able move to a next step, such as food and other living supplies, equipment, knowledge and guidance, as well as support for those who are not able to leave their homes or feel able to do so yet, to be active in their own homes with online activity sessions.

The following report sets out the key impact of our work across the city since TAWS was fully set up in 2018 and shows how we have developed from all our learning to where we are today. Within this, we specifically refer to the impact of our work in relation to our £1.2million grant from the council so far this year and why this work is so vital for the city, as well as the impact of the additional £90k funding we received during the height of Covid-19 pandemic.

Overall participation

Between April 2018 and July 2022, TAWS has delivered **22,469 free physical and social activity sessions** across the city in open green and grey spaces and community spaces. With **more than a hundred different types of activities** delivered over the years, including led rides, walks and runs, Bikeability courses, Zumba, walking football, Active Street closures, gardening, litter picking, family multi-sports, archery to name a few, we have worked with communities to ensure our offer is holistic and inclusive to all.

Through our work, we have engaged **360,158 participants** to date – i.e. total attendances in our activities. Prior to the onset of Covid-19 and the impact of ensuing lockdowns, we had been able to demonstrate our role in increasing physical activity amongst citizens, achieving a 54% growth in participation from 84,241 in 2018/19, to 130,121 in 2019/20.

As we emerged out of national lockdown and reducing of social distancing measures, we increased our in-person physical and social activities and increased our community delivery and development work to support our communities. Whilst the level of participation in activities back in the community is not yet back to pre-covid levels, similar to the national picture of physical activity, we were heartened to see just over 58,000 participations in our activities during 2021/22.

Participation by key demographic groups and tackling inequalities

We know there are communities in Birmingham who experience multiple and systemic barriers and inequalities, and we know that where you live and who you are is linked to opportunity and access, or the lack of. It is widely accepted that deprivation underpins almost all inequalities, and it is also widely understood that the deep-rooted inequalities faced by people from Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) backgrounds mean that they are far less likely to be physically active.

Sport England's most recent round of its Active Lives Adult Survey, November 20 to November 21 provides evidence of the impact of inequalities on physical activity – the results showed that those from ethnically diverse communities, those living in more deprived areas, women, disabled people and people with long-term health conditions are still less likely to be active than others.

How we work is informed by Marmot's Proportionate Universalism (resourcing and delivering universal services at a scale and intensity proportionate to the degree of need) so that whilst our provision is open to everyone, **they are designed in such a way to bring in those that need them the most**. By staying true to our core values and principles, and not applying restrictive criteria and eligibility assessments, we can demonstrate that we have continued to reach some of the key demographic groups who face enduring inequalities and support them to stay active.

For example, the following table shows the proportion of total participation by each of the key target demographic groups, by financial year.

Key target demographic group	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	City average
Deprivation - IMD Quintile 1 & 2	70.9%	73.2%	90%	87%	79%
BAME background	44.7%	49.5%	43%	59%	42%
Female	63.6%	67.1%	69.8%	65%	50.1%

By focussing our work in the most deprived areas and ensuring all of our provision is free to access, we have been able to successfully engage people from the most deprived parts of Birmingham, based on the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD 2019). The proportion of people we have engaged from IMD Quintiles 1 & 2 (40% most deprived in the country) has increased year-on-year to 90% in 2020/21, before ending at 87% in 2021/22. The latter two financial years were particularly significant given that around 79% of Birmingham's population live in IMD Quintiles 1 & 2 – in other words, **our services have engaged proportionately more of our most deprived citizens than average.**

We experienced a growth in the proportion of participation by people from BAME backgrounds from year 1 to year 2, with 49.5% in 2019/20. After a slight dip in 2020/21 (largely as a result of other local community groups being more able to support the cultural needs and preferences of specific BAME communities in the emergency food response to the Covid-19 pandemic) we ended 2021/22 with more participation by people from BAME background, 59%, than from White background for the first time ever, and more than the city's average BAME population (42% based on ONS Census 2011).

Our ability to reach girls and women has also been consistent, with around two-thirds of participation by females on average. We also saw that 10% of the females we engaged in 2021/22 were age 10-19 years, mostly through our Bikeability, bike loan and led ride sessions - whilst slightly lower than the city average (13%), this is a positive impact in the right direction as evidence shows that adolescent girls are not getting enough physical activity. Indeed, a 2021 World Health Organisation (WHO) review of physical activity participation among girls between the ages of 10 and 19 found that globally, around 85% of girls do not meet the WHO recommendations of at least 60 minutes per day of moderate to vigorous and that urgent action needs to be taken to protect the welfare of the current generation of young people while safeguarding their long-term health.¹

¹ Duffey K, Barbosa A, Whiting S, Mendes R, Aguirre IY, Tcymbal A, et al. Barriers and Facilitators of Physical Activity Participation in Adolescent Girls: A Systematic Review of Systematic Reviews. Front Public Health. 2021;9:743935. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2021.743935> or [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanchi/article/PIIS2352-4642\(19\)30323-2/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanchi/article/PIIS2352-4642(19)30323-2/fulltext)

Key activities and achievements

Our projects and activities have been wide-ranging over the years, supporting people of all ages from all backgrounds to stay active, connected and lead happier, healthier lives. Below are examples of some of our core areas of work and key impact and achievements within those.

Active Travel

Walking and cycling are great ways to incorporate physical activity into our daily routines, reduce emissions and improve the safety of our communities. We know that the cost of a bike is often the biggest barrier preventing people from cycling – so we help people to access bikes through loans and giveaways, as part of our Bike Project, including providing adapted bikes, trikes and e-cargo bikes. We also support people of all ages to learn to cycle through schemes like Bikeability and Learn to Ride.

We're now working with GPs and social prescribers to make bikes available to patients on prescription and promote cycling to more people in our communities. The success of the Big Bike Project has been recognised nationally, and we're working with local authorities across the country to share and promote our model.

Some key achievements and impact to date:

- **Over 7,500 free bikes distributed** to citizens across Birmingham from the most deprived areas.
- **44,000 participations at Bikeability courses** and **7,800 at learn to ride sessions**, teaching thousands of children and adults to cycle.
- **510 bikes maintained and individuals upskilled** through our Cycle Fix-It and Dr Bike sessions.
- **Over 10,500 participations in walk sessions**, equivalent to 26,000 miles (*based on average walking speed of 2.5 miles per hour*)

Active Parks (and ParkLives)

Our Active Parks programme supports Birmingham residents to participate in a wide range of physical activities to improve health and wellbeing whilst having fun, all across our parks and open green spaces. Supported in part by the national Coca-Cola ParkLives programme (up till 2020), we have delivered a range of activities, working with residents to reimagine and repurpose how parks and open spaces could be better used. Activities are open and inclusive, including walks, Zumba, Tai Chi, tennis, walking football, Couch to 5k, family multi-sport sessions and many more.

