Find Your Active 1 Year Report

A report to highlight the successes and learnings of the Find Your Active campaign, in its first year.

Find Your Active was established, as there was a need to address inactivity levels across the county as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. Physical activity was placed high on the Governments agenda throughout the pandemic, and it was important that Active Essex capitalised on this momentum. Launched in July 2021, in line with the systems new Fit for the Future (FFTF) strategy, a media event was held in Melbourne Park Chelmsford, alongside a week of open sessions that were offered to residents by Essex partners and organisations.

What is Find Your Active?

The Find Your Active (FYA) campaign celebrates the fact that everyone can enjoy the huge benefits of being active - it’s just about finding what is right for you.

Movement and activity can be anything, it doesn't necessarily mean spending hours at the gym, it could be taking small steps, such as ditching the car and travelling actively or meeting up with friends for a walk. The benefits of residents doing this, will not only improve physical health but mental wellbeing too.

PLANNING & DESIGN

Find Your Active was built upon the foundations of the new Fit for the Future system strategy, which aimed to help communities recover from Covid-19, by developing partnerships, tackling inequalities, and improving health and wellbeing across the county.

Learnings from the Essex Local Delivery Pilot and in particular the work around Asset Based Community Development, influenced Active Essex’s approach to the campaign. The team used the COM-B model of behaviour change to develop the campaign. This model states that to get people sustainably active, they must be psychologically and physically capable of being active; have access to attractive and convenient activity opportunities; and must believe that activity is a beneficial thing to do. Therefore, the campaign was constructed to harness all of these components to ensure effective behaviour change would be achieved.

Britain Thinks Research

Britain Thinks were commissioned to conduct research to understand the barriers and drivers of physical activity of Essex residents. Britain Thinks, an insight and strategy consultancy, were an integral part to the development of the campaign, to understand the needs of each audience, particular key words/phrases that needed to be utilised, imagery which would help encourage successful behaviour change and the best placed name.

Qualitative research with inactive residents, living in deprived areas of Essex, took place from Feb-Apr 2021. Focus groups took place with residents who were physically inactive, as defined by Sport England, and each group included both men and women, as well as those living with a long term health condition, over weight and those from an ethnic diverse background.

Findings found were:

* Inactive residents want to see a diverse range of people represented, including some ‘people like me’
* Words like ‘active’ and ‘move’ are more accessible and encouraging than ‘exercise’ or ‘fit’
* Make sure there’s enough focus on ‘getting started’. Making it easy to take the first step.
* A clear call to action was vital on all marketing collateral, which would signpost the audience to further information.

*“*I like the message on these assets, they are very positive. There was one particular asset where a lady admitted that she struggled with her mental health and physical activity helped her. I can really identify with this.*”* Mother, from focus group

Key Audiences

By undertaking market research and analysing barriers and societal influences, Find Your Active were able to tailor each element and design the campaign around four key audiences. These target audiences were identified as being those who needed more support to get moving following the Covid-19 pandemic.

* Deconditioned Adults
  + Felt uninspired and unmotivated to do physical activity. Shielding during pandemic, so became sedentary.
  + The campaign needed to inspire audience to get active using stories and remind them of the importance of being active.
* Over 65's
  + Felt it was too late to get involved in activity and not sure how to take part safely.
  + The campaign needed to promote ways to get active and the importance of becoming less sedentary for a healthy heart.
* Children and Young People
  + Felt lost out on being social and unable to get outside to play with friends.
  + Campaign needed to use fun and engaging methods to inspire families to get active together through free methods.
* Under-represented Groups
  + Felt they have no/limited physical activity opportunities available in a safe environment.
  + The campaign should play a role in helping remove barriers and stigma by ensuring opportunities are available.

*“*I wanted to be involved in the Find Your Active campaign, because as an ICS Medical Director, I strongly believe I should role model behaviour.

The Find Your Active campaign has helped highlight that whether by a small or large amount, all physical activity counts. The campaign has shown we can all support residents to live longer, which consequently helps our health and care systems last longer.

