

## Commonwealth Active Communities: Social Prescribing Micro Grants

### Introduction

There is a significant challenge to the health of the Black Country with over 32.5% of the population classed as physically inactive. With a total population of 1.17m people that equates to over 305,000 people - we need to work differently to get people active and reduce the cost to our people, community, public services and local economy.

People's lives are complex, where and how people live have a bearing on how active and healthy they are. Root causes are complicated, related and diverse and we need to work in a more coordinated manner across sectors to contribute to tackling the inequalities that exist that prevent people from being active, moving more and playing sport.

### Commonwealth Active Communities

Black Country partners have received *Commonwealth Active Communities* funding from Sport England to enable a legacy of physical activity from the Commonwealth Games that take place across the West Midlands in 2022. Using the Games as a catalyst, we are piloting a community asset-based approach to tackling physical inactivity. The pilot aims to generate learnings to inform future planning and policy, strengthening collaboration amongst local stakeholders to develop future place-based work. This will support the development of a number of opportunities over the next two years across 12 priority areas in the Black Country, encompassing;

- **Capacity** - Nine new posts, inco *Community Connector* posts, hosted across the voluntary and community sector, supporting connectivity between different parts of the system (health, education, community, workforce) and enabling the production of priority area action plans
- **Community Engagement** – to ensure coproduction and codesign are at the heart of our delivery, a People's Panel will be created, with representation from across the priority areas, reflective of Black Country demographics
- **Workforce** – identifying, working with and upskilling people of influence in the community is at the core of our approach, and Black Country partners are producing the *Community Activation Academy*, an online learning platform that will provide the paid and unpaid workforce with the requisite skills and information to support communities to be more active.
- **Wayfinding** – it's imperative that if people want to be active, they have all the information they need on local activity opportunities and how to access them. Black Country partners are developing *Black Country Moving*, an online open-data platform that will enable residents and the workforce to obtain real-time information on what is available (including suitability for different demographic groups) and how to get involved (with booking links and route finder information).

In addition, the funding will enable a series of community interventions that will pull from a number of different funding packages.

## Social Prescribing Micro Grants Fund

Black Country partners have ringfenced specific resource to enable the activation of green and blue spaces through social prescribing and other health-related pathways over the course of the next two years. We know from local consultation that our deliverers of social prescribing in the Black Country, incorporating Primary Care Networks, Voluntary Sector Councils and Housing Associations, have concerns that there is a lack of activity-related opportunities to which their clients can be safely signposted. These micro grants will look to address this issue, enabling providers to develop interventions based on identified need and provide localised opportunities for people to be active.

### - Conditions of the Fund

<b>Geography</b>	<p>Funded projects will need to have <b>impact</b> in one of our 12 priority wards; these are:</p> <p>Dudley – Brierley Hill, St James’s, St Thomas Sandwell - Langley, Soho and Victoria, St Paul’s Walsall - Birchills Leamore, Town Centre, Willenhall South Wolverhampton - Bilston East, Bushbury South &amp; Low Hill, East Park</p> <p><b>Impact</b> can be defined as an intervention taking place within one of those geographies or something that can be evidenced to benefit residents from within one or more of those geographies.</p>
<b>What is Fundable?</b>	<p>Engagement with link workers from across the Black Country in preparation for this fund has highlighted the need to ensure people’s basic needs are met when supporting them to become more active. We have therefore built this into our planning; the list below demonstrates items that can be funded using social prescribing micro grants.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Delivery fees (e.g., led walks, led cycle rides)</li> <li>- Travel fees (e.g., bus passes)</li> <li>- Refreshments</li> <li>- Facility hire (e.g., tennis court booking)</li> <li>- Equipment (e.g., tennis rackets, appropriate clothing)</li> </ul> <p>Whilst we expect the majority of the funding to go towards structured interventions, our experience in developing social prescribing pilots over the last two years has highlighted importance of the provision of small grants that act as incentives to activation (such as money to enable the purchase of appropriate footwear for individuals). This fund can be used for that purchase.</p> <p>Whilst funded projects don’t have to take place within a park or on a canal side, activating green and blue spaces is at the core of the Black Country <i>Commonwealth Active Communities</i> programme, therefore we would expect all funded projects to consider how this can be built into each initiative.</p>
<b>Digital Compliance</b>	<p>All funded structured interventions will need to be open-data compliant as an award condition to support the <i>Black Country Moving</i> platform. Active Black Country will provide the requisite information and guidance to partners and no prior knowledge is needed.</p>
<b>Maximum Amounts</b>	<p>To ensure equitable distribution of funds across the Black Country, £15,000 has been initially allocated for structured interventions within each Local</p>