Some key achievements and impact to date:

- **125,200 participations** supporting people to stay active and connected to others and their local green spaces.
- **125 different open green spaces and parks** utilised for the benefit of local communities.
- Up-skilling individuals to become community leaders and volunteers, many of whom went on to form groups that now meet themselves.

Active Streets

Active Streets takes a place-based approach to deliver a simple but radical act for a few hours at a time, showing that it's possible to turn a public road into a thriving community asset where people can engage in activity, build relationships and start a process of taking collective ownership of their local environment. The project works with communities to redefine the way we perceive our streets as a public space, supporting residents to work collaboratively to reimagine the purpose and potential of their local environment. Bringing activity to the doorstep creates an opportunity for people to come out of their homes, meet their neighbours and actively participate in a variety of interventions designed and delivered by them.

In recent years, we have worked with communities and partners to evolve the project and work with community facilities, such as libraries, schools and GP surgeries (Active Practices) to close their car park and open the space up to the local community to connect with each other and get active with a range of activities they have asked for, including cycling, street games, tennis and more. This year, we have also developed our Active Streets festivals model as part of the Commonwealth Games legacy work with the council.

Some key achievements and impact to date:

- **240 street and car park closures** across the city, with at least one per street.
- **17,600 people of all ages participating** and being connected and active.

Listen and Connect

The pandemic and subsequent lockdown restrictions made our mental health crisis in the UK much worse. During Covid initially we set up a **temporary telephone Befriending service** to offer support to people who might be in need of a 'friendly chat', providing emotional support and practical solutions. **This evolved into a permanent service area we added to our core offer in late 2020, 'Listen & Connect'** - a flexible and strengths-based community response to isolation, loneliness, social exclusion, health inequalities and physical inactivity, using meaningful conversation and connecting people to local resources and opportunities. We have managed to secure funding to sustain this service into the future.

We work with partners across the sector, social care, health and housing to connect people to the right support at the right time. As participants become more confident and able to progress from the phone support, we work with them as individuals or in groups to increase their social and physical activity, including facilitating listen and lunch sessions at our community cafes, and walking or cycling and talk sessions.

Some key achievements and impact to date:

- **816 individuals** have been supported through Listen and Connect to date, with nearly 200 of them also being referred to external organisations for further support.
- **6,915 calls** made to participants, resulting in **1,860 hours of telephone support**.
- **100 individuals supported through a pathway from phone to in-person social and physical activity sessions so far** (1 in 8 of those we are in contact with so far).

Community Food and Sharing

We work with communities and partners to develop and embed alternative food models and move towards a more communal approach. We work across the food cycle, from growing to repurposing food waste and cooking sessions, supporting people to develop positive and healthy food behaviours.

Over the years, and in particular during the pandemic, we have seen increasing levels of food poverty, with people of all ages going hungry. Whilst working practically with partners to redistribute food to those who need it, such as food parcels during Covid-19 and cooked meals at our community cafes, we also convene and facilitate networks for food justice, share insights and resources, and help influence the wider system to change and move closer to our ambition - that no one goes hungry.

As part of our sharing projects, we work with communities to share resources, time and knowledge through an asset-based approach to share skills, reduce waste and build community. We deliver a range of sharing events and develop 'Share Shacks' with partners – places where people can come together to share, borrow, and build.

Some key achievements and impact to date:

- **35 tonnes of surplus food cooked** into **62,019 nutritious hot meals** and served at our community cafes and Big Feed van at sit-down or takeaway meals, helping to reduce food waste.
- **20 volunteers** currently being upskilled to provide support at our three community cafes, located in our most deprived communities.
- **1,163 items borrowed** from our two Share Shack sites and numerous pop-up Share Shacks in the community (since September 2021), including sports equipment, DIY gardening tools, games, saucepans, sewing machines, and books, and encouraging people to reduce consumption and waste.

Holiday Activities Fund (HAF)

The government's holiday activities and food programme, through the HAF, provides support to children in receipt of free school meals (FSM) through holiday periods to provide free, consistent and easily accessible nutritious food, enrichment activities, and fun physical activities. Birmingham has over 100,000 children and young people in poverty and nearly 77,000 eligible for FSM - the largest FSM population in England.

As part of a consortium of four local partners, we successfully bought funding into the city and co-ordinated, supported and delivered holiday activity provision with food across Birmingham during summer 2019. Following our learning from this pilot year, we went on to deliver sessions for HAF in 2021, as part of a wider programme of multiple providers.

Some key achievements and impact to date:

- Around **900 sessions** were delivered in 2019 and 2020 by TAWS, with combined food and physical activities to support young people and their families.
- **16,243 total participations** at TAWS sessions.
- Reach of **2,800** unique young people in 2019 and **2,600** in 2020.

Brum Together – an emergency response to Covid-19

The Covid-19 pandemic impacted on our usual physical and social activities, with repeated lockdowns and ongoing social distancing rules halting most of our services throughout the year. In response to the crisis, TAWS swiftly designed a revised service offering, with the support of the Council and our key funders, Sport England and the Active Communities programme, and Our Health Partnership, to redirect some of the resources to this emergency response. This was collectively branded as #BrumTogether and consisted of 4 main pillars of work:

- Emergency food and supplies distribution
- Virtual Wellbeing online activities
- Telephone Befriending Service
- Positive Stories

Emergency food and supplies distribution

TAWS bought together and coordinated on behalf of the city, a community-based emergency food response which quickly grew to become a network of 85+ partner organisations during the height of the pandemic to provide food and emergency supplies across the city. From food parcels to hot meals, we and our partners collected/received, packed, cooked and delivered food to families to where they needed them, often at their home. We also acted as an intermediary between the food suppliers and local organisations, managing a central food warehouse facility to store and redistribute the food in bulk.

Some of our key achievements in this pillar during the main period of food distribution:

- **84,874 food parcels** packed and delivered to **48,629 households**
- **42,107 hot meals cooked** and delivered to households or distributed at community cafes.
- **2,423 bulk food order requests processed** and provided to community organisations to distribute – the **equivalent of 116,944 parcels**.
- A total of **1,053 tonnes food sorted and redistributed** throughout the city.

