

The Centre for Sport, Physical Education & Activity Research



Canterbury
Christ Church
University



Community Case Study 2025

Greenwich

Our Active Community is an initiative across England dedicated to enhancing opportunities for people with a learning disability to be active, happy and healthy.

It has been created as a way for people with a learning disability, stakeholders and organisations to connect, network, seek training and provision, as well as to access resources and funding.

By fostering collaboration, harnessing a community-led approach, building networks and capturing the voices of people with a learning disability, Our Active Community promotes inclusion, encourages participation, and aims to empower people with a learning disability to access opportunities to be physically active in their community.

Data sources

This case study was developed based on 3 focus groups and 22 interviews or conversations with 14 stakeholders and 32 people with a learning disability from remote consultations and a research visit in Autumn 2025.

The data informing this case study was collected between November 2023 – November 2025.





Community Overview

Community Background

1. Office for National Statistics. (2025). Local indicators for Greenwich. Retrieved 24 November 2025, from <https://www.ons.gov.uk/explore-local-statistics/areas/E09000011-greenwich/indicators>

2. Royal Borough of Greenwich. (n.d.). Population characteristics. Retrieved 24 November 2025, from https://www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk/info/200313/population_and_demographics/2163/population_characteristics

3. Royal Borough of Greenwich. (n.d.). Indices of Deprivation. Retrieved 24 November 2025, from https://www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk/info/200313/population_and_demographics/2165/indices_of_deprivation

4. Royal Borough of Greenwich. (n.d.). Learning Disabilities [PDF]. Retrieved 24 November 2025, from https://dataobservatory.royalgreenwich.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/Learning_Disabilities.pdf

Greenwich is a diverse London borough with an estimated population of around 300,000¹.

The population reflects a wide range of ethnicities and backgrounds, just over half (59%) of residents are of white ethnicity, a quarter (24%) black (African or Caribbean), a fifth Asian (14%), and 3% from other ethnicities².

One stakeholder describes it as a “very multicultural population”, while another observes how there are a “high number of ethnic minority communities, and we have additional communities within those communities.”

This vibrancy brings both opportunities and challenges, with a community stakeholder noting, “it can be difficult for them to integrate” due to the wide variety of cultures.

The borough experiences some socio-economic inequalities as Greenwich falls within the bottom quarter of local authorities in England for the average rank of the Index of Multiple

Deprivation³. One stakeholder explains, “we have a north and south divide, and the north is less affluent than the south.”

This highlights the need for funding and initiatives like Mencap’s Our Active Community to create opportunities that might not otherwise be possible.

There are reported to be 5,000 people with mild to moderate learning disabilities in Greenwich, and around 1,000 with severe or profound learning disabilities⁴. Some residents however, are believed to not be recorded on formal learning disability registers, 4,000 with mild-moderate and 400 with severe or profound disabilities⁴.

Recently, Greenwich has shifted away from traditional brick-based day services, including the closure of Sherrard Road, previously a key day centre, in favour of creating more inclusive, community-based opportunities for people with a learning disability. Greenwich Mencap now serves as the main hub supporting residents.

This transition may have left gaps in provision and continuity of support, making the timing of Our Active Community particularly valuable in helping ensure a broader range of accessible activities are available.

The borough’s location in south-east London, along the River Thames, combines urban town centres, residential areas, and green spaces, offering potential for community-based activities.

Extensive transport links, including buses, DLR, and rail, make the area accessible, with stakeholders noting, “location is great, it’s got great links with transport, bus links pretty much everywhere in Greenwich” and “it’s very easy to get around”.

Stakeholders

Engaging with stakeholders

Community Partner Kaylee has been strongly supported by key community stakeholders, particularly those within Greenwich Council, who have helped her connect with the right people and engage them in the project.

Through this support, she became aware of established groups and sessions to attend, allowing her to widen her network and reach stakeholders who may be interested in getting involved.

The Community Connectors have also played an important role, supporting Kaylee to build relationships with community members and strengthen engagement across the borough.

Building relationships

Greenwich is reported to have a well-connected community for people with a learning disability, and as the Community Partner, Kaylee has actively embedded herself within it. Stakeholders note her regular presence at local coffee mornings, which attract around 30 people.

She worked with Advocacy in Greenwich to produce a survey on local activities and attended consultations, sessions, and events, including those at Greenwich Mencap, local community hub Tramshed and the 100-day challenge.

Challenges

Some stakeholders are perceived to have limited capacity to engage, especially those focused on operational or frontline delivery.

This can make attending forums or meetings part of Our Active Community difficult, so the project increasingly needs to try and reach stakeholders where they are.

