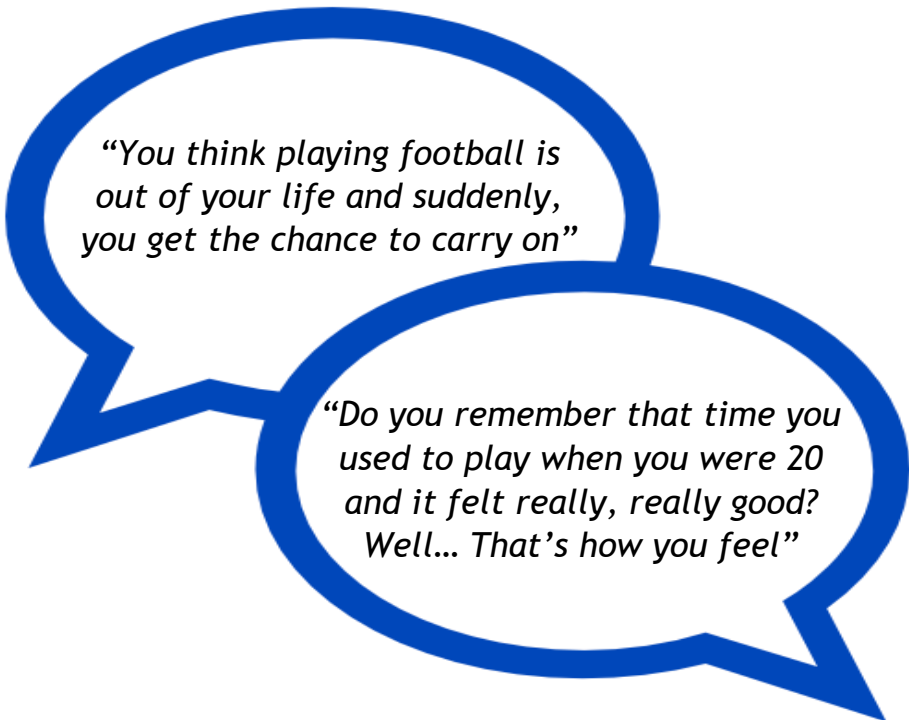


Walking Football Evaluation

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“You think playing football is out of your life and suddenly, you get the chance to carry on”

“Do you remember that time you used to play when you were 20 and it felt really, really good? Well... That’s how you feel”

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1 Introduction

This report aims to understand the impact that walking football has on participants' health and wellbeing. By identifying what motivates players and finding out what aspects they consider most important and enjoyable, recommendations can be put forward.

Gaining this in-depth view from players about the nature and structure of the game leads us to discover how and why their health improves, and could direct us to how their wellbeing could improve further, as a result of walking football. This means that a greater understanding could lead to greater programme and participant outcomes for all involved.

This is set in the context of Sport England's new strategy, 'Towards An Active Nation' (2016), which outlines that future investment will be directed towards programmes that make the biggest impact on five participation outcomes; physical wellbeing, mental wellbeing, social wellbeing, individual development and economic development. This evaluation aims to identify if walking football is achieving these defined outcomes.

The evidence gathered in this report will highlight the benefits of the programme to promote its continuity, as well as how to improve sessions to build on participant outcomes.

2 Methodology

The project focused on gaining insight from walking football occurring in Greater London. London Sport worked with London FA, Essex FA, Surrey FA and Middlesex FA in order to gather this data.

Previous to gathering this London specific data, secondary research was considered. This was mainly from the National Walking Football Research (2CV, 2015). We wanted to understand the typical walking football participant as well as participants' opinion of the sport. In this way, we would be able to test the national conclusions in our own primary data collection. The conclusions of this national report formed the basis of our primary research, explained below.

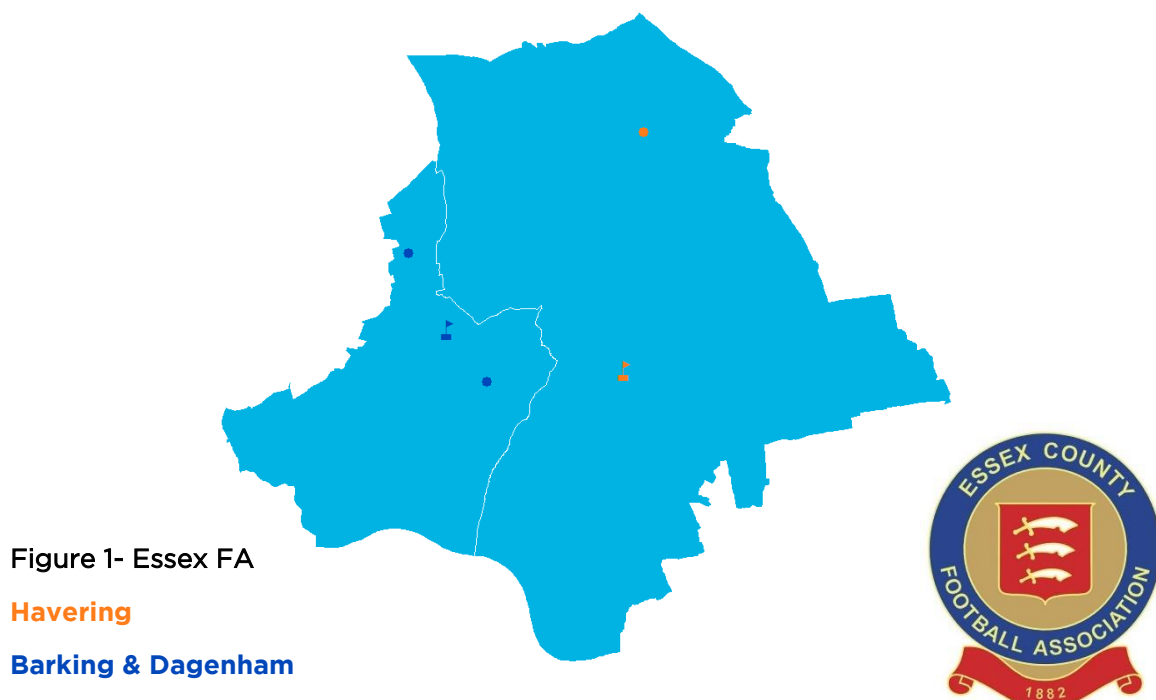
When gathering information and data, two main methods were used:

1. Health Survey

Upon joining a walking football session, participants were given a registration form containing health related questions (Appendix 7.1). These questions were adapted from 'The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale' (2007). Walking football participants were asked to complete these health questions at the start, middle and end of a 20-week period.

There were 147 responses to the health questions. Those participants that only had one data entry (either start, middle or end) were excluded, as no change to their wellbeing could be ascertained.

119 respondents provided a postcode. Where possible, these postcodes are mapped in Figures 1,2,3. Maps have been separated by FA region in order to effectively colour code the participant to the specific session they attended. Flags represent sessions, dots represent participants. Please refer to the key to distinguish between sessions.