The Food Justice Network as it is now known, has evolved to around **150 organisations** to build on the work of #BrumTogether to tackle food needs. Its purpose is to enable a secure and fair food supply for all, ensuring that people in Birmingham have enough to eat and are able to enjoy a healthy, balanced diet. Furthermore, it seeks to campaign for and address the serious food poverty concerns faced in the communities by influencing the system/s they are in.

Food poverty existed before Covid and continues to exist across the world, and the cost-of-living crisis has only exacerbated the vulnerabilities and inequalities faced by some of our communities. As a response to need, we continue to provide free hot meals at our community cafes as a sit-down session or as takeaway, as well as through our Big Feed van to provide food outreach to communities.

Virtual Wellbeing online activities

To tackle the impact of lockdown on the ability to exercise and meet people, TAWS designed and delivered a free daily programme of live online physical and social activity sessions, hosted on our Facebook page and Zoom. This enabled us to continue supporting our communities to stay active safely where possible and maintain engagement with our existing members, as well as reach out to new audiences.

Working with our network of qualified instructors, we ensured we had classes to meet various abilities, audiences, and interests with an emphasis on ‘having fun’ rather than doing exercise, to promote and encourage activity, e.g., poetry workshops and yoga for beginners. We continuously used feedback from both participants and staff to adapt and diversify the offer, expanding into activities such as wild walks, mental health awareness, cooking classes.

Some of our key achievements in this pillar during 2020/21:

- **1,203 online video sessions** designed and delivered live providing 968 hours of content
- **987,500 minutes viewed** via Facebook
- **1,888 participations** for our closed Zoom sessions (*open live Facebook sessions are unknown as participation did not need to be recorded/registered*)

By taking the learning from this work and recognising that online sessions are still needed based on feedback from citizens, we have refined our Virtual Wellbeing model and now provide weekly live and recorded online sessions as part of our permanent core offer, to support people to stay active and feel less isolated at home. This ensures that we remain true to our values in meeting people where they are at and providing a holistic range of services that are inclusive to all.

Telephone Befriending Service

Our Telephone Befriending Service provided much needed contact and support for people who were isolated and alone, needing practical advice and support or signposting/referring to other agencies, or just someone to talk to. Often, our befriending staff were also encountering people with existing or growing mental health needs exacerbated by the crisis and with nobody else to turn to since other agencies/services had closed their doors as soon as the pandemic hit.

Common themes of support included isolation, loneliness, depression and anxiety, more severe forms of mental health including suicide support, debt/money advice, living well and staying active, Covid advice/guidance, and accessing practical support such as food, clothing, and shopping. This highlights how our befriending service was different to other traditional befriending phone services – rather than a one-off friendly chat, we stepped into a unique space of offering multiple areas of advice and guidance, crisis support and the ability to also directly connect people to other services internally (e.g. food or clothing and virtual activities) and externally (e.g. homelessness, housing and debt advice, social care, and mental health services, and help apply for benefits and grants).

This approach not only shows how we were able to co-create effectively with other agencies and communities but also amplifies how system change, as well as behaviour change brings wider resilience and value to the community. In being able to support people the way we did, we saw how people built up trust in us to talk about their fears and needs. Reaching out and asking for help is not easy and that trust placed in us encouraged us that we were doing the right thing.

Some of our key achievements in this pillar during 2020/21:

- **6,038 residents supported** through our telephone befriending service.
- **14,845 outgoing calls made**, providing **5,640** hours of telephone support.

The temporary befriending service was refined and evolved after listening to the needs of our communities and seeing how much conversation and connection can benefit people in many ways. This is now known as the Listen and Connect service, a permanent service in our offer as described above.

Other achievements and impact during 2020/21 in response to the pandemic:

- **21,742** incoming phone queries answered by our call advisors = **1,200 hours of phone support**
- **80,000 items of essential and dignity supplies**, such as cleaning products, toiletries and sanitary products, and **2,000 children's activity packs** packed and distributed to households.
- **82 free bike loans** to key workers supporting them to travel, stay healthy and save money.
- **20 people trained & 15 e-cargo bikes provided** to other organisations to support their services.
- **6.2 tonnes of donated clothes sorted, packed and redistributed to 2,336 people** as well as bulk supplies to other agencies.
- **£354k equivalent of annual income maximisation** gained for **440 people**, through joint-working BCC NAIS by TAWS referring food recipients to NAIS for benefits advice.
- **1,308 volunteers recruited, trained and supported**, resulting in **25,580 hours of volunteering support given – the equivalent of £399k of value** (based on UK median hourly salary).

Finally, we also worked alongside key stakeholders of influence in the city and together brought changes to the system and amplified the need in the city and helped turn funding towards the emergency response. From this, TAWS was able to leverage new additional funding such as from Direct Line, DEFRA and National Lottery to further increase our food and emergency supplies capacity. Furthermore, we also leveraged additional capacity and resources: free use of Aston Villa Football club through the Foundation for Wear and Share warehousing and distribution hub; free warehouse space from The Custard Factory / Digbeth Estate team for our food work; and free use of Aston University student union building as the food stock and distribution hub for a few months, as well as volunteering time from their students. West Midlands Police also provided additional volunteering support via their police staff to provide practical support such as shopping and food delivery.

Impact of additional funding from BCC to support Covid-19 pandemic

During the height of the pandemic between 2020-2021, TAWS received additional funding totalling £90,000 from the council to support our emergency response across the city – this was received in three instalments of £50k, £30k and £10k over the period. This contributed in part to a variety of activities and support, including:

- Playing an important role in co-ordinating the food distribution response and being the BVSC lead for food resilience in the city. This includes operating a live daily emergency support call centre that also provided referral, signposting and advice, connecting citizens to wider support.
- Managing and co-ordinating a central food distribution hub for the city, with costs including management and support staff, hiring a qualified forklift driver, purchasing carriers bags and other items to pack and distribute the food.
- Sourcing food from other suppliers aside from Fareshare/MSK and ensuring a secure and fair food supply for all citizens.
- Managing and co-ordinating over 1,000 volunteers to support numerous roles including food warehouse support, packing, driving and delivering.
- Co-ordinating and creating daily driving routes for all the food/supplies drivers, involving a number of staff working 7 days a week in the evenings to prepare routes for the next day.
- Managing and processing around 2,000 bulk food order supplies for other organisations in the city.
- Co-ordinating the Food Justice Network (FJN), including operating a live database, regular meetings, providing information, and mapping the city's food banks and supplies network for public use. This also includes engagement with faith, community and voluntary organisations and connecting them to food distribution and contributing to the wider food poverty agenda in Birmingham in line with FJN model, and examining alternative ways that organisations can contribute to food poverty.
- Data monitoring, processing and reporting for all aspects of the food distribution, provide weekly information and insight to the council.