Next steps

Priorities include growing the forums and exploring new ways to involve schools, while recognising project funding is limited to community-based activity rather than in-school provision.

Current engagement spans a diverse range of stakeholders and organisations, including:

- ✓ Day Services, Centres or Supported Living: Compass Supported Living, Greenwich Mencap
- ✓ Community Organisations and Charities: Advocacy in Greenwich, Volunteer Centre Greenwich, Mycenae House, Ahoy Centre, Garrison Church
- ✓ Service Providers: Greenwich Leisure Limited (GLL), Dandelion Collective, Dynamic Coaching
- ✓ Health Services: Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust (Greenwich Community Learning Disability Team)
- ✓ Local Authority: Royal Borough of Greenwich Council (Sport Development, Health and Adult Services, Public Health and Wellbeing)
- ✓ Schools or Colleges: Brighter Futures College

Perceptions and Expectations

Perceptions

Stakeholders view Mencap's Our Active Community as a valuable project that helps "join the dots between services in the community", strengthening coordination across local organisations.

Several community stakeholders highlight Greenwich's existing strengths: "there is a well-connected community for people with a learning disability in Greenwich".

Several community stakeholders feel Our Active Community is building on this by encouraging collaboration, through attendance at coffee mornings, to gather insight directly from people with a learning disability.

One stakeholder notes that Kaylee's involvement as the Community Partner

has already supported understanding local needs, explaining, "Kaylee asked if we could produce a survey about local activities and what people want".

Stakeholders also emphasise the benefit of shared expertise, particularly around accessible communication and Easy Read materials.

One community stakeholder explains, "developing Easy Reads isn't at my disposal, but being able to learn from Mencap's expertise is really important."

Others see the project as raising awareness and visibility, describing it as "a starting point...helping our communities and supported living".

While capacity constraints appear to be a challenge, especially for those delivering frontline services, stakeholders consistently express appreciation for the project's collaborative approach and its role in strengthening local networks.

Expectations

Expectations for Our Active Community focus on improving access, strengthening partnerships, and expanding inclusive opportunities. Stakeholders hope the project will help "better pool our resources as a community" and improve understanding of "people's awareness of disability-specific provision and how this can be improved".

Many see Our Active Community as a platform for shared learning, with the council noting, "we will embed these learnings in our refreshed sport and physical activity strategy."

A key expectation is that the project will help build a clearer picture of local needs and provision, as one community stakeholder shares, "we can work together to get a true reflection of the available provision and the needs".

Others emphasise co-production and ambition, such as wanting to "get people with a learning disability doing

activity and make the public aware they need to support us", with hopes to "see the leisure centre full of people with a learning disability doing activities across the week".

Stakeholders hope Our Active Community will spark wider organisational involvement and reduce risk around testing new ideas, as one stakeholder explains, "with funding, we can do 'learnings' without as much risk".

Many anticipate future growth, though appreciate this is dependent on stakeholder capacity.

Across community stakeholders, there is a shared expectation that Our Active Community will amplify inclusion, expand opportunities, and help sustain long-term, community-led activity.



Current Provision

Existing Offer

GLL Leisure Centres, Oxleas and the council offer inclusive 'Fun and Fitness' sessions for people with a learning disability:

- ✓ Swimming
- ✓ Football
- ✓ Studio-based sessions

Community organisations for people with a learning disability offer:

- ✓ Yoga
- ✓ Dance
- ✓ Bowling
- ✓ Basketball
- ✓ Gardening
- ✓ Table Tennis
- ✓ Walking group
- ✓ Chair-based exercises

Other community activities include:

- ✓ Badminton
- ✓ Swimming
- ✓ Sailing at Ahoy Centre
- ✓ Gymnastics at Sutcliffe Park
- ✓ Unique cycling at Sutcliffe Park
- ✓ Dance with Dandelion Collective
- ✓ Basketball with Dynamic Coaching
- ✓ Football with Charlton Athletic Community Trust

The current provision for people with a learning disability in Greenwich to be physically active offers some valuable opportunities, but stakeholders suggest it is not sufficient.

One organisation reflects, "there's a lack of affordable activities for people with a learning disability".

While there are reported to be some community sessions targeted at people with a learning disability, much of what exists is believed to be spread thin, with "scattered classes at leisure centres and day centres" and at times "fragmented provision".

Despite this, there are positive examples across the borough.

Fun and Fitness, delivered by Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust in partnership with GLL and the Royal Borough of Greenwich Council, offers adapted inclusive classes with Easy Read guides. Local programmes such as Enable also provide specialist weight management with support to be active.