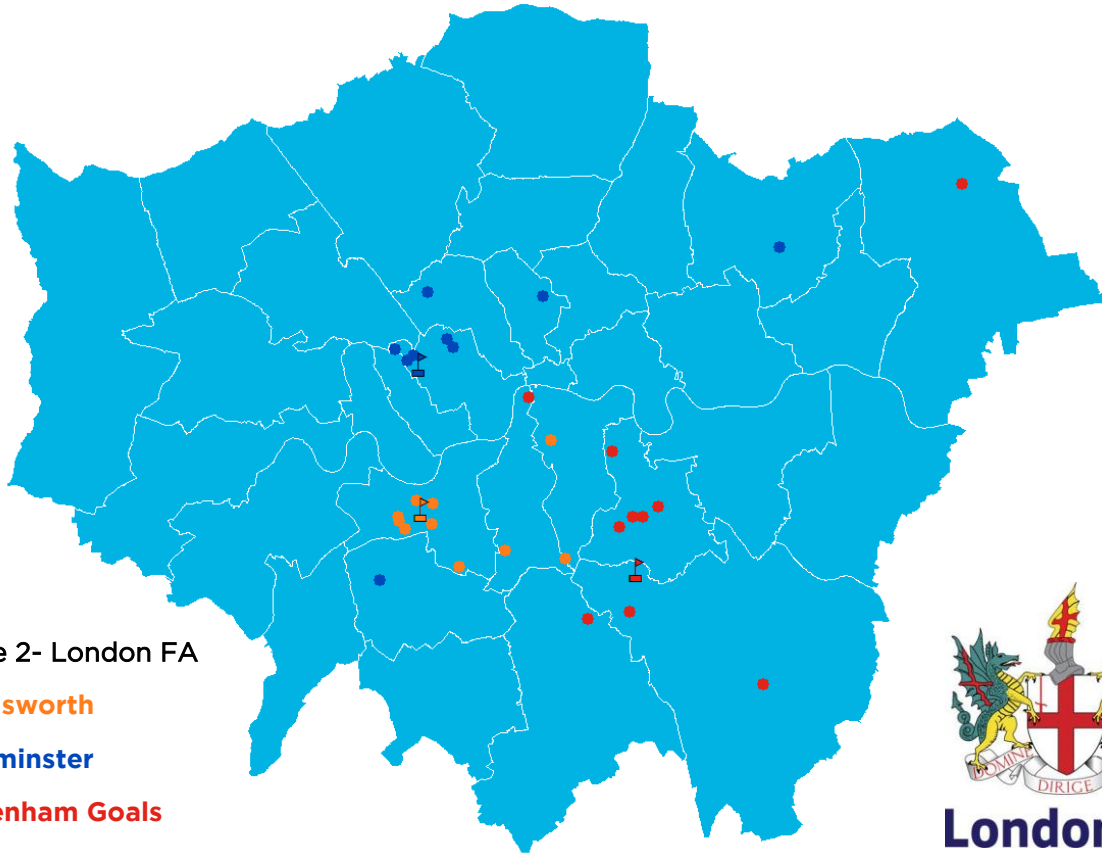


Figure 2- London FA

Wandsworth

Westminster

Beckenham Goals



LondonFA

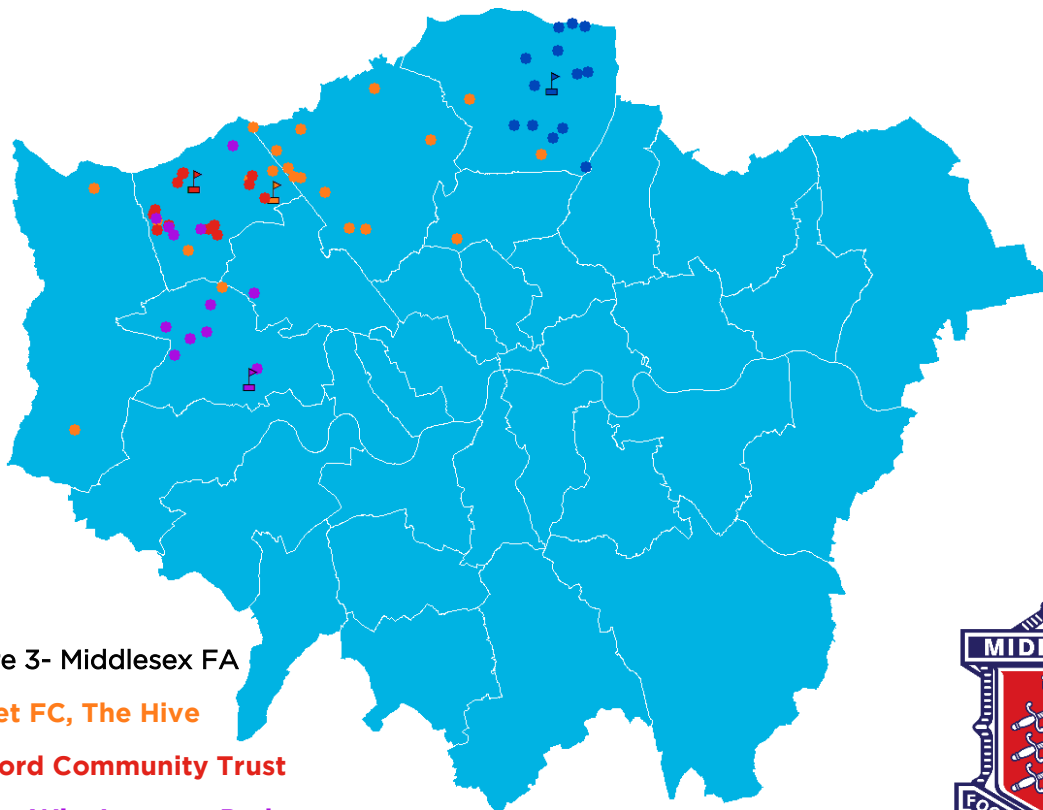


Figure 3- Middlesex FA

Barnet FC, The Hive

Watford Community Trust

Will to Win, Lammas Park

Fusion, Southbury Leisure Centre



Of those that reported gender (n=122), 75% were male. Of those that reported age (n=120), there was a mean age of 60 and a modal age of 67. The minimum age was 19 with the maximum at 85. Full sample characteristics are listed in the Appendix 7.2.

Using this health data, we were able to analyse if participants reported an overall health improvement. By asking participants for their postcode, we can work out trends across London as well as cut the data by FA region or the individual sessions.

2. Focus Groups

Four focus groups were administered by members of the London Sport insight team between July and August. The full discussion guide can be found in the Appendix 7.4. The purpose of these focus groups was to gain the views of the participants in terms of:

- Motivations and triggers to starting walking football
- What they like most about the sport and the factors that keep them playing
- Impact of walking football on their mental, social and physical wellbeing
- How to improve the sessions to increase impact

Altogether, the four focus groups contained a total of 42 participants, majority male, ranging between the ages of 53 and 85. Full sample characteristics are listed in the Appendix 7.3.

Figure 4 indicates the exact locations of the sessions where focus groups were carried out.

