

Greater Manchester Moving

Spending Review Submission

February 2025

1. GM Moving, Active Partnerships, and the movement for movement

Greater Manchester Moving is a leading Greater Manchester charity changing lives through movement, physical activity, and sport. We lead, support, and connect people and partners to deliver the shared [GM Moving in Action strategy](#) together.

GM Moving are one of 42 [Active Partnerships](#); a network of system partners working with Sport England to support the local implementation of Sport England's [Uniting the Movement Strategy](#).

Physical activity isn't a 'nice to have' - it is essential to growing the economy and an NHS fit for the future.

Movement is the foundation of good health, wellbeing, and thriving, sustainable communities. But right now, movement, physical activity, and sport aren't accessible to everyone.

Movement has been designed out of life. GM Moving, and Active Partnerships across England, are changing that. We create the conditions for everyone to move more, designing the joy of movement back into life.

GM Moving's [The Blueprint for Change](#) was born out the [Manchester Independent Economic Review](#) and the emerging devolution agenda in 2015.

[GM Moving in Action](#) (2021-31) is the third iteration of this vision in the form of a strategy to reduce inactivity and inequality through a whole system approach. It informs and aligns to [Uniting the Movement](#), and has already offered a blueprint for some other places in England, Wales and beyond.

The strategy was refreshed and refocused, in light of the pandemic, and has re-energised the established city-region approach.

Our shared mission "active lives for all" enables us to focus on **raising living standards in every part of the city region**, addressing inequalities and inactivity, with a long-term plan across GM, localities and neighbourhoods. It aligns the city-region's capacity and investment to global evidence, national direction and missions, and Greater Manchester priorities.

2. Health inequalities are stifling communities and constraining the nation's potential

Physical inactivity is associated with 1 in 6 deaths in the UK and is estimated to cost the UK £7.4 billion annually (including £0.9 billion to the NHS alone).

Nearly 1 in 3 (28%) of Greater Manchester residents are active for less than 30 minutes a week. There are stark and stubborn inequalities in activity data too with an 11-percentage point difference in inactivity rates between our most active borough Stockport (24% inactive) and less active borough Oldham (35% inactive), in the latest Sport England data.

Health inequalities are everywhere. In terms of life expectancy at birth, Health Foundation data shows a 5.5-year difference between Bolton South and Walkden (76.94 years) and Altrincham and Sale West (82.5 years).

Active Lives data from Sport England also shows that 30% of children and young people are less active (less than an average of 30 minutes a day). GM has a higher rate of childhood obesity than England in reception (22.2% vs 21.3%) and at Year 6 (38.8% vs 36.6%). Obesity rates are highest among children in deprived areas and this is getting worse.

The estimated cost associated with obesity in Greater Manchester is £3.21 billion per year.

This inactivity and inequality have a range of causes and consequences – poorer mental and physical health, economic inactivity, place degradation, impact on children and young people, their development and their relationship with physical activity.

For example, a record 4 million people are not participating in the labour market due to work-limiting health conditions, with 2.8 million citing long-term sickness or disability as their main reason for being out of the workforce.

There has also been a 64% increase in the last decade in the number of 16 to 64-year-olds with ill-health who are in work and a huge growth in health and disability-related welfare spending. The Office for Budget Responsibility now forecasts health and disability related benefits will grow from £64.7 billion in 2023/24 to £100.7 billion by 2029/30.

Physical and mental health are hampered, impacting children's development, holding back economic growth, and spending increasing budgets on treating symptoms and not the disease by not designing in movement and physical activity into everyone's daily lives.

3. We all have a role to play to overcome these challenges – we need government to think, act, and invest in new ways.

A thriving country is an active country.

Telling people to move doesn't work, nor does blaming, shaming or judging people for their lifestyle choices, it's about designing movement back into all our lives through systemic and cultural change. We need to keep learning [from those countries](#) who have made the most progress on this mission.

In Finland, for example, analysis of the [Get Finland Moving programme](#) highlighted the distinctive “management and monitoring at the government level, with measures intricately aligned with the diverse administrative branches of various ministries” and “a meticulous analysis of how different administrative branches are connected to the promotion of physical activity”.

In Greater Manchester, GM Moving is already connecting across the GMCA, NHS GM, and the VCFSE sector to create the conditions for every single person in Greater Manchester to be active.

Meaningful change is happening here through a place-based, collaborative approach that brings together people, communities and organisations to co-create sustainable, long-term solutions.