The ICS has got behind the campaign, promoting the message to as many patients and staff as possible, as we understand how physical activity is the most impactful intervention we can make to improve our quality of life.*”* Dr Ronan Fenton, Integrated Care Systems (ICS) Medical Director

MARKETING & BRANDING

The research undertaken at the beginning of the campaign highlighted the need for content to include ‘real’ people like them, stating that it would be more inspiring and motivating instead of using a famous face or influencer. Therefore, all marketing collateral, including the launch film, reflected the four key target audiences, and these soon became the faces of the campaign. Assets were shared with Britain Thinks focus group participants who felt that due to a diverse range of people and non-traditional exercise activities featured, the campaign would be deemed a success.

Following the planning stage, Find Your Active set out to ensure that the campaign became a highly visual and story led initiative to influence behaviour change. Videos have become an integral part as they have helped relay individuals, groups and organisations stories, placing communities at the heart of the campaign. The videos and stories captured, provide relatable content for the campaign and this has ultimately helped ensure Find Your Active can be adopted by everyone in their own way. On reflection, this has become one of the biggest successes of the campaign.

The Britain Thinks research and soft market testing established key elements of the campaign. This included the Activity Finder, ‘help’ pages on the website and utilising new marketing methods, helping to grow brand awareness and reach all audiences.

Any insight collected through campaign monitoring activities has been used to constantly update and focus the delivery of communication and engagement materials to target audiences.

“You can engage and relate to local people, more so than a famous face. The film gave me the feeling, that this campaign is a great initiative for community building.” Long-term inactive resident, from focus group

Website

Inline with the launch of Find Your Active and the Fit for the Future system strategy, Active Essex rebranded their website, with a particular focus on the user journey, reflecting on the strategic priorities and building in what was learnt through the planning stages of the campaign. The Active Essex website has become a central hub of information, which signposts to opportunities and shares stories around the campaign. The website has been rooted as a call to action on all marketing material for the campaign, which will continue going forward. Specific pages such as 'how do I get started' have been particularly significant in supporting residents who are inactive or returning to physical activity. Britain Thinks research highlighted the need to support, motivate and inspire many different audiences and the Find Your Active pages reflect the many varied users coming to the site.

Activity Finder

The activity finder and open days throughout the launch weekend kick started the campaign, coupled with a launch video and a media event taking place in Chelmsford. Following Britain Thinks research, the activity finder was seen as the key function of the website. Inactive residents stated they would be likely to use it and weren't aware of a similar service available elsewhere. The Find Your Active activity finder has become a central hub for the campaign, helping residents to find activities near them. The page has remained in the top 10 viewed pages on the Active Essex website since launch in July 2021, and the number of sessions uploaded to the finder has more than quadrupled since launch.

Find Your Active Toolkits

In order to keep the Find Your Active messaging fresh and relevant, the Active Essex comms team distribute monthly toolkits with new content around the campaign. These toolkits help provide a focus to stories and keep stakeholders and the Essex comms group engaged.

* 69,673 unique visits to the FYA website pages in the first year
* 600,000 households received direct mail & competition to launch
* 1,779,112 individuals reached through ITV hub and Sky Adsmart ads
* 138,600 individuals accessed the FYA YT channel Oct 21-Feb 22
* 3,574 number of sessions on the FYA activity finder

EMBEDDING FYA ACROSS THE SYSTEM

Working across systems has been imperative in getting the Find Your Active message out there. With the support from multiple organisations, groups and individuals, Find Your Active has been able to support resident’s health and wellbeing, reduce social isolation through new friendships and continued to strengthen communities.

The buy-in from multiple systems such as the below, has helped to reach the target audiences and beyond:

* ICS
* Adult Social Care
* Schools
* Local Councils
* Groups and organisations
* Activity Clubs

Having support from individuals such as Cllr’s and key stakeholders, has helped give the campaign status and empowered the county to adopt the campaign as their own. The power of word of mouth has been a key driver in harnessing this campaign and using methods such as Find Your Active virtual Teams backgrounds have helped generate conversations, further promoting the campaign.

Local assets have been key in driving the Find Your Active message within communities, and the campaign has grown organically as a result. Learnings fed in through the evaluation team has ensured messaging and collateral is continually refreshed to shape the campaign going forward, addressing the ever-changing landscape of gaps within activity provision. As part of the evaluation process, it was imperative to encourage groups to complete partner and participant surveys, and share regular updates with stakeholders and partners.