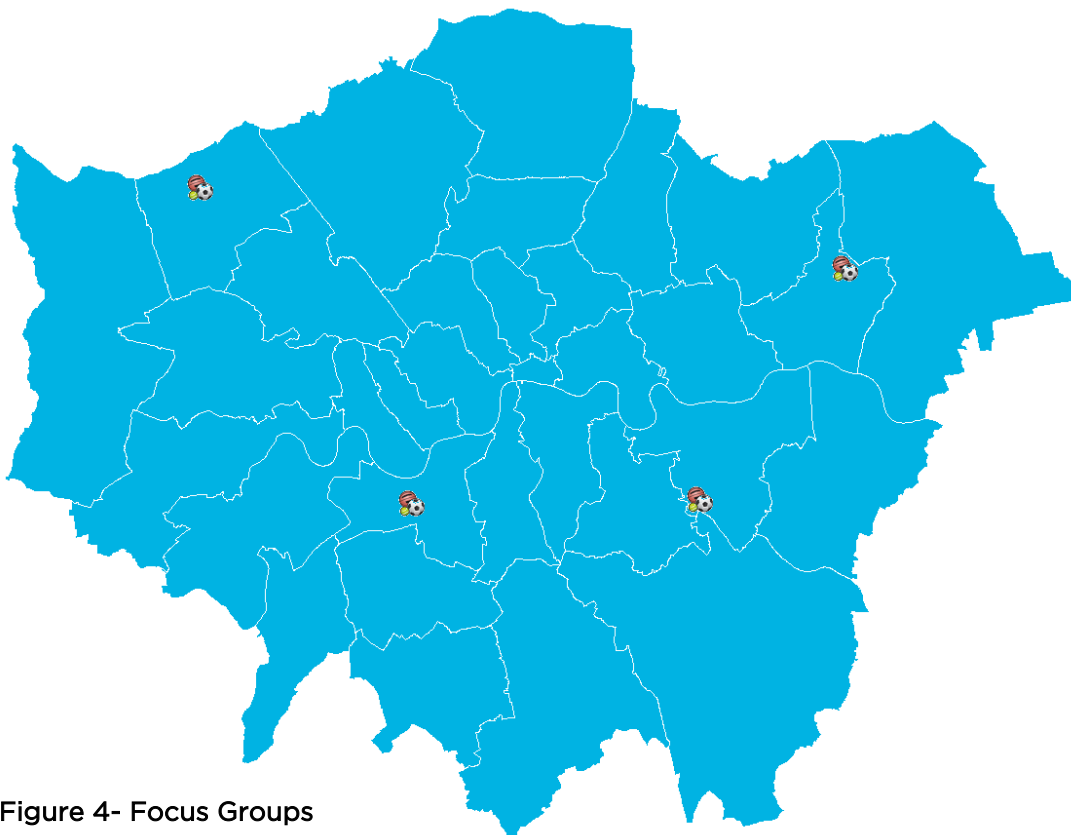


Figure 4- Focus Groups

The next section pulls together the results of the methods explained above. It also summarises the key findings from the national report.

3 Findings

3.1 Secondary research

The national research concluded that the average player is aged 58 and used to play football over a decade ago. When deciding to take up the sport, most do so for health and fitness reasons, to socialise and for a general love of the game. However, there is a challenge to reach those that are not currently taking part as the sport is commonly misconceived as being too gentle and slow.

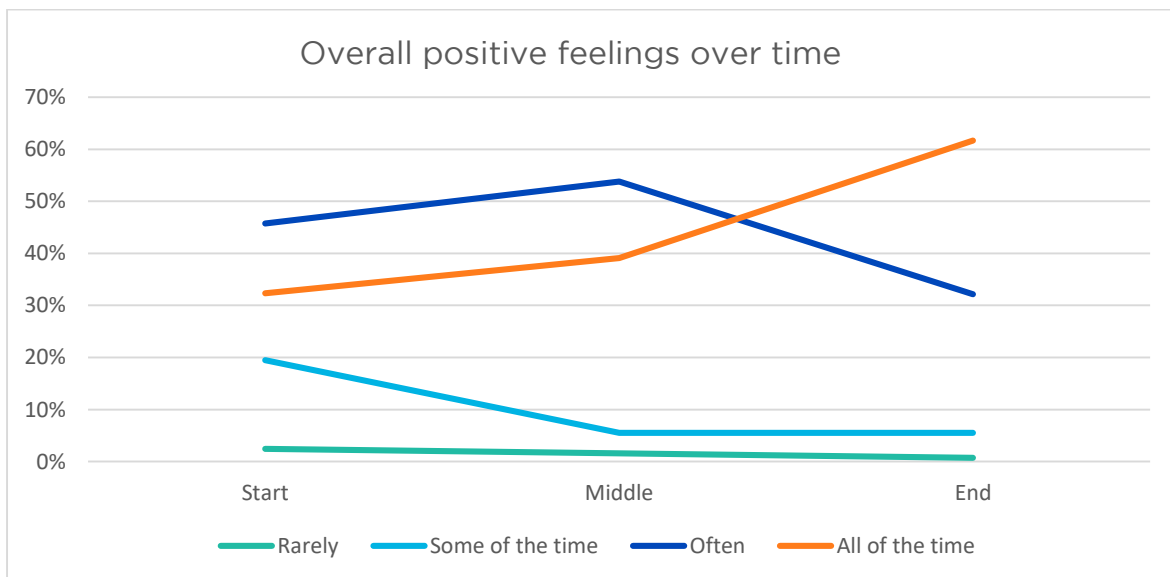
When considering marketing and communications, the most important channels by which to contact the target audience are through word of mouth and or newspaper/magazine adverts. In order to progress the sport further and keep players satisfied, the 'Walking Football Research' recommended focusing on hosting more matches and tournaments, whether competitive or friendly.

These conclusions were fed into the focus group discussion guide and will be considered against the qualitative findings in Section 3.3. The next section considers the outcomes from the health questions.

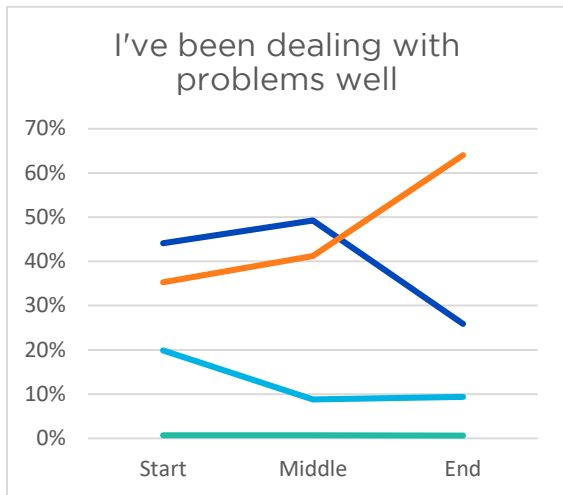
3.2 Primary Research- Health Survey

In order to understand if walking football had a positive impact on participants' health, specifically mental wellbeing, participants were given six statements about feelings and thoughts and asked to report on a Likert scale. For example, one question was 'Have you been feeling optimistic about the future?', with options to answer, 'None of the time, rarely, some of the time, often, all of the time'.

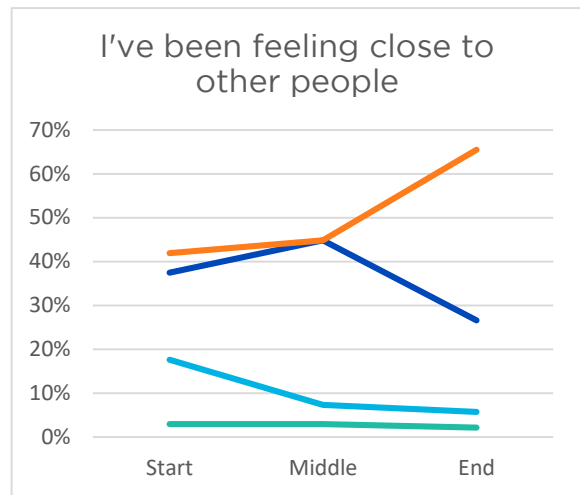
Together, answers to these six questions build an overall picture of positive feelings over time which feed into mental wellbeing, shown in Graph 1. The responses to each of the six individual questions are shown in Graphs 2,3,4,5,6,7. The answer 'none of the time' is excluded as there were no responses to this option.