People with a learning disability highlight the value of some of the opportunities, saying, "I like coming out on these walks" and "I like being able to explore the local area", and describe activities such as swimming and basketball as "enjoyable" and "exciting".

Challenges

This section explores the key challenges in delivering inclusive physical activity provision for people with a learning disability in Greenwich.

While some provision exists, stakeholders highlight ongoing issues that limit its reach, quality, and accessibility.

A core stakeholder explains how Greenwich “doesn’t have a strong sports network like other boroughs have, but does have a strong health network”, which could shape the types of opportunities currently available and contribute to gaps in coordinated, inclusive provision.

Information sharing

A concern among community stakeholders is the difficulty of getting clear, accessible information to people with a learning disability and their families.

Stakeholders emphasise the need for “more information and finding ways to share within the community”, with another stakeholder noting it can be “hard to get the info to people with a learning disability”.

While most venues are physically accessible, the lack of accessible information could still prevent full participation.

Resources and funding

Funding pressures are believed to have affected service availability, as council cuts are suggested to have reduced capacity in day centres, limiting the number of people who can access this supported provision.

One organisation mentions how “more resources need to be available to develop and implement more accessible and affordable activities for people with a learning disability in the community”.

Workforce capacity and training

Workforce limitations present a key barrier. Conversations with stakeholders reveal a shortage of instructors confident in delivering adapted sessions, with some hesitant due to limited experience working with people with a learning disability.

This includes gaps in specialist roles such as swimming instructors.

As summarised by one stakeholder, the challenge lies in “getting good-quality delivery or reach to people with a learning disability”.

Top Challenges:

- ✗ Limited information sharing
- ✗ Insufficient funding and resources
- ✗ Reduced day service capacity
- ✗ Workforce shortages
- ✗ Limited trained staff

Opportunities

Stakeholders identify several opportunities to enhance physical activity provision for people with a learning disability in Greenwich, emphasising the potential to expand both the reach and inclusivity.

One stakeholder notes, “it’s not been great without particular targeted sessions”, highlighting an opportunity to increase specific inclusive sessions in the community.

Mapping activity

Stakeholders express a strong interest in mapping existing provision for people with a learning disability, as well as other disabled community members, highlighting the need for a comprehensive overview of activities.

Previous attempts include informal timetables shared during coffee

mornings, but more structured collaboration with the council is underway to produce a complete and accessible list of opportunities.

This approach aims to identify gaps, avoid duplication, and ensure resources are effectively targeted to meet community needs.

Staff training & session quality

Improving staff skills and session quality appears to be a key priority and prospect to enhance opportunities. There are current offers for training people with a learning disability to become swimming teachers.

Council training programmes draw on expertise from both professionals and people with a learning disability to offer guidance.

Oxleas has also previously delivered upskilling courses and could continue to do so, working alongside experts by experience who are community members with a learning disability.

There is also a focus on sharing best practice and connecting providers with established groups, ensuring sessions are inclusive.

Improve accessible information

Accessible information is seen as essential for participation. Leisure centres and other community organisations could be encouraged to provide further support with Easy Read guides with clear directions that go beyond simple postcodes. This would help people with a learning disability and their families navigate venues confidently and independently.

“The great thing about the project is the flexibility and willingness to try things”

Familiar places and people

Consistency in locations and staff is recommended to build trust and rapport.

Ensuring people can regularly attend the same venues and have familiar staff can support participants in understanding activities, reduce reliance on jargon, and encourage sustained engagement.

Areas to improve:

- ✓ Map provision
- ✓ Staff training
- ✓ Session quality
- ✓ Accessible information
- ✓ Familiar venues
- ✓ Consistent staff

A group of diverse people, including men and women of various ages, are walking along a paved waterfront promenade. In the background, a body of water and a city skyline are visible under a hazy sky. The entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent purple filter. The title 'Community Needs' is written in large, white, sans-serif font across the middle of the image.

Community Needs

Motivation and Confidence

People with a learning disability in Greenwich express a range of feelings about being physically active, with many describing it as rewarding and fun.

Many express feeling happy, relaxed, calm, safe, loved, excited, and confident, as well as sometimes feeling overwhelmed and frustrated during activities.

Specific examples include gardening, which a community member says, “it makes me feel relaxed”, reflecting the emotional as well as physical benefits of inclusive community activities.

Motivation

Motivations to engage in physical activity for people with a learning disability seem to vary widely.

Many are drawn by the social side of activities, enjoying teamwork, friendship, and conversation: “Enjoy doing it with my friends, we get to talk

and “I wouldn’t do the walking group if it wasn’t with others”.