Additional support provided outside the scope of the original agreement, and therefore added value to the above:

- Providing call centre support to BCC when their contact centre closed during holiday periods – TAWS' given as main point of contact for emergency supplies on the council's answer message and website.
- Working with the council's Neighbourhood Advice and Information Service (led by Mike Davis) by identifying and referring residents to the service for benefits and finance advice - this led to approximately £354k of income maximisation for 440 Birmingham residents.

Inspiring resilient communities and active citizenship

We work with communities to disrupt and shift the balance of power, hearing all the voices – the mainstream and the marginal – and enabling local people to have more of a say over what happens in their areas and lives. Active Citizens feel more connected and more powerful – they have a greater sense of agency and self-efficacy; they feel more able to make a difference and be agents of social change. This shift in power can lead to increased activity, increased involvement, and more resilient communities.

Volunteers

We know that volunteering makes a significant contribution to society, helping to build safer, stronger communities and promote activity through civic engagement. Throughout all our work we look to find ways to support people in our communities to take the lead – such as organising street closures as part of our Active Streets work, delivering supplies, serving food and welcoming people to our community cafes, leading running, walking and cycling groups, telephone support, gardening and much more.

Volunteers are integral to TAWS and none more so than during our emergency response to the pandemic. For example, compared to pre-covid, our volunteer network grew from around 100 people to over 1,300 individuals during 2020/21. We have a dedicated volunteering team to manage and administer our volunteer network and opportunities to link them to.

Since 2018, we have:

- Worked with around **1,500 individual volunteers**, supporting and developing their skills to support their communities, with many going on to find employment either with TAWS or elsewhere.
- Gained approximately **40,342 hours of volunteering support**, at an estimated value of up to **£564k worth of time donated** (based on UK median hourly salary at per year).

Co-operative members

We have also been on a journey to create a more participative governance structure, enabling people in the communities we work with, as well as those who support our aims, to become members. Members play an important role for us, helping us to live up to our vision and mission, as well as our commitment to the seven cooperative values: self-help, self-responsibility, openness, democracy, equality, equity, and solidarity.

- To date, we have **151 co-op members**, of which **127 are community members and 24 are staff**.

Training and employment

Building the world we want to see will require lots of people working with different skills and experience. We support people to access training, volunteering and employment opportunities, particularly for those who are traditionally underrepresented or excluded. As we continue to see the increasingly devastating impact of the cost-of-living crisis, on top of the Covid-19 pandemic effects, we're even more passionate about supporting people to develop skills to be able to support themselves.

Our workforce

Over the four years, we have grown quickly and expanded our workforce to support our wide-ranging projects. From an initial small organisation with a head count of about 30 employees back in July 2018, we now employ over 140 individual staff, providing the full-time equivalent of 103 staff. This shows how we have evolved into an important employer in the Birmingham region. In particular, we are proud to provide employment and development opportunities to those who live in the most deprived communities, with **73% of staff who live in Birmingham residing in IMD quintiles 1 and 2 areas.**

Additionally, in the last 6 months we have provided permanent employment to three residents of Birmingham who began their journey with TAWS as participants of our services. As participants and then volunteers, they have worked with the organisation and recently become employed by them.

We also provide temporary, flexible employment opportunities throughout the year for sessional contract staff to support the delivery of our outdoor and online virtual activities.

Project Brum and Kickstart

Our annual youth employment programme offers young people aged 16-24 the opportunity to support community projects through paid work experience. We recruit, train and mentor young people throughout the summer months and develop their skills across a wide range of delivery areas and functions. We also support work experience opportunities, including apprenticeships, internships and Kickstart placements. We are keen to grow from within and support those who come through these schemes to gain employment with us whenever possible.

To date we have:

- Employed and developed **259 young people** through our Project Brum scheme, and **17 through Kickstart.**
- Provided permanent and stable employment to 21 young people from the above Project Brum / Kickstart schemes, offering either longer term fixed contracts or permanent roles in TAWS.

Supporting the legacy of Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games

We have been committed to working with the council and partners on ensuring that the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games (CWG) capitalised on the opportunities to use the inspiration of a major Games on home soil to help build more active communities. We have supported two main projects across the city, as well as directly informing the Sustainability Working Group of the CWG, to focus on identifying tangible legacy opportunities for communities post-Games, as described in further detail below .

BCC Community Legacy Fund

We are working with the council's Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games team as part of its Community Legacy Fund for physical activity, which provides an opportunity to promote the importance of physical activity and wellbeing and the huge legacy benefit they can provide to tackle inactivity and improve the health and wellbeing of our citizens. It is also an important opportunity to use the power of the Games to promote physical activity as a way for people and communities to connect, and to help highlight and begin to address the barriers that prevent people from becoming physically active.

As part of this work, we have been delivered 70 Active Street Festivals, bringing the Commonwealth Games to the doorstep. We facilitated road closures across the city, upskilling and enabling local residents to reimagine the use of their local streets and host Active Streets festival events, incorporating physical, civic and creative activities. We have also specifically recruited young people across the city as part of our Project Brum scheme to work on this project, providing a range of training and development to work across a range of activities and role.

We have:

- Delivered **70 Active Street Festivals closures and open space festivals**, including two outdoor FlatPack cinema experiences in local parks to over a thousand local residents.
- **Employed and upskilled 44 young people** who worked on this project.

Sport England Commonwealth Active Communities Fund

The Commonwealth Active Communities (CAC) programme focuses on supporting people to more active and to help to tackle inequalities in the most deprived wards. It is a major contributor to the ambition of the Games to improve health and wellbeing and to the evaluation research questions around how the Games has improved levels of activity amongst the most inactive communities, accelerated mental health awareness and increased levels of walking and cycling.

TAWS was part of a consortium that successfully bought in £1million of funding from this programme to Birmingham, by providing strategic consultancy and input to the bid, including demographic profiles and insight. As part of the delivery of this, which will involve a number of local organisations, TAWS will

specifically be providing programme support and interventions including walking, health engagement and green social prescribing, and cycling and bike maintenance activities.