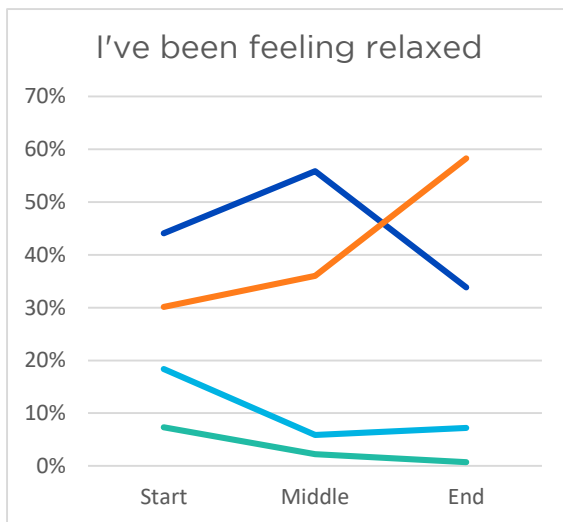
Graph 1



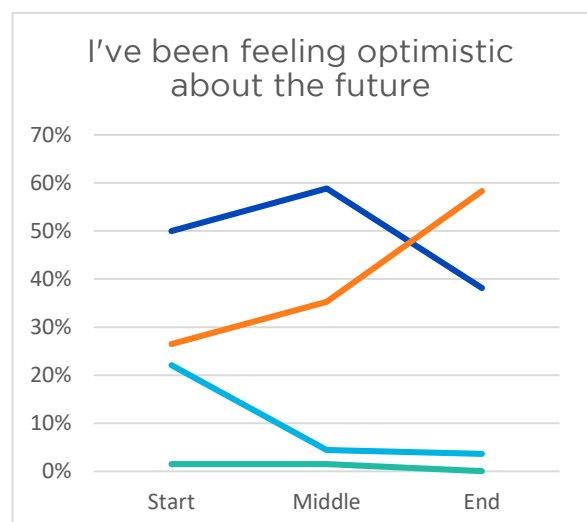
Graph 2



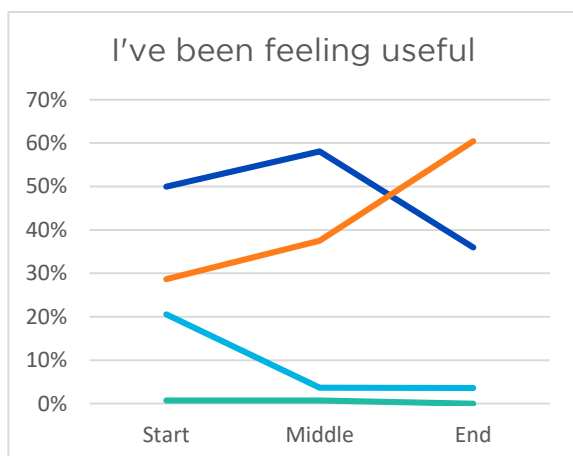
Graph 3



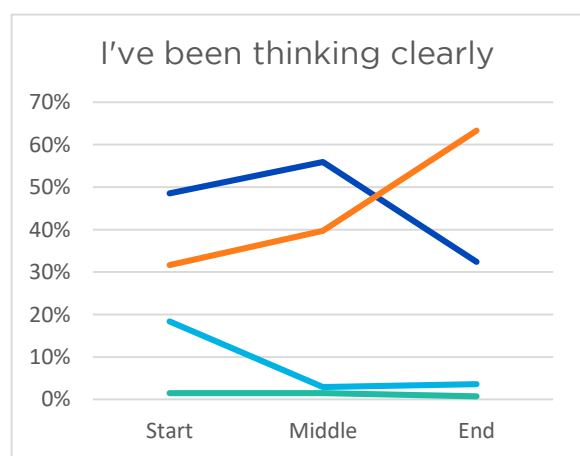
Graph 4



Graph 5



Graph 6



Graph 7

— Rarely
 — Some of the time
 — Often
 — All of the time

Graph 1 averages out the answers to all six questions to give an overall measure of ‘positive feelings’ over the course of the programme. The findings demonstrate an overall self-reported improvement in wellbeing. This is because between starting and ending the programme the average participant had positive feelings, more of the time. For example, a player may have had positive feelings *some of the time* when they started the programme, positive feelings *often* mid-way through, and by the end of the 20-week period, experienced positive feelings *all of the time*. This trend is reflected in all six questions to differing degrees which will now be explored.

The measures that reported the largest changes over time were ‘I’ve been dealing with problems well’ and ‘I’ve been feeling close to other people’, shown in Graphs 2 and 3. This means that by the end of the programme, two thirds of respondents were dealing with problems well and feeling close to people *all of the time*. In particular, of the 6 health questions, ‘I’ve been feeling close to other people’, had the largest number of respondents feeling that way *all of the time*. This indicates that walking football to at least some degree, enables participants to feel close to other people.

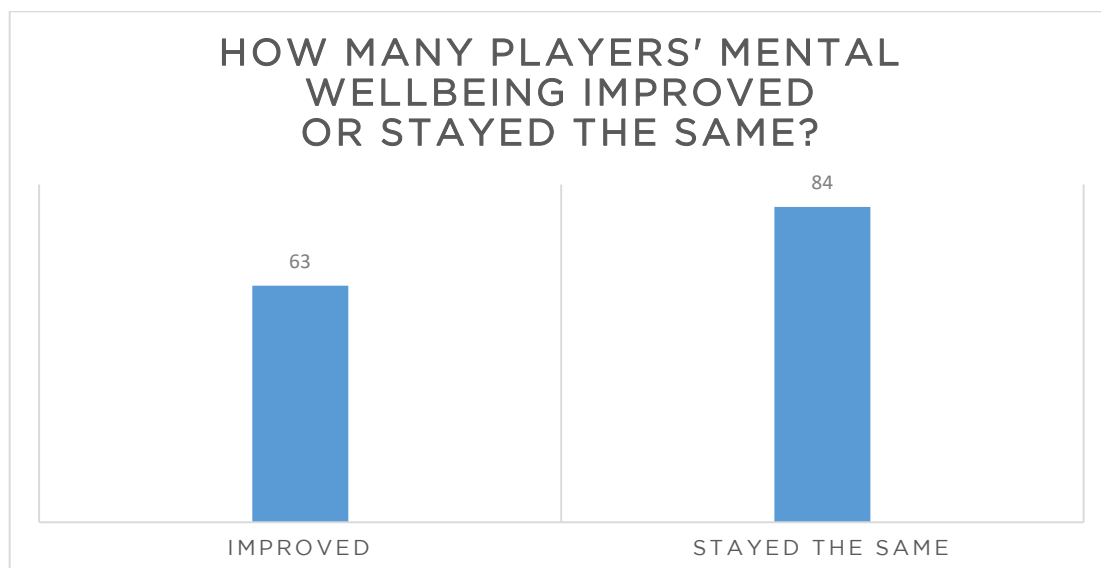
Interestingly, between the start and midway point, the extent of feelings does not change significantly, especially in order to ‘feel close to other people’. It is not until they reach the end of the 20-week period that the largest change occurs. This shows that attendees do not necessarily realise these benefits of walking football until they attend numerous sessions.

These results suggest that walking football has a positive impact on social wellbeing by helping participants to feel close to other people, but in order to feel this positive outcome, they must attend for a sufficient number of sessions.

However, for those on the lower end of the scale, answering *rarely* and *some of the time* having positive feelings, they move to feeling positive more of the time by the midway point. To move towards the higher end of the scale, and have positive feelings *all of the time*, participation in the programme must be sustained until the end.

On the whole, these six measures indicate that walking football does have a positive impact on participants’ health, notably mental and social wellbeing. Players improve their ability to deal with problems, feel useful and think clearly and optimistically. However, participation must be sustained for a sufficient number of weeks in order to realise significant increases.

An improvement in health is further evidenced by the number of positive personal transitions over time. This is shown in Graph 8, detailing the number of players that reported an improvement in mental wellbeing. No players reported a worsening. This means 100% of players improved or maintained their wellbeing, with 43% self-reporting an improvement.



Graph 8

The next section presents qualitative findings from focus groups in order to further explore how and why walking football is having this positive impact on participants.

3.3 Primary Research- Focus Groups

In line with the national research, there was a consensus that until starting walking football, the players did not understand or appreciate what the sport entailed. For example, comments included, *'I thought it was ridiculous'*, *'an April fools, a joke'*, *'I was very sceptical'*. This negative feeling towards the game is mostly due to the element of walking, *'people can't envisage how it's played'*, *'they think it's an ambling stroll'*, *'a lazy game'*. The participants agreed that they thought it would be easier and less tiring. However, once participants attended their first session, these concerns about the sport were alleviated, with comments such as *'it's a lot more energetic than I was expecting'*, *'despite a smaller pitch it's a lot harder than I thought'*.