By supporting people and building on the unique strengths of each place, we are breaking down systemic barriers and creating opportunities for **everyone** to live healthy, active lives.

Place matters. Where we are born, live, work and play profoundly shapes our opportunities to live healthy, active lives.

This whole system, place-based approach is needed across the whole of England and is underway in the places that need it most, with leadership and investment from Sport England.

[Well-established models](#) suggest that clinical care accounts for just 20% of health outcomes while social and economic factors and physical environment together make up 50%.

Our approach addresses the deep-rooted inequalities and systemic barriers that determine who can move, be active, and thrive so everyone can live a healthy, active life.

Unlike traditional short-term programs that often fail to address systemic issues, we prioritise long-term, tailored approaches that enable communities to take charge and

sustain meaningful change. Since 2019 we have demonstrated how collaboration, prioritising relationships, and community-led solutions can sustainably tackle inactivity and enable active lives for all.

Put sport and physical activity to work to power a prevention-first NHS

A prevention-powered NHS needs movement at its heart. We are working in partnership with national and local organisations to make this happen.

GM Moving helps people working in the NHS and social care to prioritise and support physical activity. Through partnership and community connections, GM Moving provides and catalyses leadership, support, tools, resources, training, and communications. We work at every level within local health systems.

To support our efforts, government should:

- Maintaining investment and support into Uniting the Movement (via Sport England) to help realise the health benefits of movement
- Train every doctor and nurse on the benefits of being active for our physical and mental health.
- Incentivise doctors and nurses to routinely prescribe physical activity, particularly within prevention plans and treatments for patients with long-term health conditions.
- Co-locate community leisure, health and care services, creating active wellbeing hubs.

Embed movement at the heart of every school day

Too many children don't get to experience the joy, wellbeing, and sense of purpose movement, physical activity, and sport provides. We must focus on the children and young people who need the most support and give them the best start in life.

GM Moving is ensuring inclusivity by working closely with specific groups, like young women and girls. We're breaking down barriers so that all young people can form a life-long love of movement. We're embedding positive experiences of physical activity and sport within schools, communities, clubs and health provision to set every child up for the best start in life.

To support our efforts, government should:

- Put being active on an equal footing with English, Maths and Science, making PE a core curriculum subject.

- Redesign the PE curriculum to offer pupils a greater choice of activities – traditional PE lessons and competitive team sports work for some children, but not all.
- Invest in improving training for teachers delivering PE in primary and secondary schools.
- Implement all recommendations emerging from the School Games Organiser review.

Design the places we live to encourage physical activity in everyday lives

Being active and moving in outdoor spaces boosts mental health and wellbeing like nothing else. But the places we live, and work can limit and inhibit our movement when they should be inviting and inspiring us.

GM Moving is mainstreaming physical activity and movement into the design and creation of our schools, play spaces, housing developments, high streets, neighbourhoods and community spaces.

For example, 4 in 5 women between 18-24 years old have been sexually harassed. 74% of women reported being subject to unwanted sexual attention or sexist comments.

This is clearly a barrier to moving freely in public spaces, our [Right to the Streets movement](#) demonstrated how a whole-system, place-based can tackle these issues and bring joy back to the journey.

We regularly join forces with national bodies, local authorities, planners, transport teams, public health teams, and local communities to put movement at the heart of new developments.

Our work to embed active travel alongside Transport for Greater Manchester has seen the [number of trips on foot in the city region rise from 28% to 31%](#).

Over the past 5 years, the number of people walking short journeys has increased from 52% to 57%, with the number of short journeys being taken by car down from 41% to 36%.

There is a clear positive impact on our communities' health and the environment. Together we're making walking, cycling, and outdoor movement safe, natural, and inviting.

To support our efforts, the government should:

- Integrate Active Design principles into the new National Model Design Code

- Build Active Design principles into all local plans, relevant design codes and the guiding principles for the New Towns Taskforce.

In addition, it is important to us that we address inactivity and inequality in everything we do. Our mission is Active Lives for All.