CWG Sustainability Working Group

Our Sharing Team have been working with the Circular Economy Action Group, one of three groups feeding into the overarching Sustainability Working Group as part of the CWG, to focus on identifying tangible legacy opportunities for communities post-Games. Historically, equipment, furniture and other assets have been sold off after previous CWG to generate income back to the CWG as part of their dissolution strategy. With the support of Sport England, we provided insight and learnings to influence the system and successfully negotiate for equipment to be donated to us to share with communities.

For example, we were donated:

- **2 vans which were used by the CWG teams.** These will be converted into mobile Share Shacks and take support direct to communities across the city in locations of high need by providing household items and equipment for free loan and activities that upskill and empower citizens.
- **Over a thousand items of sports kit and equipment and other practical items both used and unused from the Games, to redistribute to communities via our Share Shacks.**

We are now working with Sport England and the Commonwealth Games on a feasibility study for a Share Shack in the west of the city to be funded as part of the CWG legacy which will be in place by the end of the financial year.

Management of Birmingham and Solihull Local Delivery pilot programme

Active Communities is a Sport England funded Local Delivery Pilot testing a range of interventions across six areas of high need in Birmingham and North Solihull to help people live active lives. It is a 'test and learn' programme, which aims to foster relationships and connections which become self-sustaining and tackle inequalities and remove barriers to better enable the least active people to become active, healthy and happy. The programme explores the positive link between civic and physical activity and works to change the systems around us, so they work better for our communities.

TAWS is the accountable body for the programme, working with partners to ensure its impactful and effective delivery against a set of outcomes for communities in the pilot areas. As part of our management role for the programme, we have responsibility for and deliver the following key activities:

- Employing and hosting a team of core programme staff including its Programme Director and Programme manager to lead the programme, and a number of staff for project management, governance, marketing, and learning.
- Programme governance to ensure that there is robust and effective programme management and delivery of contractual requirements.

- Membership of its Core Steering Group to direct and be part of key decisions-making and budget and risk management.
- Project management of interventions, supporting and developing partners.
- Ensuring the budget is maximised and additional funding leveraged, and work with communities for their benefit.
- Programme evaluation and reporting and working with the national evaluation body to ensure robust processes and learning.
- Sharing and wider dissemination of the learning and value of the programme to various stakeholders locally and nationally, and system influence and change.

Partnership building and strategic capacity

As well as providing practical interventions in places across the city and nationally, TAWS is increasingly providing capacity to partnerships and working to provide strategic capacity to other organisations locally and nationally. Through learning from the work that we do, as well as experience of working at a local, regional, and national level TAWS has a range of perspectives of the sector that prove invaluable for partners when informing the development of the sector.

Examples of this work include:

- **Representation for the city in the LGA Members Academy** for Sport and Physical Activity Portfolio holders. The academies, run by Sport England and the LGA, provide elected members with best practice guidance on a range of issues related to their work. For the last 4 years, TAWS Chief Executive has lead a session within the academy about working with communities and tackling inequalities, based on the work being undertaken in Birmingham.
- **Representation for the city in the LGA Officers Academy** for Sport and Physical Activity Senior Officers in Sport and Physical Activity nationally. The academies, run by Sport England and the LGA, provide senior officers from the sector with best practice guidance on a range of issues related to their work. For the last 4 years, TAWS Chief Executive has lead a session within the academy about working with communities and tackling inequalities, based on the work being undertaken in Birmingham.
- **Convening networks:** TAWS works closely with a range of partners across the city to bring interested parties together to work collaboratively on issues of social and civic change. These networks include the Food Justice Network; Growing Network; holistic interventions – social prescribing.
- **Strategic support and consultancy:** TAWS has provided strategic consultancy for specific pieces of work in the city and nationally. This work has included policy development; team and capacity building; peer audits; service reviews; service planning and business planning.

- **National networks:** TAWS has secured commissions to represent Birmingham at a national level, most recently with the work on the national social prescribing framework and also with the Active Travel framework.
- **Capacity building:** TAWS has worked with partners across the city to bring in additional funding and resources to further develop communities. This support includes: providing funding support to 3rd sector organisations; applying for and securing funding on behalf of other organisations (the BCC parks department for an intervention in Quinton for example); supporting organisations to develop through collaborative partnerships (Saheli, St Pauls, Spearhead Trust etc).

Wellbeing centre and hub support to maintain service provision

TAWS' IT and Systems team have provided continuous support to the council's leisure sites, particularly for LeisureFlex management and maintenance, customer services support, leisure sites training and advising, data inputting, and providing performance and insight reporting. Specifically, over the past four years, the team have been responsible for the following example activities to ensure the smooth operational running of the council's Wellbeing Centres and services.

LeisureFlex management and maintenance

- Amendments to site programmes consisting of casual tickets, casual bookings, block bookings, 12 weekly courses re-enrolment for swimming and gymnastics, and online bookings.
- Annual Price increase work.
- Management of Direct Debit customers, customer queries via telephone, phone calls, Monthly Direct debit runs, income report writing.
- Leisure card application forms data input (in the tens of thousands)
- Leisure Card orders processed through Panacea, ensuring correct numbering sequence in line with previous orders, artwork.
- Housekeeping on all data held within LeisureFlex

Be Active Plus / GP referrals

- Management of GP Referrals input on N51 system.
- GP surgery enquiries and advising on referral process and completing forms.
- Reporting on referrals and performance.

Leisure sites training, development and systems management

- Implementation/management of Chip & pin devices across all leisure sites.
- Management of site hardware, chip & pins, slip printers, swipe card readers, till drawers.
- Training of leisure staff on systems and hardware.

Customer Services

- Management of Direct Debit customers, customer queries via telephone, phone calls,
- Daily management of the BCC General enquiries line.
- Calls from LF members and sites staff about activities and closures and cancellations/ issues with memberships.

Reporting and expert advice and guidance to BCC

- Providing support to BCC on PCI Compliance, LeisureFlex infrastructure discussions with BCC IT&D, Neighbourhoods Business Application – Revised Service Levels meetings.
- Reporting writing – LeisureFlex Income & Attendance, N51 data (Be Active Plus), ad-hoc data requests.
- Advice, guidance and input to BCC wellbeing service management / ops meetings.
- Initiate planning for reopening of sites after lockdown and booking system working with Omnico and sites.
- Daily online banking and income distributed across sites and income posting support to Voyager.