Nevertheless, participants still had difficulty explaining the game to others. They were normally met with reactions such as laughing, or simply questioning *'What?!'*. Some believed that although the Barclay's advert was beneficial in terms of spreading awareness of the sport, it did not depict the sport accurately, *'most of them look 75+'*. Still, the perception of others does not put participants off continuing to play. Instead, it encourages them to correctly inform friends and family by bringing them along to sessions and tournaments to understand the game. Participants were also positive about changing how the sport is marketed, such as the inclusion of how many steps are walked or calories burned in a session. This would help to overcome misconceptions about the game.

Motivations and Triggers

Despite somewhat negative preconceptions of the game, participants largely joined walking football on the premise of wanting to do more exercise to improve their health. Once becoming aware of walking football, in many cases thanks to the Barclays advert,

participants were pulled in by the love of football and the fact it was for people of a similar age, whilst being able to exercise at the same time.

Between becoming aware of the sport and actually starting, some experienced a time delay. This was either due to a lack of local sessions available or simply requiring an extra push, either by an external trigger such as an advertisement, or by an internal change of opinion. The opportunity was commonly presented to players via leaflets, posters or from direct recommendations from friends. Participants support word-of-mouth advertising but also believe sessions should be promoted further. Specifically, both online through Google searches, the FA and Walking Football United and offline in libraries, doctor's surgeries, pubs, shops, football clubs and in local papers. Additional search providers such as Get Active London and opening data via openactive could also offer more channels. Advertising in gyms, leisure centres and on class timetables was also encouraged, however this may mean engaging already active participants who are not the primary target audience.

Overall, it is felt that the Barclays advert was effective in increasing awareness of the sport but lacked the call to action needed in order to fully engage participants. Localised widespread advertising is encouraged in order to promote sessions available but the power of word-of-mouth must also be encouraged.

Enjoyment and Alternatives

Although starting for exercise reasons, it is the thorough enjoyment gained from the sessions that keeps participants attending and separates walking football from other physical activity alternatives. Other activities mentioned were the gym, swimming and running but they were described as *'boring'*. When probed as to why they were boring, participants stated there's no social element or team spirit, *'you can't talk to anyone'*, as well as a lack of mental stimulation as they are *'monotonous, just ploughing up and down'*, *'it's repetitive'*.

In comparison, there was unanimous agreement that with walking football, *'you're getting exercise without realising it'* because players are having such a good time; *'we love the game'*, *'it's great fun'*, *'chasing a ball is really good exercise'*, *'scoring a goal is great'*. Instead of staring at a wall in the gym, they are highly engaged in the technicalities of the game as well as the social element. Football is a nostalgic activity that resonates with their youth. The feeling that they can play a sport again that they thought was out of their lives evokes positive emotions. Hearing the *'rustle of the net'*, *'scoring a winning goal'* and *'team talks'* were feelings they had forgotten and relish reliving. These are less evident with individual sports. With walking football, they enjoy the camaraderie and banter, making for a good atmosphere. Whereas when running, participants may be inclined to give up without the motivation of a team to play for or a ball to chase.

Although those that used to play football were extremely positive about playing a game they thought was out of their lives, newcomers to football still resonated with the fun of the sport and being able to try something new, despite their age.

This suggests that enjoyment is important to sustain physical activity participation, more specifically, walking football participation. As much as the driver to start was the desire to exercise, which they could do at the gym, without the enjoyment factor and social element, participants would be unlikely to stick with it.

The infographic, Figure 5, ranks the factors that players like most about walking football. Those in green are central to enjoyment, there are mixed feelings about orange factors and those in red evoke the least enjoyment.



Figure 5

The nature and structure of walking football sessions

Looking into more detail as to what it is that participants so enthusiastically enjoy about walking football, it is worth considering the general nature and structure of walking football sessions. Different factors are explored below.

Informal Structure: Without match, membership or registration fees, participants enjoy the ability to turn up and play as and when they like. This was particularly relevant for those that had retired who may be away for different periods of time owing to fewer commitments.

Organisation: Despite the ability to be able to turn up and play, participants admired the management and coordination of the sessions, being able to rely on it happening each week. Equally, participants appreciate the fact they do not have to take responsibility for equipment or kit.

Format of play: Players enjoy the challenge of adapting their previous footballing style to meet the demands of the new game. In addition, players enjoy a having a competitive element to the game, an edge that beats running or the gym.

Leveller: Despite the desire for competition, participants repeatedly stated that they enjoyed the fact the game is for any ability, with combinations of players that have and haven't played before. They value that there are no set teams, that everyone mingles and the standard isn't important. This means it's inclusive to all.

Location: When asked to rank important factors, location was consistently ranked amongst the top 3 elements that are important to them continuing. This is evident in the largely small distances travelled as shown in Figures 1, 2 and 3.

Age: Some participants identified this as a very important factor to walking football. This was mainly because it meant the standard was more appropriate and they would not be out of their depth, as well as feeding into less risk of injury. In contrast, others argued this was not so important as the format of play is already set. It was also noted that walking football should be made available to less senior players that may be recovering from injuries or operations, meaning 'running' football is inaccessible to them.

Some of these elements are ranked within Figure 5, 'What do you like most about walking football?'. Others are less important when they start, and more important to sustaining participation, eventually leading to the health benefits explained in the quantitative research. The infographic, Figure 6, explores these elements.

What are the most important factors to keep you playing?

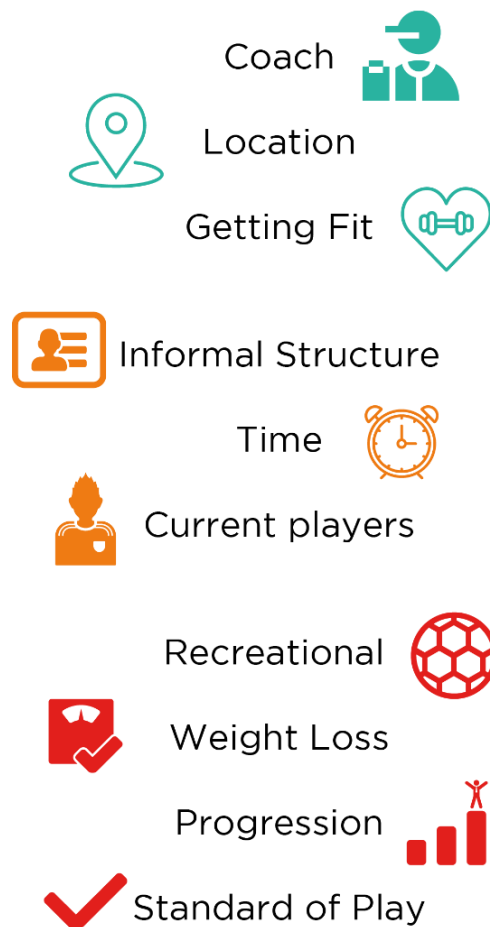


Figure 6

Factors affecting participant outcomes

Despite the positive view of the game, there were elements that were felt to be barriers or negatives that could be improved. Some of these are listed above, others arose through continued discussion and probing.

Injuries: It was common that players experienced injuries or high levels of pain in the days following their first sessions as their muscles were not accustomed to the game. If participants are not warned of the common pain after playing, by either the coach or fellow players, this can put them off coming back again. This is referred to as the 'discomfort' stage in the three stages of fitness model shown in Appendix 7.5. In order for the individual to get past this stage, time, effort and help from others is required. For example, it would be beneficial to encourage a warm up and cool down. In addition, although the game benefits from being played both indoors and outdoors, it was mentioned that hard floors were unforgiving and put some people off playing.