Others perceive themselves to be motivated by their wellbeing, with activities seen to support mental and physical health: “I like dancing, it makes me feel calm and it’s good for my mental health”.

Overall, participation is driven by a mix of enjoyment, social connection, and health benefits.

Confidence

Conversations with people with a learning disability and those working closely with them, reveals confidence among people with a learning disability varies widely and can act as both a motivator and a barrier to participation.

Many can require encouragement or support to try new activities, as one stakeholder reflects, “some need encouragement or need support staff there”.

Initial low confidence may relate to perceived skill gaps or fear of embarrassment.

Structured opportunities, peer role models, and step-by-step engagement, however, are believed to help build confidence over time.

Top Motives:

- ⬆ Social connection
- ⬆ Enjoyment and fun
- ⬆ Physical health
- ⬆ Mental wellbeing
- ⬆ Teamwork & friendship
- ⬆ Conversation & interaction

“Feel they don't have the skill set and could get embarrassed”

Barriers to Participation

Conversations reveal how several barriers can prevent people with a learning disability in Greenwich from accessing opportunities to engage in physical activities.

These include reliance on support, limited accessible information, lack of adapted activities, and some travel challenges.

Support

Many people with a learning disability often rely on carers, family, or support workers to enable participation in physical activities.

Stakeholders highlight support is essential not only for transport but also for prompting attendance, with a service provider commenting,

“I think the carer or whoever they live with has a massive influence on this person turning up”.

People with a learning disability often note, “support worker takes me”, highlighting the reliance on consistent, trusted individuals to ensure engagement. It is also highlighted that people with a learning disability often need a carer to accompany them in the water when swimming. This can present a significant barrier if carers are unwilling or lack confidence in the water themselves, limiting opportunities for participation.

Accessible and up-to-date information

Finding clear, accessible information is viewed as a key challenge.

Stakeholders note some websites are difficult to navigate: “it’s hard to find where to sign up, and it’s not accessible”.

Centralised directories, like the Greenwich Community Directory, exist but are often understood to be out of date.

Regularly updating these resources, providing Easy Read materials, and proactively sharing information through carers, who are often the main source of information, could significantly help to overcome barriers.

Inclusive activities and new experiences

Stakeholders stress how activities require accessibility adaptations, including seating, proximity to instructors, and sensory considerations, as “some don’t like noise and light”.

Trying new activities can also cause anxiety, with one stakeholder working closely with people with a learning disability shares, “new things are a process; if they haven’t done it before, not all of them will go and do it straight away”.

Encouragement and familiarisation are also identified as necessary to build confidence.

Access and transport

Transport is also identified as a potential barrier for some.

Although public transport is available and many people with a learning disability can travel independently in Greenwich by bus or occasionally by DLR or train, others require support to travel safely and confidently, limiting their ability to access community activities without assistance.

“Onus on the carer to be there so they can take part”

Enabling Participation

“More can be done educating care workers, as people with a learning disability rely on their carers, that’s the one place people get their info from”

While some needs are currently being met, people with a learning disability highlight additional support and opportunities that would help them to be more active.

Many emphasise the importance of building confidence and reducing barriers to participation, noting that by “going to the spaces in walking groups, they can feel comfortable to go to those activities” and that “familiar things are more accessible to them”.

Others highlight the vital role of family, carers, or friends in providing travel support and encouragement: “family to come with me, someone can help me if things go wrong” and “friends to help me”.

Creating spaces where “they know the people are like them, so they wouldn’t feel judged” is also seen as crucial to promoting inclusion and sustained participation.

People with a learning disability want more access to:

- | | |
|--------------|-----------|
| + Gym | + Cycling |
| + Climbing | + Pilates |
| + Basketball | + Tennis |
| + Football | + Darts |



Developments

Community Partner

Each Community Partner involved in Our Active Community plays a vital role in identifying community strengths by listening to local individuals, engaging with stakeholders and organisations, and facilitating meaningful connections that support growth.

By increasing awareness, bridging gaps in accessibility, and promoting inclusion, the Community Partner plans to ensure more people with a learning disability can engage in physical activity.

Their role focuses on support, utilising seed funding, capacity building and ensuring sustainability.

Value of the role

Stakeholders emphasise the importance of the Community Partner in strengthening networks and driving collaboration across the borough. One stakeholder notes that the role has “contact with projects that I would never have the capacity to do...it can accelerate the impact.” Others describe the role as being central to building momentum, by sharing, “the role can achieve a lot” and “I think the Community Partner will really encourage growth in physical activities across the borough”.