Furthermore, in the last 6 months our IT and System manager has played a pivotal role, and continues to do so, in supporting the Wellbeing Service in its work to transfer to a new leisure membership and data system, providing expertise and guidance. This has to date involved:

- Weekly project meetings, training, scoping sessions, and emails with around 120 hours in total.
- Scoping out the needs of the business with various BCC personnel including Gladstone Project Team, BCC Finance and BCC ICT & D.
- Working directly with Gladstone Leisure on System Spec scoping.
- Attendance of System scoping and training days with Gladstone Leisure for various Gladstone modules, Gladstone360, Plus2, GoJoin, GoBook, Sisense reporting and Impact.
- Transfer of Leisure management programmes, financial extracts through FTP systems directly to Gladstone.

Research, Insight and Evaluation

Our highly experienced research, insight and performance teams provide valuable knowledge and insight for the city, amplifying the lived experience of some of our most deprived citizens with robust evidence and insight based on this. We use the knowledge and insight collaboratively with partners to create a shared narrative on wellbeing issues for our deprived communities. Examples of our work informing strategy and decisions are highlighted below.

Wellbeing Centres and Hubs Consultation 2018

TAWS supported the council to design, facilitate and evaluate a public consultation survey as part of its wider consultation on its wellbeing centres and hubs. As part of this, we helped scope and design a survey with the Wellbeing Service management team, promote and distribute it to citizens, input data

from around 500 paper copies of the survey and analyse and write a report on the findings. This supported a council review of the facilities and provide evidence for a subsequent Cabinet report and recommendations around the future of the leisure sites.

Insight and evidence to inform council strategy and decisions

We provide regular reports and insight, including monthly and quarterly performance reporting against our grant agreement, to support the council's understanding of the needs of our communities, evidence of its impact on the health and wellbeing of citizens and enable effective decision-making.

During the Covid-19 pandemic we provided weekly data and insight on the need for emergency food and support and impact of covid, from both our work and work of our partners so that the council could make quick effective decisions on processes and budget and also inform central government on the impact of covid. We demonstrated the value of our expertise and our robust data and insight, when perhaps local information about need and impact was not readily available from other sources.

Furthermore, we have worked with other departments of the council to provide research and insight capacity to support and inform its work, including delivering on commissions with Birmingham Public Health around its Seldom Heard agenda and facilitating focus groups on topics of Physical Activity, Digital Exclusion and Food Strategy.

We also supported the council in its ambition to shape the approach to creating a positive discussion with communities regarding pregnancy and ultimately reduce infant deaths across the City, by providing a Community Researcher Training course. We trained 7 women from BAME backgrounds to acquire the skills and abilities to undertake research with women from their communities, capture insight around their experiences of pregnancy and act as a community resource, engaging with public services and sharing views of the community and facilitating a two-way conversation.

Impact of our grant funding of £1.2million so far this year

We continue to support our communities, working with them where they are at and providing a mix of telephone support, virtual sessions, and in-person activities. Based on the key deliverables for our £1.2 million grant funding from BCC for 2022/23, so far we have achieved the following in quarter 1 & 2:

- We have had 19,573 participations across our Active Streets, Bikes, Active Parks, Walking and Running, Outreach Services and Virtual Wellbeing Being activities within this funding agreement (with a further 12,861 participations from our activities not within this agreement).
- We continue to reach our disadvantaged and vulnerable communities, with 82% of participations by residents in IMD Quintiles 1-2 (Birmingham rate is 79%) and 75% from BAME backgrounds (Birmingham rate is 42%).
- We have been working with a number of partners to develop tailored sessions to support groups including Cerebral Palsy Midlands, Sifa Fireside, GPs and Community Cafes. The Royal Orthopaedic Hospital have included our programme in their GetUBetter platform that provides

24/7 self-management support, so people trust their recovery and are only re-directed to healthcare services when necessary. This means healthcare systems can provide a digitally enabled MSK pathways across the whole pathway, which avoids silos of care and prevents over treatment. We are also receiving acute referrals from Heartlands Bariatric Team into our seated exercise groups.

- We have worked closely with colleagues in transportation to secure the Active Travel Fund to deliver 500 bikes since late 2021 and focused our giveaways from April onwards.
- We are working with colleagues from Strategic Sport in BCC to lead and support the Commonwealth Active Communities programme. We have secured funding from Sport England to deliver various interventions across 5 wards in the City and both BCC and TAWS sit on the steering group.
- The funding secured as part of the Future Parks Accelerator programme with Public Health and the Parks department ended in during the first quarter after we had undertaken a series of consultation events with the communities around the priority parks. Funding has been extended for this programme until 2023, so we are working closely with Public Health and the City of Nature Alliance group to see how the work can be supported.
- We are linking with Public Health in relation to CPD and green social prescribing for link workers, looking at how we embed connection to nature and green social prescribing into the role of Birmingham link workers.
- We have linked with weight management and smoking cessation leads to ensure that the pathways into commissioned services are part of primary care delivered programmes of work.
- From July 2022 we secured funding from the Rugby Football Union's (RFU) Commonwealth Games legacy funding to pilot a walking rugby on prescription programme with two local rugby clubs and the community. Working closely with the RFU and the local club we are creating a pathway and referral process to access walking rugby for older adults who have long terms health conditions.
- We have worked closely with the council to develop initial proposals for strategic support and have had preliminary discussions with BCC officers about the scope of work we could undertake, including but not limited to the development of a Sport and Physical Activity strategy.
- Whilst not part of this grant specifically, we continue to manage and co-ordinate a network of volunteers across the city to support our activities and empower them through training, development and opportunities. So far, we've had 3,029 hours of volunteering time, which is equivalent to a value estimated between £28,776 (national living wage) and £44,738 (ONS median hourly salary for full-time employees).
- We understand the importance of engaging our communities in multiple ways, and our digital presence is vital in reaching citizens and organisations. Our digital reach and engagement remains high, and higher than levels pre-covid – for example our reach is 550k in Q2 compared to 485k in Q4 of the year before covid.