Participant numbers: If numbers were lower than three a side, players experienced some level of frustration or found the sessions too tiring and tedious. This can be overcome by extending promotion and advertising, or perhaps using a smaller pitch or varying

activities. It was found that it's not that easy to discover available walking football sessions, with online pages sometimes out of date.

Perception of walking football: As discussed, at times the misconception of walking football can be a deterrent. This partly stems from the Barclays advert which was dominated by men over a certain age. This can deter both younger men and particularly women from joining.

Coaches and other staff: Having a regular coach was beneficial to sessions as it allowed for a rapport to be built up, enabling greater progress of participants. Additionally, staff in the facility should be made more aware of walking football in order to welcome and direct participants.

These four elements, injuries, numbers, perception and coaches, can be described as mediators that limit participant outcomes, as well as the health improvement of players. The coach was found to have a significant influence amongst all focus groups and will now be explored further.

The Coach

As touched upon above, the coach can have an impact on how much the players get out of the session. Ultimately, the coach is regarded as essential in the running and continuation of walking football. This is because players admit to being '*selfish*' in wanting to turn up, play, and go home again. They felt they had '*done their bit*' in volunteering with football when younger or for children's football. Therefore, they appreciated having an independent coach to manage, coordinate and run sessions. They required someone with a certain level of authority and man-management, in order to deal with needed tasks including sending emails, presence at sessions, organising equipment and pitch hire. As well as organisational skills, players also valued particular personality traits. Desirable characteristics included someone that was outgoing, fun and relatable, someone that is energetic, gets you talking and loves it as much as the participants. They want someone to be '*part of the craic*', to '*evoke an atmosphere*' and to '*ensure a good laugh*'. Players also valued the ability of a coach to focus on individual development as well as the team environment. Essentially, the coach has far more responsibility, influence and impact than just training the players, they have an overall leadership role.

In spite of this viewpoint, there were a handful of people that wouldn't mind taking on some organisational responsibility in order to keep the sessions running. Wider tasks of coordination were deemed more important than refereeing on the day. But, it must be recognised that taking on this responsibility, takes away the positive informal element of the session of being able to turn up and play intermittently. By and large it should be reiterated that this was the minority, with the majority preferring to see a reasonable rise in cost than lose the coach. Overall the view was that without a coach, walking football would slowly crumble.

Having discussed elements to walking football that may mediate programme and participant outcomes, it is now worth looking further into the participant outcomes themselves. Namely, physical, mental and social wellbeing.

Physical Wellbeing

As getting fit was cited as one of the most important reasons for starting walking football, it is important to explore the physical benefits participants experienced as a result of walking football. Throughout discussions, players consistently self-reported an improvement to physical wellbeing. This is exemplified through various direct quotations in Figure 7.



Figure 7

Therefore, this suggests that walking football is positively contributing to physical health improvements. In addition, walking football has aided particular illnesses. There were three particular case studies mentioned; '*I have an early stage of Parkinson's and this helps me with posture and balance*', '*I noticed I was short of breath in comparison to other guys so I had it checked out and it revealed a heart condition*', '*a hip operation had ruined my muscles but since walking football it's getting stronger*'. Positively, walking football can not only help general physical wellbeing but it can have an even greater impact on those already suffering with medical conditions or help to detect future health problems.

In order to promote the extensive physical health benefits, it is suggested real case examples are shared as well as common numbers of steps taken and calories burned using fitness trackers.

The quantitative results showed positive increases in mental and social wellbeing, these are now further explored and supported below.

Mental Wellbeing

Where some activities may lack mental stimulation, participants were very positive about the impact walking football has on mental health. It is an activity to look forward to (commonly mentioned as a highlight of the week), a change of scenery and an opportunity to occupy time that may have previously been filled by full time employment. Outcomes extended further than this by mentioning specific aspects of the game. Participants noted that walking football, *'exercises the memory'*, *'gets the old brain going'* and *'forces you to make quick decisions'*. As well as stimulating the brain, others noted it allows for an element of escapism, *'it allows you to switch off from what you have going on at a personal level'*, *'if you're going through a bad time, it's helps you to focus on something different'*.

Similarly, to physical wellbeing, there were two cases of depression noted where walking football had boosted recovery. Lastly, taken as a whole, walking football also produces a general moral boost, *'I have a new lease of life'*, *'I feel high spirited'*, *'the first time I ever went it was the biggest buzz I had had for years, for the whole day, it was just fantastic'*. To conclude, the mental benefits gained from the sport may not be associated and considered at the start upon joining, but they are most certainly realised and come hand in hand with the physical outcomes of walking football.

Social Wellbeing

In addition to the *'love of the game'*, it is the social side of walking football that differentiates it from other physical activity alternatives. This was evident in the quantitative analysis whereby *'feeling close to other people'* reported the largest positive change. A number of the participants that we spoke to were retired and as such, their social network had decreased. They agreed that it can be difficult to keep meeting people and needed to engage in new activities, such as walking football, to avoid loneliness. As a result, the sport not only contributes to social wellbeing but also provides the opportunity to have new experiences and learn skills, supporting individual development. At walking football, they meet peers in similar situations, *'there's a togetherness'*, *'you all have a laugh'*. Therefore, the comradeship and camaraderie play a massive part in fostering participants' enjoyment of the session, in turn sustaining their participation. Further comments included, *it's a 'fun bunch of people to be with'*, *'everyone is welcomed and included'*, *'I come along for the banter and the laugh, even if I'm injured'*. What is more, it is not just being with others that pushes them, it is forming a team and working towards a common goal, *'there is nothing that can compare to being part of a team'*, to *'play with people that stretch and inspire you'*. To conclude, it was highly evident that players realise significant social benefits by surrounding themselves with likeminded participants.

4 Implications

The findings in this report generally align with the findings from the national research. Specifically, a similar participant profile of a male, around 60 years of age that used to play football. The findings also align with the motivations and attitudes to the sport. This report went further in gathering more qualitative evidence via focus groups, in order to gain a more in depth understanding of what it is players really value in walking football, and the outcomes they experience from the sport. These are summarised in Figures 8, 9 and 10.

The infographic, Figure 8, starts by outlining how walking football should be promoted, both in terms of the content and which channels used. Next, once participants arrive at the sessions, Figure 9 details what these sessions could contain based on the players' values. Lastly, if these are met, Figure 10 depicts the outcomes that participants can expect from walking football, in terms of physical, mental and social wellbeing.



Figure 8

what is **valued** in walking football?

what makes it **different**?

what is **important** to achieve positive **outcomes**?