Hopes for the role

Stakeholders hope the Community Partner will increase participation, identify gaps in provision, and support long-term sustainability. The role is seen as a bridge between organisations and the learning disability community, ensuring insights and needs are shared in ways that lead to practical action. For example, stakeholders hope to work with the Community Partner to advertise mentoring schemes, gather

feedback, and share accessibility insights. One community stakeholder notes, “the more successful these projects are in the community, the more likely people with a learning disability can become more active and be part of a bigger and wider community.”

Progress

A core focus has been relationship-building and visibility. One particularly engaged stakeholder explains, “the focus has been on getting Kaylee to know people in Greenwich...and hearing about what’s working and what activities are out there.”

Stakeholders have supported this by connecting the Community Partner with key organisations, including GLL, Oxleas, Special League and the Volunteer Centre Greenwich.

The Community Partner has also delivered a range of community activities, including a conference, support for dancers working towards a leadership qualification, and developing the upcoming Winter Sports Day.

Views of the Community Partner

Feedback about the Community Partner is consistently positive. Stakeholders describe her as “lovely and helpful”, “really approachable”, and “great to work with”, noting a strong relationship and open communication.

Some however acknowledge the challenge of being a new face, noting that trust takes time, highlighting that attending established groups has been an effective approach.

Challenges

No major challenges have been reported, though progress is understood to rely on allowing time for connections and activities to develop. Patience is viewed as important to enable activities to become self-sufficient, allowing growth and engagement to progress organically over time.

Community Connector

Mencap's Our Active Community is recruiting a Community Connector in each community to identify and advocate for the needs of people with a learning disability, share lived experiences and help shape inclusive activities and opportunities.

Views of the role

Stakeholders across Greenwich view the Community Connector role as influential and impactful. They emphasise the value of lived experience in encouraging physical activity, with peer-to-peer guidance and support proving particularly effective.

The role is also seen as an important employment pathway for people with a learning disability.

Hopes and concerns

Stakeholders hope the role continues long-term, expands across the borough, and further raises awareness of physical activity, with one stakeholder expressing, "it would be great to have it continue". Several organisations also hope to host similar roles in the future, recognising the value the role brings to the community. Concerns primarily focus on securing ongoing funding and ensuring hosts can provide adequate support.

Recruiting the Community Connector

Introducing the role initially raised questions about the amount of funding, fair pay for a London borough, and the organisational capacity to offer appropriate support.

While the funding was welcomed, many organisations felt it would not "cover the costs of their time". Concerns about ensuring a London-appropriate wage were shared with Mencap, who adapted the funding model in response.

Volunteer Centre Greenwich and Brighter Futures were selected as hosts.

Despite initial hesitation, one host reflects, "we could always see the benefits...we have been championing employing people with a learning disability for years." Hosting the role is viewed as an opportunity to learn and strengthen inclusive practice.

Recruitment was delivered collaboratively between the Community Partner and host organisations, who value the flexibility to adapt role descriptions and ensure accessibility.

The role was expanded into two posts, with individuals appointed to bring complementary strengths.

During induction, one host raised onboarding challenges, which Mencap promptly addressed.

Since the Community Connector role began, one host notes capacity as an ongoing challenge, explaining that,

unlike other communities, they do not have a dedicated staff member to support the Community Connectors full-time.

Feedback on the Community Connectors

Early feedback is highly positive. Stakeholders praise their passion, confidence, and visibility, describing them as "great voices for people who are less able to provide that voice."

They are recognised for strengthening community links, contributing to forums, and shaping more accessible materials.

Their involvement has also encouraged organisations to reflect, adapt, and improve inclusive practice.

Community Connector profile:

Nicole

Joined in February 2025

Receives support from:

- + Kaylee (Community Partner) and Volunteer Centre Greenwich

Personal motivation:

- ✓ Passionate about supporting people with a learning disability in their community
- ✓ Committed to helping individuals become more physically active

Hopes and aims:

- ✓ Encourage people with a learning disability to get out, be active, and enjoy new activities
- ✓ Use personal experience of having a learning disability to provide practical support and understanding

Early achievements:

- 🏆 Supported funded sessions including creative dance, boccia, and sosa dance
- 🏆 Presentation at conference, sharing experiences and advocating for inclusion

Future plans:

- + Organising a Winter Sports Day in December to showcase inclusive opportunities

“Enjoy doing the creative dance with Kuan at Dandelion Collective”



Community Connector profile:

Abdul

Joined in June 2025

Receives support from:

- + Kaylee (Community Partner) and Brighter Futures

Personal motivation:

- ✓ Driven to improve experiences and prevent others facing the challenges they encountered
- ✓ Committed to making a positive change for people with a learning disability

Hopes and aims:

- ✓ Bring people with and without disabilities together

Early achievements:

- 🏆 Facilitated forums using flipcharts to gather community priorities
- 🏆 Ran a Mencap Learning Disability and Sport workshop
- 🏆 Presented at the Our Active Community conferences

Future plans:

- + Support people with a learning disability in accessing gym memberships

“We are all unique and different, just because we have a disability, it doesn't define who we are”



Network Developments

The Community Partner has focused on building networks and partnerships, encouraging collaboration between local organisations.

