



BOWL FOR HEALTH

2018 'AWARDS FOR ALL' FUNDED PROGRAMME
EVALUATION REPORT



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This National Lottery Community Fund money enabled MSP in partnership with Merseyside Sports Foundation to roll out and scale up the 'Bowl for Health' programme in seven bowling clubs across the boroughs of Sefton and Liverpool.

This project was able to engage with:

164 unique participants from 7 clubs, of which:

- **60% didn't meet minimum physical activity guidelines**
- **47% were at high risk or very high risk of loneliness**
- **51% had also never previously played bowls**

After taking part in the Bowl for Health programme:

- **68% of participants improved their physical activity levels**
- **50% of participants at the greatest risk of loneliness reported feeling closer to other people**
 - **84% of participants went on to join a local bowling club**

The legacy of this programme has enabled bowling clubs to be better equipped at connecting with their local communities, and has created new long-lasting friendships and a community connection for over 160 citizens in Sefton and Liverpool.



BACKGROUND

'Bowl for Health' is an eight week programme designed for newcomers or previous players to bowling, providing an overview of the basics of the sport so that they feel confident to join a club by the end of the programme. Suitable for complete beginners, all equipment is provided and no previous experience of bowling or any other sport is required to join in.

The idea for Bowl for Health was developed and successfully piloted in 2017 by Holy Trinity Bowling Club in Formby, with support from MSP. Based on the success of this, MSP in partnership with Merseyside Sports Foundation secured funding from the National Lottery Community Fund to roll out the course across more clubs in Sefton and Liverpool with the assistance of Active Sefton (Sefton Borough Council) and Liverpool City Council.

Run by qualified and welcoming coaches with the help of club volunteers, the course targets older adults who are looking to improve their physical and/or mental health. A main component of the course is to provide an opportunity for participants to socialise after each session, which is particularly helpful for those people who may be feeling isolated or lonely in their community. The sport of bowling is also very inclusive, enabling participants with long term health conditions or disabilities to be able join in.

PARTICIPATING CLUBS

Five bowling clubs in Sefton initially took part in the Bowl for Health programme, followed by an additional two clubs in Liverpool in spring 2019:

- Brooke Hotel Bowling Club (Waterloo)
- Botanic Gardens Bowling Club (Southport)
- Holy Trinity Bowling Club (Formby)
- Mossley Hill Bowling Club (Liverpool)
- Southport Flat Green Bowling Club at Kings Gardens (Southport)
- Victoria Park Bowling Club (Southport)
- West Derby Recs Bowling Club (Liverpool)

PROCESS

We worked with Active Sefton and Liverpool City Council to identify bowling clubs in the borough who would be interested in hosting Bowl for Health sessions. Based on their own experience, representatives from Holy Trinity Bowling Club delivered an informal workshop to interested clubs about the benefits of getting involved in the programme and how to deliver the eight week course.

After confirming dates and locations of interested clubs to host courses, MSP in partnership with Merseyside Sports Foundation then worked with local organisations and charities to target individuals who may have low levels of physical and mental health to attend Bowl for Health – these organisations included Sefton CVS, Healthwatch Sefton, Sefton Alzheimer's Society and Sefton Pensioners' Advocacy Centre. We also used more traditional media channels to promote the opportunity to residents more directly, for example using local newspapers such as the Formby Bubble, Southport Reporter, Southport Visitor and Liverpool LINK. These media outlets proved crucial in a large number of people self-referring in to courses held across the region.

We also provided clubs with the necessary training, equipment and governance support to be able to host Bowl for Health courses. For example, we ensured that clubs had coaches and volunteers who had the most up to date safeguarding training, first aid training and first aid supplies available. We also used some of the funding towards purchasing suitable bowls equipment for participants to use – this included lighter bowls, to enable people with health conditions (e.g. arthritis) to be able to take part, as opposed to them struggling with using heavier standard bowls.

Once booked on to a course, participants received a friendly call from their respective club to let them know about where to go and what to expect when they attend, plus the opportunity to be met outside of the club if they were nervous about attending on their own for the first time. Participants were also provided with a handbook that contained useful information about what to expect when attending the club (for example information about what to wear), and an introductory video to bowling was produced that provided participants with a recap of the main learning points that they could watch as a reminder to reinforce their learning in between the Bowl for Health sessions.

All participants were encouraged to complete a pre-course evaluation form (before attending their first session) and post-course evaluation form (after their final session) in order to provide a baseline and outcomes comparison to be able to monitor and report on the progress that they made as a result of taking part in the Bowl for Health programme.

PARTICIPANT DATA

In total, 164 unique participants took part in the Bowl for Health programme in 7 clubs across Sefton and Liverpool.