Funding and added value

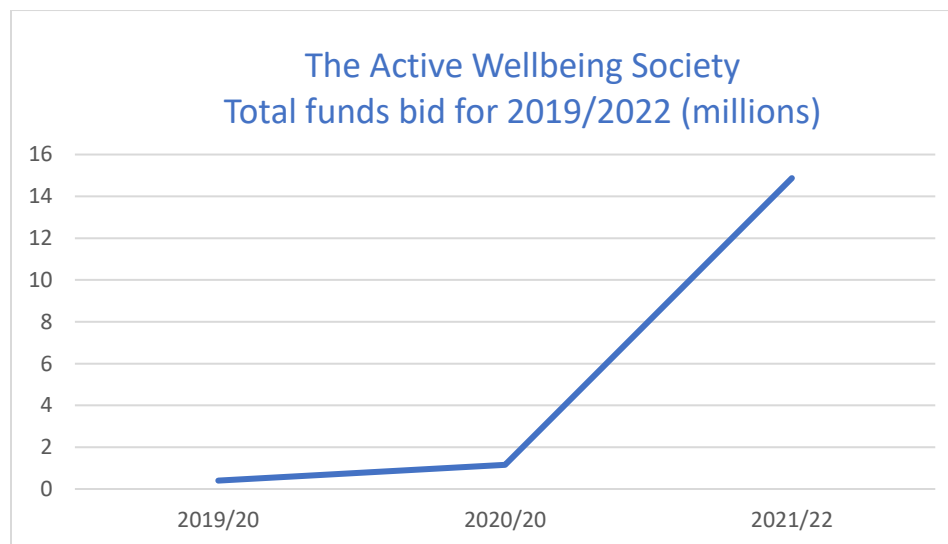
In addition to providing added value to Birmingham City Council's core service contract, our status as a not-for-profit organisation allows us to lever in funding from sources not available to Local Authorities. Over the last four years TAWS has grown dramatically in size and more than doubled its income.

We have continued secure additional funding for the city, and for example we have finally secured over £10 million from Sport England for the Active Communities programme for Birmingham and Solihull, shared out across a range of delivery partners in the sub region. While this programme was initiated while in the Council, TAWS has secured further funding for it in two further rounds, and we are hopeful that this programme will now extend beyond 2025.

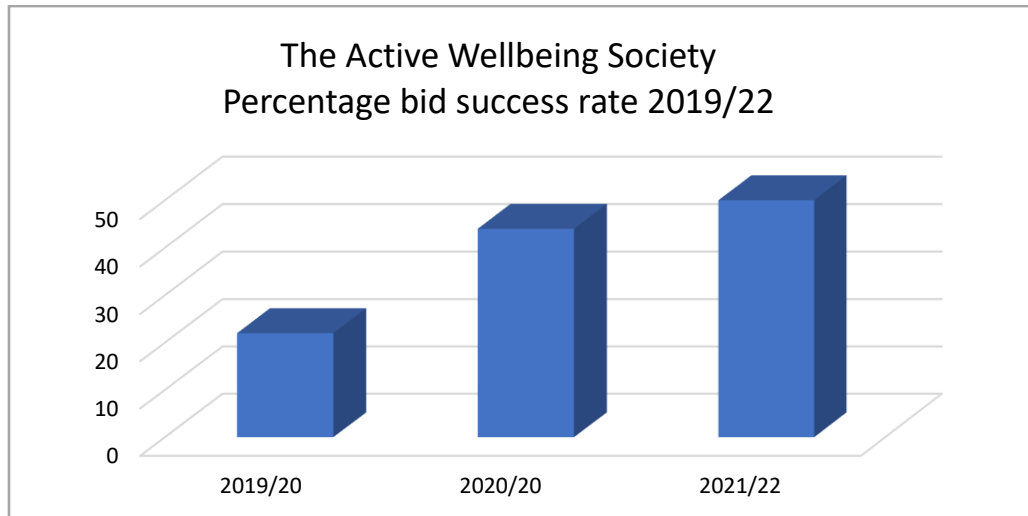
We have also secured an additional **£5 million of funding** for partners in the city in collaboration with us from a range of other sources including health, Department for Transport, Department for Education, Food for Life, DEFRA, NLCF, Direct Line, Cycling UK, and NHSE.

This trend has continued during the current financial year. From March to September 2022 we have secured an additional £587,644 with a further £101,939 still in the process of evaluation. We also have a number of large opportunities in the pipeline that we are confident will make this year another successful year for the charity.

Along with amount of funding we have secured we have built a strong and effective funding team whose success rate has increased dramatically over the last three years. This year we will extending this expertise to other local partners as we expect to lead more consortia bids that will bring additional funding to TAWs /or to the City.



TAWS is not only bidding for more funding , we are securing a greater percentage of the opportunities we bid for. Our bid success rate has more than doubled in three years and is now above the average success rate for charities of a similar size.



Finally in terms of qualitative added value TAWS brings strategic added value to Birmingham's reputation by undertaking consultancy and advisory work in other parts of the country. This has spread our strategic reach and made Birmingham a national centre of expertise for active wellbeing.

Looking Ahead: Making the Case for Future Funding

We are very aware that covid recovery and impact continues, and for many, the impact has been long-lasting and has exacerbated inequalities, and new challenges emerge with the cost-of-living crisis. Recent results from the Census 2021 shows that Birmingham continues to experience high levels of deprivation, with 59.6% of households in Birmingham were deprived in at least one of the four dimensions of deprivation, compared to 51.7% for England and Wales (households are considered to be deprived if they met one or more of four dimensions of deprivation based on employment, education, health and disability and housing conditions).

At a local level, four of the top ten middle super output areas (MSOAs) with the highest percentage of households deprived in at least one dimension are in Birmingham, with Sparkbrook North in Birmingham having the highest proportion of deprived households across all MSOAs in England and Wales (78.7%). This is followed closely by Saltley East (77.8%) and Washwood Heath (77.2%) – and all three of these areas are in the east of Birmingham.

We have been heartened to see the many ways the communities we work with have demonstrated their resilience during times of uncertainty and great change. We continue to provide the support to encourage and motivate our communities, recognising that it is important to stay with them where they are at, and still provide services such as telephone support and virtual sessions, alongside our increasing in-person physical activity and social groups offer.

Food and Fuel Poverty

TAWS is already looking to the challenges of the future. The most immediate challenge we face will be the food and fuel crisis coming this winter. We already have community food projects in place to distribute both sit down and takeaway meals to deprived communities across Birmingham. TAWS have community venues in areas such as Ladywood and Tyesley which are available for use as heat banks in the winter for the most deprived and isolated citizens. TAWS are working closely with the city and the Financial Inclusion Partnership on the development of the **Warm Welcome Hubs** and the management of the network. TAWS are also working closely with Public Health colleagues about an emerging waste food initiative across the city this winter.