While stakeholders identify improved communication because of Our Active Community, they believe increased dialogue may not yet have translated into broader participation among people with a learning disability, with hopes that stronger connections might soon lead to more inclusive, community-based activity.

“Well-structured, very good, questions really relevant, our people with a learning disability turned up and gave feedback and direction”

Community forums

The community forums have become a key part of Greenwich's Our Active Community project, often led by the Community Connectors with support from Kaylee, the Community Partner. Stakeholders note they have been well attended, bringing together people with a learning disability from across the borough, as well as representatives from various organisations.

One stakeholder shares how the forums “have been about meeting people with a learning disability, but also how networking with different partners has been great.”

Forums are described as “action-focused” and viewed as providing a space for discussion, brainstorming, and sharing ideas.

Community members can share their work, hear from others, and contribute to shaping activities and projects.

Sessions have included talks from people with a learning disability, interactive activities such as dance and sports demonstrations, and collaborative planning discussions.

Stakeholders share how feedback is actively sought and considered, ensuring the forums can remain responsive to the needs of the community.

Outcomes of the forums have been positive, with an attendee commenting, “it was helpful to meet people from other organisations”.

Stakeholders believe they provide a platform for people with a learning disability to voice their priorities, gain confidence, and connect with potential mentors or friends to support participation in physical activity.

Plans are in place to continue forums every couple of months, focusing on the six priorities set by community members.

Currently, the priority being emphasised is 'Trying something new,' supported through sports days and activities at forums that participants can try.

Challenges associated with the community forums raised by stakeholders are related to ensuring ideas generated are followed through. To enable this, it is suggested that ideas may need to be shared more widely so other organisations can take them on or provide the necessary support.

Despite this, forums are valued for in-person discussions and informal side conversations, with monthly meetings timed well to support ongoing engagement.

They are understood as providing a space to meet others and share information.

One stakeholder reflects, "it's great that it's led by people with a learning disability; it feels community-led," highlighting their role in fostering connection, collaboration, and community-driven action.

Another attendee added, "they are working well so far, hopefully that can continue."

Greenwich community forums are:

- ✓ Building local relationships
- ✓ Facilitating stakeholder networking
- ✓ Showcasing projects and activities
- ✓ Amplifying the voices of people with a learning disability





Successes

Seed Funding

Funding process and panel

The seed-funding process allows written or video applications and is described as “straightforward”, though some feel it “could be streamlined to be easier”.

The panel itself includes people with a learning disability, keeping lived experience central.

Six successful applications:

Fun and Fitness Zumba

This seed-funded activity began in January 2025, informed by a community forum where people with a learning disability voted Zumba as an activity they wanted, and aligned with the council’s development plan.

The sessions are run by Oxleas Learning Disabilities Team in partnership with

Greenwich Council, taking place every Tuesday, 2–3pm at GLL’s Plumstead Leisure Centre. Funding covers the instructor and venue, with participants contributing £2 for sustainability.

Classes include adaptations like extra repetitions, a mix of structured routines and freestyle, and activities such as the “catwalk” to build confidence.

Participants are believed to find it empowering to express themselves

freely, often requesting their favourite songs, with carers joining in too.

One participant says that “if I miss a session, I’m not happy”, while staff comment how, “the instructor has been really well received, people just love attending her class.”

**“It makes me feel like I
can take on the rest of
the week”**



Seated Boccia and Sosa Dancing

Seated Boccia and Sosa Dancing, part of Mycenae House's Reach Out programme, started in September and runs on Wednesdays 11:30–12:30.

Funding supports the instructor, venue hire, and marketing. Led by an inspiring instructor, sessions feature adapted international dances like cha-cha and salsa, using maracas, pom-poms, and body movement.

Attended by residents from supported living and other community members, the classes are described as “really busy, really vibrant and really exciting”.

Participants voice enjoying expressing themselves, building confidence, and having fun and sharing, “I love coming every week” and “it makes me feel good inside”.

Support workers' involvement is also valued by participants, and there is interest in having sessions led by people with a learning disability in the future.

Currently, however, the only sustainability plan is to secure donations, so further planning may be needed to sustain the sessions.