Club	Course start date	Participants
Brooke Hotel Bowling Club	x2 in May 2018	15
Botanic Gardens Bowling Club	July 2018 September 2018*	15 17
Holy Trinity Bowling Club	x2 in May 2018	8
Mossley Hill Bowling Club	March 2019	12
Southport Flat Green Bowling Club	May 2018 August 2018	17 21
Victoria Park Bowling Club	May 2018	25
West Derby Recs Bowling Club	March 2019	34
* Separate course specifically for people with dementia and their carers to attend		

PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS



164

unique participants



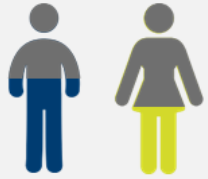
26%

participants disclosed having an illness



21%

participants disclosed having a disability



58%

male

42%

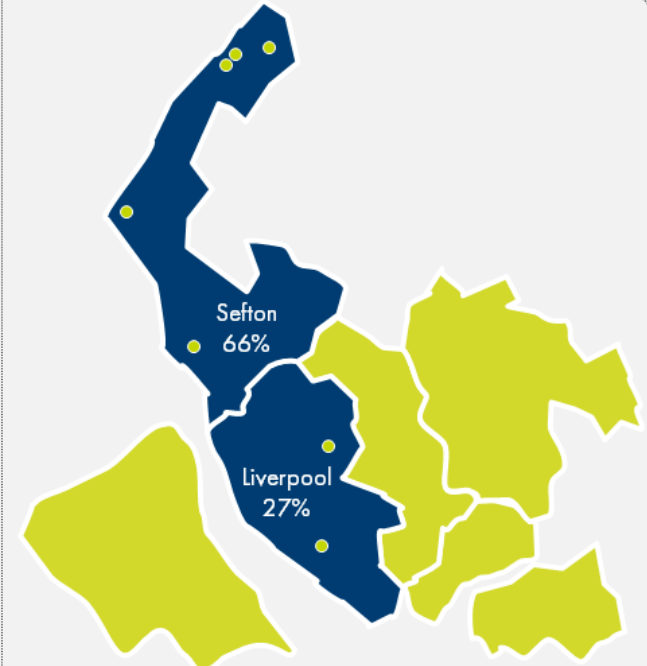
female



average age of participants



48 - youngest participant
88 - oldest participant



7% from other areas of the Liverpool City Region

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY LEVELS

Participant physical activity levels prior to attending Bowl for Health



60%

participants did not meet CMO guidelines*

* Chief Medical Officer guidelines = less than 150 minutes moderate physical activity per week

MOTIVATIONS

Why participants wanted to join in



28%

participants live in Sefton and Liverpool within the top 20% most deprived areas in the UK



47%

participants live within 'high risk' or 'very high risk' areas for loneliness



51%

participants had never played bowls before

36% participants who had played before hadn't played for over five years or more



PARTICIPANT OUTCOMES AS A RESULT OF ATTENDING BOWL FOR HEALTH



68%

participants increased their physical activity levels

44% reported being in a better physical health condition as a result of taking part



“ The exercise has encouraged my weight-loss and helped my bad back ”



40%

participants increased their mental wellbeing levels

39%

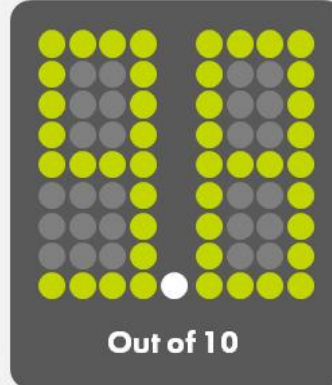
participants reported an increase in their self-efficacy levels



“ I’ve benefitted from getting active through a gentle activity. I’ve found that bowling can be a very relaxing, calming activity when played for fun rather than competitively ”



7 clubs
164 participants
53 volunteers



average participant satisfaction levels



£58.15

cost per head for an eight week course, funded by the National Lottery Community Fund



84%

Bowl for Health participants have gone on to join a bowls club in their community

40%

participants have reported feeling less lonely

50% of the people living in areas of high risk/very high risk of loneliness reported a decrease in feelings of loneliness



“ It’s made me more enthusiastic to take part in a social sport; I’ve made new friends and I felt great after every session – really satisfying! ”



CASE STUDY: JAMES

“I go to my local gym once a week, but I joined in with Bowl for Health for the possibility of a better social life. Being on my own is very difficult – it’s hard to come to terms with the fact that you can’t turn around to speak to anyone.

I got a note through my door about the Bowl for Health course and I was really interested in joining. My father was a great bowler in Liverpool and I used to go and watch him play, but I’ve never played before myself.

The club here is very welcoming, and the coach and volunteers as part of Bowl for Health were very encouraging and very professional. I’ve got a problem with my hip, but that’s not taken in to account here and you’re not looked upon as though you’re something different just because I use a walking stick.

I’ve only been a member of the club for a short time, but I’ve found the activity of bowling very invigorating – both from a physical and mental side, making lots of new friends and connections – so with this you get the best of both worlds!”

WIDER CLUB BENEFITS

Greater community connections

One of the biggest problems that bowling clubs reported prior to hosting Bowl for Health sessions was the ability to attract new people to the club. Part of this programme legacy was to connect clubs with local health and media partners (e.g. GP Practices, charities and local newspapers) who could help the clubs to raise awareness of their services and attract new members moving forward.