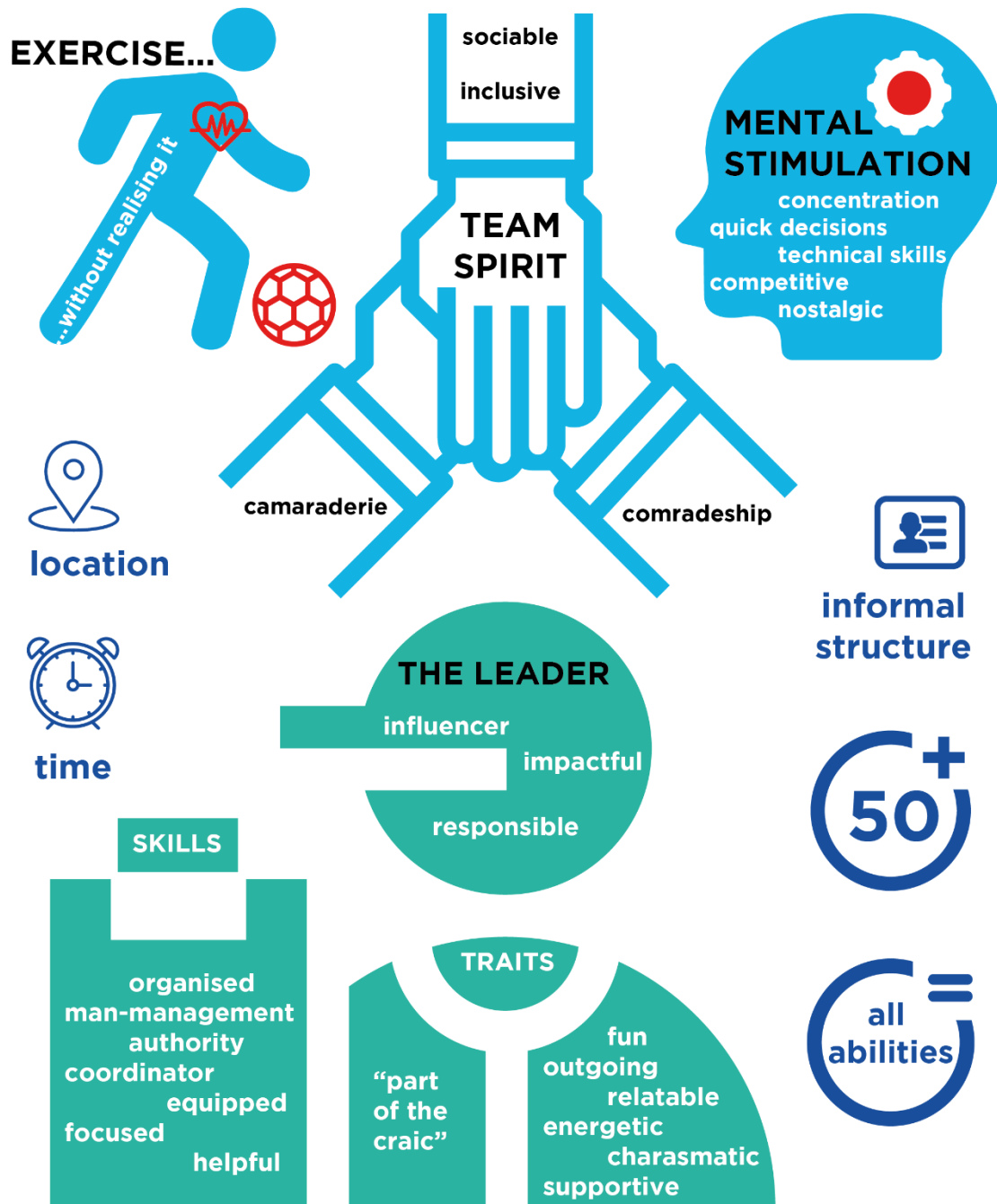


Figure 9

**MENTAL
WELL-BEING**



highlight
of the week

boost
memory
& **decision**
making



outcomes
of
walking football

43%
of players had an
improved
mental wellbeing

96%
felt **optimistic** 😊
often or all of the time

**SOCIAL
WELL-BEING**

supportive
peer **network**



“Biggest **buzz**
in years”



92% felt **close** to
others often or
all of the time

95% were
thinking clearly
often or all of the time



switch
off
from life

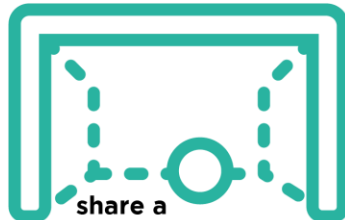
“have a
laugh”



“there’s a
togetherness”

“join in the
banter”

**PHYSICAL
WELL-BEING**



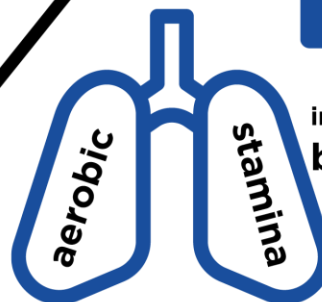
share a
common goal



improve
breathing



feel **welcomed**



feel
energetic



flexible
stronger
muscles



Helps **long term**
health conditions
& **injury recovery**

Figure 10

5 Contact Details

For more information on walking football in London, please contact:

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**SURREY COUNTY
FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION**

6 References

1. Freepik (2016) <http://www.flaticon.com>
2. Short Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (SWEMWBS) © NHS Health Scotland, University of Warwick and University of Edinburgh, 2007
3. Sport England. (2016). Towards an Active Nation. Available: <https://www.sportengland.org/media/10629/sport-england-towards-an-active-nation.pdf>.
4. 2CV. (2015). Walking Football Research. Available: <https://data.londonsport.org/dataset/walking-football-research>

7 Appendix

7.1 Health related questions from the registration form

Below are some statements about feelings and thoughts. Please choose the answer that best describes your experience of each over the last two weeks.

	None of the time	Rarely	Some of the time	Often	All of the time
I've been feeling optimistic about the future					
I've been feeling useful					
I've been feeling relaxed					
I've been dealing with problems well					
I've been thinking clearly					
I've been feeling close to other people					

7.2 Quantitative Sample Characteristics (Health Survey)

Total	n=	147	%
Gender			
	Male	110	75%
	Female	12	8%
	Unknown	25	17%
Age			
	<50	17	12%
	50-57	23	16%
	58-65	39	27%
	>65	41	28%
	Unknown	27	18%
Ethnicity			
	White British	93	63%
	Asian British	9	6%
	Black British	6	4%
	White Other	8	5%
	Mixed Other	2	1%
Region			
	Essex	9	6%
	Middlesex	73	50%
	London	65	44%
Session			
	Barking & Dagenham	5	3%
	Havering	4	3%
	Barnet FC, The Hive (Day & Night)	29	20%
	Fusion, Southbury Leisure Centre	15	10%
	Watford Community Trust	14	10%
	Will to Win, Lammas Park	15	10%
	Wandsworth	14	10%
	Westminster	13	9%
	Beckenham Goals	16	11%
	Eltham Goals	22	15%

7.3 Qualitative Sample Characteristics (Focus Groups)

	Watford	Eltham Goals	Dagenham	Wandsworth	TOTAL
Total n=	10 %	20 %	4 %	8 %	42 %
Gender					
Male	10 100%	20 100%	4 100%	7 88%	41 98%
Female				1 13%	1 2%
Age					
50-57	1 10%	3 15%		1 13%	5 12%
58-65	6 60%	10 50%	1 25%	4 50%	21 50%
>65	3 30%	7 35%	3 75%	3 38%	16 38%
Used to play football					
Yes	10 100%	17 85%	3 75%	5 63%	35 83%
No		3 15%	1 25%	3 38%	7 17%
Dates of field work	15-Jul	19-Jul	10-Aug	17-Aug	

7.4 Focus Group Discussion Guide

Assessing the impact that the walking football programme has on participants' health and wellbeing, identifying drivers and mediators of programme and participant outcomes.

Duration 60 minutes

Resources needed: Stimulus A cards, Stimulus B cards, paper, pens.

1. Introduction (5 minutes)

- Briefly explain the nature of the research and structure of the session
 - Reassure neutrality, confidentiality
 - Informal, discussion, bounce ideas off each other, nothing right/wrong
 - Aim of the session is to understand the benefits they gain from walking football.
- Respondents to introduce themselves
 - Name, age, retired/working, did they used to play football? Or other activities currently or used to?

2. Explore the motivations and triggers to starting walking football (15 minutes)

Motivations

- What made you decide to take up walking football?
 - To what extent did health and fitness reasons come into it?
 - How fit/healthy would you consider yourself before starting?
 - And now?
 - Are there any common health issues within the group?
 - To what extent did the desire to socialise come into the decision to start WF?
 - How much of an incentive/deterrent was the ability to exercise with others and be part of a team?
 - Or did you start just for the love of the game?
 - When did you last play football before starting the programme?
 - Why did you miss playing football?
 - How engaged are you in football outside of walking football?
 - Do you play in any other leagues?
 - How regularly do you watch football? Live?
 - Do you volunteer with football or take part with kids?
 - How seriously do you take football?
 - To what extent did you join to gain a sense of achievement or meet goals?
- Why did you choose walking football and not something else?
 - How does walking football compare to other exercise?
 - How does it make you feel in comparison to say using the gym or individual exercise?
 - Why do you think this is?
 - How does spending time playing walking football make you feel instead of other ways of spending your leisure time such as watching films/TV or reading? (stationary activities)
 - What are the reasons for this?
 - To what lengths would you go to prioritise walking football and why?