Community Connectors

The campaign is also being supported by ten paid Community Connectors, who are embedded within their local communities. Like ambassadors, Community Connectors are playing a vital role in linking residents with appropriate local activities as well communicating the importance of activity for both physical and mental wellbeing.

“The campaign has invested in a substantial amount of litter-picking equipment, and after a slow start, distribution of equipment has increased primarily due to the work of the Community Connectors. It offers a free, social, low-impact activity for local residents. The Connectors are pivotal in supporting residents to take that first step into physical activity and are a friendly face for those who are new to a group/class.” NSMC on FYA findings

SUPPORTING ESSEX WORKPLACES

Workplace Edition

Find Your Active created a spin off sub-brand to focus on workplace health, which was designed alongside the Essex Working Well Scheme and Mid and South Essex Care Partnership. Now more than ever movement and exercise is vital for both employees and employers alike. Encouraging a better work-life balance, is becoming a priority for many. Find Your Active: Workplace Edition launched in January 2022 and since its conception has hosted a Big Team Step Challenge, released a policy and guidance document and has plans to continue this work going forward.

The initial findings of Find Your Active suggested that time was a barrier to getting active, therefore encouraging employees to move more whilst at work or travelling to and from, helps remove this barrier and supports better mental and physical health of staff.

Offering employees physical activity opportunities or adopting good wellbeing practices, such as 50-minute meetings, coupled with 10-minute walk and stretch, can help to increase productivity, reenergise staff and encourage employee retention. Find Your Active has shown that by implementing small changes, workplaces will see the benefits long-term for both their employees and their business.

Fund

The Find Your Active Small Grant fund has been an integral part of the campaign and was provided by Active Essex and Essex County Council, supported by Southend-on-Sea Borough Council and Thurrock Council, to respond to the immediate challenges of engaging people who had become less physically active due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Any organisation from Essex could apply, and the money could be used to either start new activities or increase availability/spaces for existing activities.

In addition to the Relationship Team utilising their key contacts, they helped infiltrate the fund into their localities and supported groups who were providing physical activity opportunities. These key audiences included: deconditioned adults, children and young people, over 65’s, women, ethnic diverse communities, lower-socio economic groups and people living with long term health conditions.

* Finding Your Feet is a project led by Community360, which helps improve people's health and wellbeing, through social prescribing. Find out more [here](https://youtu.be/k8Msqe2bn4E).
* Blue Therapy Active creates a safe inclusive environment for swimming to benefit the mental, physical and emotional wellbeing of residents in Southend. Find out more [here](https://youtu.be/a1uIuU0Z8VU).
* Yoga4All provides physical and mental health services to those living in Southend with a mental or physical health condition or disability. Find out more [here](https://youtu.be/zGupZSQXndI).
* High Beech Cycling Club based in Epping Forest, is a club for young people to help remove barriers, build confidence and learn life skills. Find out more [here](https://youtu.be/jexoQN1eILI).

In addition to the small grant fund, Find Your Active also had a funding pot, which promised large grant projects. This included the provision of litter picking equipment, for communities, country parks and libraries to utilise; a partnership with GoJauntly; a walking app whereby Find Your Active were able to fund 50 miles of new walking routes; and activity kits and associated training to care homes across the county, to increase activity levels amongst some of the most sedentary residents.

* 225 applications made to support community groups
* £466,000 funded to local groups/ clubs across Essex, Southend & Thurrock
* £461,000 funded to bigger projects throughout the county

Learnings and feedback taken from groups who received funding, as well as those who held open week sessions throughout the launch, have been instrumental in providing intelligence for the progression of the campaign.

Integral to the evaluation of the Find Your Active campaign, has been the partnership of Active Essex and the NSMC (National Social Marketing Centre), which has strengthened the developments of the campaign and the stories that have been shared as a result. This partnership has also allowed a deeper dive to take place among communities to understand what is working well, identify any challenges, and generate insight to help in the commissioning of new projects and messages within the campaign.

The evaluation has identified key characteristics of successful small grant activity projects – success being measured in terms of how the project reached its audience and achieved a sustainable increase in participants activity levels.