An example of this is when we linked up Botanic Gardens Bowling Club to Sefton Alzheimer's Society, who established demand for a large number of people with dementia who would like to take part in Bowl for Health. The charity visited the club to provide free Dementia Friends training to the club coach and volunteers, to provide them with top tips and advice for when helping people with dementia to learn and practise bowls. On the back of this, the club delivered a Bowl for Health session specifically for people with dementia and their carers. This then created a link with local dementia services, such as care homes and day care services, who brought along people they support to join in with sessions:

“I just wanted to say a huge thank you to you for providing us with the bowling opportunity; our guests thoroughly enjoyed all of it and we'll look forward to attending future sessions.”

Jane, Albany Oasis (Dementia day care service provider)

Empowered volunteers

In addition to new players to bowling that have benefitted from getting involved in Bowl for Health, 53 existing bowling club members have also been empowered to volunteer as part of the programme. This has provided a platform for them to be able to offer their own learning and experience to new players, and for some of the volunteers they are relatively new to bowling themselves so were able to relate to the journey that new players go on when starting to take part in the sport:

“I've only been playing bowls myself for two years, joining initially wanting to get a break from doing up our house! I got hooked on playing and the social side of the club, and now it's great to give back – helping people to develop their skills and integrate within the club like I did myself.”

Pauline Brown, volunteer at Southport Flat Green Bowling Club

NEXT STEPS

Based on the success of this funded programme, MSP in partnership with Merseyside Sports Foundation are looking to secure funding from other sources in order to roll out the Bowl for Health initiative further across the Liverpool City Region – enabling more community members and more bowling clubs to benefit from the programme.

A short video case study of this funding programme can also be viewed online by visiting https://youtu.be/mwa8TsVm_LE.



CASE STUDY: VICTORIA PARK BC

Based within a park in the town of Southport, Victoria Park Bowling Club took part in the Bowl for Health programme with a view to attracting more members to the club. With great clubhouse facilities and two large bowling greens, the club had scope to cater for more members but had always previously struggled for interest and new members when advertising in the local area.

Ted Morrell, club Chairman, said, “We were delighted that 25 people came to our club to try the Bowl for Health sessions, supported by a healthy number of club members who volunteered their time to support the new players with our club coach. 21 of these new players ended up joining the club at the end of the eight weeks, which was a huge boost to our club’s finances but importantly brought new life in to our club.”

“This year we’ve entered more teams in to the local competitive league, and 38% of the new Bowl for Health club members are now participating in these matches. They have also joined in our winter indoor sessions whilst our greens are out of use, and even when they’re not bowling they come down to the club and take part in board game groups and quizzes; it just shows how bowling is a great social game suitable for most folk.”

“We will continue to run Bowl for Health courses next year, and really appreciate the excellent work and promotion by MSP and Active Sefton to make this happen.”

SPECIAL THANKS

MSP in partnership with Merseyside Sports Foundation would like to thank the following individuals and organisations for assisting with the Bowl for Health project:

- Eric Gowling (Holy Trinity Bowling Club, Formby) who established the Bowl for Health concept and assisted other clubs as part of this project to implement the initiative
- Dave Croot (Holy Trinity Bowling Club, Formby) as the club coach, who assisted Eric in developing the Bowl for Health course
- Helen Birrell (Active Sefton) and John Farrell (Liverpool City Council) who helped to recruit bowling clubs to join the programme
- Linda Lawson (Sefton Alzheimer's Society) for helping to establish demand for the Bowl for Health course for people with dementia and their carers, plus also providing Dementia Friends training to Botanic Gardens Bowling Club volunteers
- The following bowling club leads, coaches and volunteers, who ran sessions and supported participants:

**Brooke Hotel
Bowling Club**

Joe Casey, Peter Hiron, Andy Howie
and Percy Smith

**Botanic Gardens
Bowling Club**

Margaret Aindow, Rodney Eckersley, Janet Hart,
Bill McGreavy, Don Warburton and Roy Wignall

**Holy Trinity
Bowling Club**

Isabel Balshaw, Dave Croot, Eric Gowling,
Adrian Hodge, Graham Redfern, Lesley Roberts,
Kath Ryan and Les Walker

**Mossley Hill
Bowling Club**

Arthur Carson, Olwyn Dindsdale, Martin Keatley
and Bridget West

**Southport Flat Green
Bowling Club**

Pauline Brown, Roy Brown, Nick Darlow,
Norman Dawson, Fred Douglas, Stephen Goulding,
Sandra Hardgrave, Derek Maxwell, Janet Maxwell,
Lillian McManus, Ted Pownell and David Williams

**Victoria Park
Bowling Club**

Diane Banahan, Peter Banahan, Paul Crummey,
Fred Douglas, John Morgan, Doreen Morrell,
Ted Morrell, Allen Mountford, Sue Mountford,
Andy Muchall, Judy Muchall, John Townsend and
Noreen Townsend

**West Derby Recs
Bowling Club**

Pat Hughes, John Morgan, Henry Quinn,
Pat Sharples, Tina Voce and Les Wright

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