NB: Most common other activities from FA= walking/golf, swimming, cycling, gym.

- How much time passed between becoming aware of walking football (ie through an ad/friend) and actually starting walking football?
 - What caused the time delay?
 - What were the barriers to overcome if any?
 - How important was the influence and/or support of family and friends?
- What do your friends and family think of you taking part in walking football?
 - Were they encouraging when you started?
 - How have their opinions changed over time?
 - How does their opinion affect you?
- What did you want to get out of walking football when you started?
 - Was improving your fitness important to you?
 - How important was the opportunity to socialise?

- *Or did you have a desire to improve your football skills?*
- *Were you recovering from an injury?*

Triggers

- *How did you hear about walking football?*
 - *Did you see it advertised? Where? Probe: friends/family, tv, newspaper/magazine, flyers, posters, local football club, social media and where specifically.*
 - *This specific session/club as well as walking football as a whole?*
 - *Did you hear about it from friends? WOM?*
 - *Social media?*
- *What is your preferred communication method for hearing about new activities?*
 - *What is most effective for this age group and target market?*
 - *Why?*
 - *Probe: Type of media (electronic, offline) and where advertised (café, newsagent, pub)*
- *What would be the best comms method for keeping you engaged once signed up to the activity?*
 - *Probe: Email, texts, social media (which?), calls*
 - *Why is this the best comms method?*
 - *What level of communication is necessary?*
 - *How many triggers?*
 - *How much support?*

3. *Opinion/enjoyment of the sessions (20 minutes)*

Begin with Q: What do you like about walking football?

Then begin the task with prepared cards. STIMULUS A: Moderator to use stimulus A to test the impact of factors they may like about the session. Introduce the cards and ask respondents for their first thoughts about how much they relate to the 'like'. Explore each card in detail and welcome a discussion about each one.

Stimulus A includes:

- *It is social*
- *It increases my fitness*
- *I feel health benefits*
- *Being part of a team*
- *It is for people my age*
- *It is skilful*
- *It is competitive*
- *Less chance of injuries*
- *The format of play- No running/offside rules*
- *It makes me feel good*
- *Gives me something to do*

NB: explore both likes in terms of benefits and practicalities of the game.

- *For each 'like':*
 - *What are you first thoughts on this?*
 - *To what extent do you agree this is what you like about walking football?*

Following this activity, ask the group to rank the 'likes'. What is most liked about the session?

Then ask them to individually put a sticker on their top one.

Begin with Q: What factors are most important to you to keep you playing?

STIMULUS B: Moderator to use stimulus B to test the impact of factors that are most important to keep them playing. Introduce the cards and ask respondents for their first thoughts about how much they relate to each factor. Explore each card in detail and welcome a discussion about each one.

Stimulus B includes:

- *The coach/leader*
- *Time of the session*
- *Location of session*

- The standard/ level of play
- Recreational vs competitive
- Informal vs formal
- Progression in terms of matches/tournaments
- The current participants/players
- Getting fit
- Losing weight
- For each factor:
 - What are you first thoughts on this?
 - To what extent do you agree this is important in a walking football session?

Following this activity, ask the group to rank the factors most important to keep them playing.

Open up the discussion to anything that may be missing.

4. Impact of walking football (10 minutes)

Broadly- If you were talking to a friend or family member about what you get out of taking part, what would you say? Then probe for physical, mental, social wellbeing.

- How have you benefitted from the walking football sessions so far? (social wellbeing)
 - To what extent have you realised social benefits? ie having a laugh, camaraderie, new mates
 - Has this extra social activity improved your wellbeing?
 - Why do you think this is?
 - Is there anything that could be done to further realise social benefits?
- Have you felt physical benefits from the walking football sessions? (physical wellbeing)
 - How much fitter do you feel?
 - How much stronger do your muscles feel?
 - Are you less out of breath on a daily basis?
 - Do you have less heart pain?
 - To what extent have you lost weight?
- Have you felt mental benefits from the walking football sessions? (mental wellbeing) Be careful with language...maybe just ask about how it makes them feel.
 - To what extent have you noticed a difference in your energy levels?
 - To what extent do you feel more confident? Why?
 - To what extent has it made you feel happier and more content? Why?
 - Have you noticed a difference in anxiety levels?
 - To what extent do you feel more positive and motivated?
 - To what extent are you feeling more satisfied?
 - What differences have you noticed in terms of individual development?
- When did you start to realise any of these benefits of walking football?
 - As soon as I decided to take it up?
 - After my first session?
 - When it became a habit?
- If you had to give one main impact you have felt as a result of the walking football programme, what would it be and why? Write it down anonymously on post its
- Are there any ways you could gain a larger benefit and impact from the walking football programme?

5. How to improve the sessions (10 minutes)

- Are there any challenges/barriers to attending the sessions?
 - Either for themselves or thinking about new joiners?
 - Access and opportunity barriers?
 - Time?
 - Cost?
 - Location?
 - Age of participants?
 - Weather?
 - Outside/inside facilities? Quality of facilities not good enough?
 - Lack of organisation/commitment from players?

- Knowledge of walking football? Don't know where to go or what to do?
- Unaware of the programme existing?
- Don't know enough about it?
- Put off by negative stigma of 'walking football'
- Personal circumstances?
- Friends don't play?
- Family commitments?
- Prefer other sport?
- Lifestyle, too busy to find time? Work commitments?
- Football reasons?
- Game style doesn't suit my (too slow)?
- Own ability not good enough or too good?
- Health/disability barriers?
- Recent injury?
- Poor health?
- Disability?

- What are the most important and relevant barriers?
 - Is it a single factor or a combination?
 - Which combination?
 - How are they related?
 - Are there certain types of people that are likely to be more/less affected by these barriers?
 - How easy is it to generalise?

- Are any of these barriers specific to London?
 - Probe as needed: ie transport, safety, access, working hours, precedent, culture, attitudes

- Are these real barriers or do you think they can be an excuse?
 - As in they might be embarrassed, scared or participating due to time off since playing?
 - Are there any real life examples of this?

- How can we get around this barriers?
 - What would help current players to continue playing?
 - Encourage others to participate?

- What would you change about the session?
 - Or walking football in general?
 - Why?
 - Who would this affect?
 - If you were starting your own WF club, what would you do differently?
 - What would be the trigger to get them there?
 - And the hook to stay?
 - Would you want to involve any partners or parts of the community? ie local sports providers or facilities, coffee shops/social venues, retailers, local employers.

6. Final Thoughts

Any final comments? Things that haven't been mentioned that help us to better understand the impact walking football has had?

Thank and close

Moderator to tell respondents where they can keep in touch and get further information.

7.5 Stages of Fitness, Motivational Interviewing (Rollnick & Miller, 2012)

Stage	Characteristic	Motivation
1. Discomfort	Anaerobic; discomfort, lack of wind, desire to stop.	Extrinsic; cosmetic, health, social (pressure from others)
2. Physical	Aerobic/anaerobic; feelings of physical benefits, breathing easy but no feeling of flow.	Extrinsic; physical gains, health benefits, social status
3. Psychological	Aerobic; feeling of flow, enjoyment of the effort, mental relaxation, physical exhilaration.	Intrinsic; mental wellbeing, relaxation, enjoyment.