Continuing to demonstrate a pathway to activity

Building on the work of the Active Communities programme to date, TAWS would like to continue its work with BCC to demonstrate a pathway from inactivity into physical and social activity that would help to mitigate the impact of Covid and the Cost of Living Crisis on those in the most need and reverse the current trend in a downturn on inactivity for those in the most need.

We have capitalised on new funding streams, having demonstrated networked, fast paced and responsive solutions to need as it emerges in our communities. We have also demonstrated continued, considerable influence and impact in the wider system that we work within.

We've built some incredible partnerships and worked together to achieve significant system change and impact. We will continue to work with partners to show how the sharing and distribution of power and leadership, with priorities determined from the bottom-up, can really work to ensure that communities are supported, and that resilience is built.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, we showed up and pitched in – negotiating this period of crisis and heightened anxiety with bravery and integrity. It would have been easy to turn away but instead we embraced our principles of staying with communities and responding to need.

Evidence base that drives what TAWS should deliver under the new agreement

When the original business case was put together for The Active Wellbeing Society, it accompanied the Cabinet Report that sought agreement for the establishment of the new organisation and the TUPE of existing services from within the Council. At that time, there had been a move from Sport Development to an understanding of the contribution that Sport and Physical Activity contribute to solving some of the structural health and social inequalities. Work had been underway to reimagine the Sport and Leisure Service as a Wellbeing Service, one that spoke to the Five Ways to Wellbeing.



Working with citizens to get them more active does much to contribute to tackling health inequalities and improving both overall life expectancy as well as life lived in health. More physically active citizens are more efficient in terms of health, social care, and employability. Initially the work around wellbeing centred on a health lens, but this soon opened out and to wider wellbeing focus and includes mental health, active citizenship, and increasingly now, system shift.

As a result of the work we have undertaken in Birmingham and increasingly in other places over the last 5 years, we now have a body of evidence that shows the efficacy of the interventions we undertake with

citizens and communities, as well as confirming the approaches that we take to the interventions, the **how** being as important as the **what**.

Our evidence, cleaned over the last 15 years now shows that:

- **Civic and physical activity are closely aligned** - there is now clear evidence to show that there is a translation between civic and physical activity that is mutually beneficial and that works both ways. Civic activity can lead on to greater levels of physical activity, and being physically active can lead onto greater levels of civic activity. There is also evidence to show that working in this way, to co-produce greater physical and civic activity has a beneficial impact on the resilience in the communities where this is happening. There is also early evidence to show that this can also lead to system shift in accountable public bodies working with them.
- **Place based working**, undertaken through the lens of distributive leadership and co creation **delivers great results on the ground** for those in the most need, both qualitatively and also quantitatively.
- **People engage with what they help to create** – where services have been delivered in cocreation and coproduction with communities, there has been greater engagement and retention than in services delivered top down.
- **By working in this way, we are consistently getting in those that are in the most need-** demographic data from those participating confirms an over representation of those in the most need, those from the most marginalised communities.

Increasingly we are seeing that the journey to physical activity has got harder (for those in the most need) since COVID started - we have been able to demonstrate a pathway from contact to physical activity intervention that doesn't start, but does end up with, physical activity and that this is more successful in its outcomes than more traditional forms of sport development approaches.

We have demonstrated that by working closely with those in the communities in the most need, by understanding their journey to activity and the barriers that they will face along the way, by working with them to remove or mitigate those barriers, starting where they are at, we have been able to significantly increase the levels of physical activity in communities that would usually have experienced very low levels. We have been able to show how physical activity is a possible problem solver for a wide range of social issues, and we have been able to demonstrate how physical activity can be delivered in ways that repairs some of the fractures in communities, enhancing community cohesion and also provoking system shift in the sectors around those communities.

What else should/ could be delivered above and beyond the current agreement and within the proposed grant amount

While not within the original brief for the outsourcing of the Wellbeing Service, TAWS is clear that we could also be commissioned to work in a number of related ways to support the work of the Council or in fact to increase the scope and depth of the current contract. Areas for further potential commissioning, or an extension to the contract, could include:

- Place based working support for those communities in need. The BCC approach around some of its placed based working links Locally Trusted Organisations (LTOs) together through the Neighbourhood Network Scheme (NNS) structure. TAWS would be able to work collaboratively with the NNS LTOs to ensure that there were consistent and systematic approaches to the work of the NNS organisations, as well as a suite of city wide interventions that we know work, in addition to the including how we engage with the NNS structure given that we work across whole city and beyond that. We are able to support system shift work, as well as link the work of the NNS LTOs to best practice around routes to Physical Activity.
- LTN and active travel – how do we help BCC to do more of this strategically, especially related to some of the community engagement and behaviour shift that is necessary. We now have significant expertise in shifting views and behaviour in communities that experience scarcity.
- Civic engagement and research – increasingly we have developed significant expertise in this area, and would welcome the opportunity to do more of this with the Council to inform policy development and approaches
- There is also scope for ongoing IT and platform support for BCC, including Direct debits, Be Active plus referrals, consultancy and so on.

Summary

As we look ahead, with more uncertainty to come, we will continue the journey with communities, responding to their needs and working together to become more active and connected. We are determined and focused on continuously building on our learning and play our role in supporting and working with our communities, to empower them to be active citizens, and amplify their voices and lived experiences.

We are continuing to support communities in most need and experiencing the highest levels of health inequalities and barriers across the city, to access free physical and social activity. At the same time, we have also stepped into new areas of work that both continue our overall aim to support our communities to co create wellbeing solutions that improve lives and tackle inequalities, and also to influence the wider system from within. We have shown that we listen to our communities and learn and adapt what we do according to need.

APPENDIX 1

Going forward we hope to grow our services to further address the challenges faced by Birmingham citizens. We offer a unique delivery pathway based on Co-design and Co-production of services with our beneficiaries/communities. We believe we can expand this service further to look at areas such as employability, learning, and youth support. We are hoping to provide opportunities for young people, particularly in East Birmingham, around employment, training, mental health support. However, this will not be at the expense of the core values we hold. TAWS start where people are at and work *with* them to identify and tackle the barriers that stop them from being physically, socially and civically active, and take a whole system approach that supports a shift of power to communities.

Ultimately the work that TAWS does for the Council could be scaled up to deliver more widely and deeply, with additional funds allocated in line with the additional delivery. We would be very happy to discuss this further at any point in the anticipated future contract.