Dance with Dandelion Collective

In March 2025, dance sessions began with the Dandelion Collective, a community arts organisation supporting creative and inclusive activities. With support from the Community Partner and the council, a previously low-attendance learning disability class was revived.

Seed funding supports two student assistants from Brighter Futures, providing a valuable opportunity for people with a learning disability to take on leading roles.

Funding also covers space hire and the instructor's fee. Weekly, student-led, improvisation-based classes use imagery, favourite songs, and dance parties, culminating in performances.

The organiser notes participants enjoy expressing themselves, building confidence, and improving communication skills, describing sessions as fun and empowering.

'Hoops' basketball sessions

Basketball sessions delivered by Dynamic Coaching at Shooters Hill College offer adapted, fun, and engaging basketball for Special Education Needs and Disability students.

The sessions are supported by Our Active Community funding and the council, and were delivered in partnership with Access Sport.

Using specialised equipment, sessions aim to help young adults express themselves and build confidence, providing a safe space for those who might usually feel intimidated at the sports academy.

Attendance is strong, with 15–20 participants per session and feedback shows the sessions are going well.

Yoga sessions

Advocacy in Greenwich has applied to run a yoga class at Tramshed, a community hub known for hosting inclusive and accessible activities, following interest raised by women to their consultants and beneficiaries.

The funding amount though was noted as modest, intended to cover venue hire, an instructor, and equipment costs.

The session also hopes to provide a social element, with access to the communal café area for participants to interact.

This has been approved, and pending funding, the sessions will start soon.

Football Leaders course

The Football Leaders course, run and supported by the council and Oxleas and delivered by Next Level Training, offers a six-week pre–Level 1 introduction for people with a learning disability, helping to address gaps in accessible coaching pathways.

Participants express wanting to become leaders, “learn some basic rules”, and gain broader skills.

Sessions cover team formation, basic rules, leadership skills, and practical football games.

Participants mention valuing learning to lead, gaining confidence, and teaching others.

Many are interested in further coaching qualifications, and the council hope to re-run the course and explore additional opportunities with the provider.



Other Partnerships and Activity

“We have consulted with learning disability participants about what they want, what they like, what activities they need in the community”

Our Active Community has continued to consult with people with a learning disability to understand their interests, preferences, and the types of activities they want in the community.

These insights have helped shape activity development and identify gaps in provision.

Stakeholders have also been supported in accessing Easy Read resources from other organisations, ensuring activities and information are inclusive and accessible.

As a result, more opportunities for people with a learning disability are being provided across Greenwich, helping to increase participation and engagement.

Further funding applications

Several funding applications are in progress to expand opportunities:

Coaching courses

Previous attempts by Greenwich council to launch a multi-sports coaching course faced low sign-ups, resulting in the need to postpone.

The plan is now to start a dance leaders course in January with Dandelion Dance Collective, an established community group. This could provide a more structured and reliable approach to successfully engaging participants and getting the course underway.

‘Give it a Go’ disability

Feedback from community forums highlights the desire for gym access.

A partnership with GLL will hopefully create an accessible membership pathway, offering free and then discounted memberships, gym inductions, and mentor support through

Advocacy in Greenwich and the Volunteer Centre Greenwich.

Sensory movement sessions for complex needs

Funding has been sought to run theatre-style exercise sessions led by Dandelion Collective at Goldie Lee Hospital, responding to the need for inclusive, sensory-based movement activities.

Sessions were shaped through consultation with carers and support workers and will include ‘Train the Carers’ workshops to enable exercises to continue independently.

The requested funding covers tutor fees, equipment, and sustainability workshops, with the venue provided in-kind.

Try It, Like It, Do It – inclusive activity sessions

Funding is sought to run quarterly 'Test and Trial' sessions with Tramshed social groups, offering swimming, gym, curling, trampolining, and cycling. Shaped by participant and carer feedback, sessions will provide safe, low-pressure opportunities to try new activities, build confidence, and continue independently.

Funding will cover tutors, equipment, and coordination, with venues in-kind, while the pilot informs future programming and strengthens local partnerships.

Winter Sports Day

The Community Partner and

Community Connectors are planning a Winter Sports Day on Saturday 6th December.

Activities include multi-sport sessions, Boccia, climbing, cycling, and a silent disco, which has been reported to work well in another Our Active Community area.

The event reflects preferences identified in consultations about what people with a learning disability want to try.

It is also designed to link participants to pre-existing sessions, such as adapted cycling at Sutcliffe Park, supporting long-term engagement in community sport and activities.

Community Connectors are playing a key role in recruiting participants and promoting the event.