Levers that would improve the system conditions for our shared work in GM and beyond include:

- Guaranteed prevention fund from the NHS (and accountability for improving population health) as part of a co-investment model with Sport England as part of a wider prevention fund tied to the new health duty of MCAs.
- Alignment of Sport England investment with other mission-based investment such as DWP and NHSE monies directed at Getting Britain Working.
- Build out from and align financial incentives around the concept of a Healthy Neighbourhood, as part of all future devolution deals (e.g., Live Well in GM) and an 'earnback' model (local capture of a proportion of additional improvements e.g. tax revenue or savings) with HMT. Ensure flexibility in financial regulations to enable local places to develop incentives.
- Develop a model of co-investment with private and philanthropic finance such as the emerging Shared Investment Fund.
- A cross-departmental commitment, plan, and flexible funding for movement, physical activity and sport that is owned by all government departments, with collective, mission-based leadership.
- A deeper understanding of and commitment to measurement, evaluation and reporting approaches that align to systemic approaches to the work. There is constant pressure in the system and a search for causal data to evidence change in complexity.
- An agreed suite of system indicators of change based on latest evidence and evaluation from the National Evaluation and Learning Partnership.

Sport England and government can support our missions through:

- Devolved long term flexible funding (at least 5 years) to allow local places to make informed decisions (with security) based on evidence, principles, insight and data to invest in the people and places with greatest need utilising the principles of proportionate universalism.

- Cross-departmental alignment and case making with MCAs – DCMS, DHSC, DfE and MHCLG working closely with MCAs and associated agencies to collaborate with HMT and other departments to make the best case for physical activity and its ability to achieve multiple missions of government.
- Create the conditions for leadership and investment into early years and physical literacy to support outcomes in the critical first years of life.

4. Huge potential benefits across ages, places, and at scale

Movement, physical activity, and sport builds economic growth through health. It boosts opportunities and productivity, sport and physical activity is key to driving growth through a healthier, happier and more resilient nation.

Movement, physical activity and sport contributes [£107.2 billion in social value in England](#) each year: £96.7 billion in wellbeing value, and £10.5 billion in savings to the health and care system.

For every £1 invested in community sport & physical activity, there is a return on investment of £4.20.

And an active workforce is a healthier and more productive workforce: the cost of sickness absence and lost productivity due to ill-health is c.£150 billion – approximately 7% of GDP. But active adults take 27% fewer sick days.

A more active population is the sustainable path to securing the future of the NHS.

Moving helps prevent and manage long-term health conditions. It helps protect us from the biggest killers like cancer and heart disease. But all too often it's missing from the health and care picture when it should be front and centre.

Each year [physical activity prevents 3 million cases of chronic disease and reduces the demand on GP visits and mental health services](#). Every extra person who gets active reduces costs and saves lives (prevents 1.3 million cases of depression, 900,000 cases of back pain, 600,000 cases of Type 2 diabetes, 150,000 cases of coronary heart disease, 100,000 strokes).

The mental health benefits are significant too. The latest data from GM Active, [creators of Prehab4Cancer](#), shows a significant increase in life satisfaction for people in GP exercise referrals.

The mean scores (out of 10) for patients taking part in [exercise referrals were 1.9 points better than for those on a waiting list](#). This compares to previous studies where moving from unemployment to work led to an average 0.5-point increase in life satisfaction.

Success would power the healthiest generation of children ever. Because movement, physical activity, and sport matters most for our youngest citizens.

[BeeWell data](#) shows one additional minute of physical activity per week over a year could increase life satisfaction by 0.001 to 0.45 points. This translates to an improvement of 0.1% to 45% of a WELLBY: moving from a rating of 7 out of 10 to 7.001 to 7.45, a potentially notable change.

Using the value of a WELLBY, this increase is worth £13 to £5,850 per young person per year, the range representing the two different analytical methods used.

GM Moving want to create the conditions for active young lives everywhere, bringing children and young people together to make our communities stronger and healthier.

Active children are happier, perform better academically and report higher levels of trust. They are more confident and build broader social skills.

5. Greater Manchester is demonstrating this approach works – we're ready to do more and other places want to too.

Our story, approach, and evaluation

For ten years, partners across Greater Manchester, supported by Sport England, have been demonstrating how a place-based, collaborative approach works. Despite fierce headwinds, Greater Manchester was reducing inactivity at nearly three times the rate of change nationally before the pandemic. And inactivity levels have recovered twice as quickly as the national rate since; closing key inequality gaps in the process.

The latest Children and Young People data from Sport England shows Greater Manchester with higher levels (48.7%) of active (those doing an average of 60+ minutes physical activity every day) children compared to the England average (47.8%). This is the second year in a row GM has out-performed the national average having trailed by 4.2 percentage points at the height of the pandemic (2020/21 academic year).