RELATABLE CONTENT

The initial research highlighted the need to think about wording and messaging used throughout the campaign, in order to achieve behaviour change. This was, and will continue to be reflected across all marketing material designed and created, ensuring relatable content is shared for each target audience.

Ambassadors

The fantastic cohort of 103 Find Your Active ambassadors, are brilliant at highlighting the plethora of opportunities taking place around the county, helping to breakdown some of the common barriers to physical activity.

Ambassadors within local communities play an important role in championing physical activity and inspiring residents 'like them' to get involved in positive movement. They provide anecdotes and lived experiences of the many ways individuals can get active and this can motivate others to follow a similar journey. Find Your Active has grown ambassador profiles and supported them to develop their skills and training, as well as help them to deliver led walks, community support groups and further their career.

The ambassadors range from 13-year-old Macey, helping inspire young people to get involved in physical activity, to Dave Chase who is an advocate of the benefits physical activity can have on men’s mental health.

To make sure that ambassadors reach all audiences across the system, System Supporter roles were created at the start of the campaign to help disseminate the messaging of Find Your Active across multiple systems and at a high strategic level.

Learnings and Legacy

Ambassadors, Community Connectors and the Britain Thinks research ensured Find Your Active could be driven locally, especially among harder to reach areas and those most affected by the pandemic.

Lessons learnt from the NSMC deep dives, so far are being used to shape the future direction of the Find Your Active campaign. For example, the small grant projects have had a similar impact to the larger grants, in providing sustainable activity sessions and developing community cohesion. The Active Essex team are continuing to build relationships with these projects, to support further growth. The Find Your Active campaign has been uniquely placed to bridge the gap between residents who are socially prescribed physical activity, with organisations/ Find Your Active projects, who are ready to help and support.

Marketing

Exploring different marketing methods enabled the communications team to understand what avenues worked well and how to best promote the messaging going forward. TV adverts, Social Media Retargeting and street adverts proved to be the most successful, as shown through the Active Essex website analytics and reports from the media agency, Zest. However, SMS text messaging, Radio Sponsorship Tags and YouTube adverts did not perform well in engaging residents.

Case Study

NSMC carried out a number of deep dives on Find Your Active funded projects, one of which included an activity for older residents in Braintree. Find Your Active funded their 12-week programme which consisted of seated exercises and low impact dance for older adults or those with living with a long term health condition. A key challenge for this rural group were a low number of attendees and the deliverer, had tried various promotional routes, but struggled to get GP's to support. Deliverer added: "One social prescriber told me that they were too busy to help, and that I would have to explore other avenues."

Following this insight, NSMC identified that there was a need to address the missing link between GP referrals to social prescribers and this will be a focus going forward, to make the pathway more effective. Find Your Active recognise the importance of utilising social prescribers to not only help increase physical activity levels, but positively reduce the pressure on the NHS and health care system.

Active Essex initially planned for this to be a year-long campaign, however due to its success and evolution across systems and organisations, this has in turn organically developed Find Your Active into a brand. Without intending, Find Your Active has become a social movement across Essex, being owned by the people and the Essex ecosystem, to ensure physical activity remains a priority for all.

Find Your Active has pushed the campaign further beyond its four key target audiences among residents. By capturing the attention of key stakeholders, such as local authorities and ICS’s, the messaging has been infiltrated across the system to help change the mindset of these organisations. As stakeholders have adopted this pioneering county-wide behaviour change campaign, it has helped strengthen their own agendas to positively enhance their many projects. By continuing to embed this successful campaign across the system, together we can make a difference to the county’s wellbeing through physical activity.

Over the next 6 months the campaign will continue its development of the Find Your Active: Workplace Edition and use the brand to power campaigns and events such as ReJuneVenate, RideLondon: Essex and this year’s Essex Activity Awards.

One of the main NSMC findings following the project visits, were that there was a gap in the range of activities offered for older men. Therefore, NSMC will be undertaking a 3-month project, with a cohort of men 50+ to understand their barriers/motivators and give them the opportunity to get active, whilst making new friends.

The Fit for the Future strategy helped shape the behaviour change campaign, and throughout this journey Find Your Active has begun to shape the future of not only Active Essex, but the sector as well.

Find out more about the campaign here: [www.activeessex.org/find-your-active/](http://www.activeessex.org/find-your-active/)