Challenges

Overview of Challenges

Greenwich community challenges

As discussed, people with a learning disability in the borough of Greenwich face a range of barriers to being physically active in the community.

While the borough benefits from good transport links and accessible venues, many rely on carers or support workers to attend activities, and limited availability or confidence among staff can prevent participation.

Accessible information is often assumed to be lacking, with directories and websites not always Easy Read or up to date.

Provision exists but is inconsistent, with activities scattered across leisure centres and community venues, and some sessions identified as unaffordable or inaccessible.

Changes in day services and available funding have also disrupted continuity, making initiatives like Our Active Community important for ensuring inclusive, regular opportunities.

Our Active Community-specific challenges

Our Active Community faces some challenges around stakeholder capacity, engagement, and sustainability.

Organisations and frontline staff are understood to have limited time to participate fully in forums, and building relationships with people across Greenwich's diverse communities takes time, particularly for a community-led project such as this.

One stakeholder observes, "it takes a while for new people to get to know people; therefore, the project has taken a while to start."

Host organisations also report struggling with capacity to support Community Connectors consistently.

Ensuring activities and Community Connector roles can continue beyond initial funding is also a key concern, highlighting the importance of careful planning and community-led development.

“Capacity-wise, it's difficult, but we are always happy to support community initiatives”



Conclusion & Next Steps

Summary of Key Findings

“The community Our Active Community has built has been great”

- ✓ Existing physical activity opportunities include swimming, dancing, cycling, walking groups, basketball, and chair-based exercises.
- ✓ Provision is understood to be scattered across leisure centres, community venues, and organisations, with some activities not fully accessible or inclusive.
- ✓ Stakeholders and community members express interest in expanding opportunities, particularly more inclusive and accessible activities that meet the needs of people with a learning disability across Greenwich’s diverse communities.
- ✓ People with a learning disability can often rely on carers or support workers for transport, prompting attendance and in-session support, where gaps in support could limit participation.
- ✓ Accessible and up-to-date information is believed to be limited; directories and websites are not always Easy Read or easy to navigate.
- ✓ Motivation to participate in physical activity varies, with many seeming to be drawn by social aspects such as friendship and teamwork, and others motivated by enjoyment, wellbeing, and the mental or physical health benefits of activities.
- ✓ Confidence among people with a learning disability can be a barrier or motivator, with some needing encouragement or support to try new activities. Opportunities in familiar settings with known peers and role models are believed to help build confidence over time.
- ✓ The Community Partner has been viewed as central to building networks, raising awareness of local provision, connecting organisations, and facilitating collaboration across the borough.
- ✓ Community Connectors are highly valued for their lived experience, advocacy, and ability to support peer-led engagement, shape activities, and amplify the voices of people with a learning disability.
- ✓ Forums and consultations are bringing people with a learning disability and organisations together, supporting collaboration, co-production, and networking.
- ✓ Seed-funded activities have supported inclusive, and adapted sessions, including dance, boccia, yoga, and team sports, alongside leadership courses. Together, these have helped build confidence, social connections, and skills, though some sessions require further planning to ensure sustainability.

Next Steps

- ✓ Expand engagement across diverse and neighbourhood-specific communities, including schools and cultural groups, ensuring stakeholders are reached in the spaces they naturally use.
- ✓ Support organisations with mapping existing provision to identify gaps, avoid duplication, and target resources effectively.
- ✓ Consider addressing practical barriers to participation, with travel support, buddy systems, familiarisation with new activities and accessible guidance for getting to commonly used venues.
- ✓ Explore ways to reach those not engaged with day services, supported living or community organisations.
- ✓ Look to update or create a central resource hub, such as the directory, for people with a learning disability to find out about activities in the community.
- ✓ Consider developing a central system for distributing accessible resources, including Easy Read materials, directly to carers and support workers.
- ✓ Encourage further peer-led or participant-driven activities, empowering people with a learning disability to take leadership in planning, delivering, and running sessions.
- ✓ Explore providing training and support to staff to enhance confidence and competence in delivering inclusive activities and enhance session quality.
- ✓ Continue building on forum discussions to plan next phases, focus on the next priority, anticipate gaps, and incorporate insights from stakeholders and community members.
- ✓ Look to ensure insights and feedback from forums are shared back with wider stakeholders and community members to inform ongoing or new activities.
- ✓ Continue support for the Community Connector role while identifying strategies to manage host organisation capacity and ensure effective guidance.
- ✓ Consider some support for sustainability planning for funded activities, Community Connector roles, and inclusive sessions beyond initial Mencap funding.

“Our Active Community has given us a structure by which we could bring together some of the physical activity agenda”

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