Greater Manchester has been tracking data on system conditions and [enablers for change](#), which is a method now being used across the country. Understanding the enablers, conditions, and barriers to change is a vital part of the learning so we can create better conditions, and shift blockages and barriers at national and local levels.

Progress has been made across all five enablers for change, with the area in most need of attention being transforming governance and processes. There is still much work to be done here at the national level, as well as working across and between sectors.

GM Moving's work draws on evidence and learning from whole system approaches to complex challenges. Evidence from the first ten years of working in this way shows a positive correlation between these ways of working and active lives data trends.

As Sport England begins to work at scale, depth and pace in more places around the country, we can translate and apply the evidence and learning from the GM pilot phase to create the conditions for change at scale. It will be vital to keep learning and adapting about the [enablers for change](#) and how to create the optimum conditions.

The evidence is building all the time, and the learning is emergent. We also know that devolution in Greater Manchester has [impacted the whole health system](#) and led to [improved population health](#) relative to a control group with health improvements partially driven by improvements in the social determinants of health.

“Greater Manchester (GM) has been the ‘poster child’ for devolution in England, and alongside it, in the health world, the leading light in efforts to improve population health at scale... this is a story of how change happens in a national policy context, when it is driven by a coherent vision and commitment at system and local authority level. It is a story that has lessons for a government seeking to deliver a health mission that is centred on closing regional gaps in health inequalities and for other systems seeking to improve population health” ([Kings Fund, 2024](#)).

The whole system, place-based approach is seeding and growing across the whole of England, through a universal and targeted approach. Through further devolution, we can develop exemplars across the country; learning and demonstrating how these approaches can be designed and implemented according to local system conditions and context. There is a huge opportunity ahead, to make change at scale and depth across England.

Our current work in Greater Manchester

The [third MOU](#) between Greater Manchester (Partnership Board members: GMCA, NHS GM, TfGM, GMVCFSE, GM Active, GM Moving) and Sport England in September 2024 set the conditions for the next phase of our work.

The MOU gives us the springboard to align the next phase of our shared work with the new government's priorities (NHS improvements, reducing health inequalities, and prevention and community focus; building well-designed places and regeneration; supporting people

into work by joining-up work, health, and skills offers; and greater access to arts, music, and sport to support children) and the Greater Manchester missions (Live Well, MBacc, Housing First, and the Bee Network).

We are working closely with GMCA and GM partners to develop Live Well GM as part of a national 'prevention demonstrator'. GM Live Well is about ensuring there is a consistent offer across Greater Manchester so that 'everyday support' is available in every neighbourhood.

This recognises that thousands of GM residents are currently unable to fulfil their potential due to poor health, poor housing, living standards, skills and work etc.

People in this position are understandably more reliant on the state. They're more likely to attend A&E or see their GP, more likely to be claiming benefits, more likely to get drawn into criminality or to need expensive crisis interventions from their local council or the NHS.

This adds constant pressure on public services which are already struggling to cope with an exponential increase in demand and complexity.

To support people into good work and health, and reduce dependency on public services, we need to support them with other aspects of their lives. Helping people to move more is a critical part of this process as key to many people's journey of recovery.

GM Moving will continue to connect into these wider ambitions as part of the GM Prevention Demonstrator and wider Live Well ambitions meaning that we will be able to support people as part of a wider ecosystem leading to more sustainable outcomes in several areas. It also means this investment can align with wider investment and delivery around prevention and provides the opportunity to quickly scale and spread learning from this work.


We can do more with greater support, and so can other places in the country


GM Moving is already driving this work successfully in Greater Manchester, alongside the Combined Authority, NHS GM, and other partners across every sector and within every community. With an evolution and maturing of the cross-sector approach nationally, we can create conditions for a growing the economy, an NHS fit for the future, safer streets, and opportunity for all.

This will require an all-government, cross-departmental approach that starts with maintaining investment into Uniting the Movement and expands to unite departments and missions: economic growth through better health; a prevention-powered NHS with

movement at its heart; children able to experience the joy, wellbeing, and sense of purpose movement, physical activity, and sport provides.

Contact details

 info@gmmoving.co.uk

 0161 223 1002

 Greater Manchester Moving
House of Sport
The National Squash Centre & Regional Arena
Rowsley Street
Manchester
M11 3FF