	<p>Authority area. It is expected that the maximum funding for a single project will be £3,000, however this could be increased by exception.</p> <p>A further £8,000 has been allocated for small grants (separate to the B2022 small grants programme) to support the activation of individuals through social prescribing pathways. The maximum amount that one person could benefit from is £150.</p>
<b>Monitoring</b>	<p>All awards, whether for structured interventions or individual small grants, will be required to provide monitoring information.</p> <p>Structured interventions will be required to keep a record of those who are being active and encourage all participants to carry out a short survey to enable an understanding of impact no sooner than 4 weeks into the programme.</p> <p>Link workers who facilitate small grants to individuals will be required to follow up with the patient 4 weeks after they receive the item to understand how it's been used and the impact on their activity levels.</p>

### Examples of Fundable Projects

<p><b>Led Walks</b></p> <p>A social prescribing team, based within the voluntary sector, have identified a group of people on their caseload who would benefit from the physical and social benefits of weekly walks around the local area of Birchills Leamore, encompassing Reedswood Park and the nearby canal. The link workers have a qualified walk leader within the team who has volunteered to lead those taking part, however 6 of the clients require transport to and from the start point each week and 3 people require new walking shoes. The project can be funded from the Social Prescribing Micro Grants scheme as a structured intervention.</p>	<p><b>Group Gym Sessions</b></p> <p>A PCN in Sandwell is looking to develop a project as part of its population health work to tackle health-related inequalities across its local footprint. The Clinical Director has a strong belief in the power of physical activity to improve physical and mental health and would like to subsidise a select group of patients to be able to become members of a community gym (cost being identified as the main barrier to them being more active). The PCN is based in Soho and Victoria and, as a condition to receiving the funding, all participants will be encouraged to meet as a group, once a week, to use the outdoor gym equipment at Victoria Park. The project can be funded from the Social Prescribing Micro Grants scheme as a structured intervention.</p>
<p><b>Supporting Elizabeth to be Active</b></p> <p>Elizabeth is 58 and lives in Brierley Hill. She has a mental health condition, exacerbated by chronic back pain. Her link worker has established that she'd be interested in starting to go on short but regular walks in the local park but she needs appropriate footwear. This can be purchased as a small grant from the Social Prescribing Micro Grants scheme. Four weeks after receiving the footwear, Elizabeth will be encouraged to join some of the established walking groups in the Black Country. A full list will be available on the <i>Black Country Moving</i> platform.</p>	<p><b>Community Gardening</b></p> <p>A housing association in Wolverhampton has identified a cohort of residents who would benefit from regular group activities. The housing association owns a plot of land that they want to use as an allotment, to encourage the residents to take ownership of it and start moving more. The project will require equipment, seeds and plants. This can be funded from the Social Prescribing Micro Grants scheme as a structured intervention.</p>

**Application Process**

1. Either the project itself, or those benefitting, need to be located within one of our priority areas. To check eligibility, please use the search function here (<https://blackcountry.maps.arcgis.com/apps/View/index.html?appid=bc4a0262bcad46ac851359e8fd70b3ce>)
2. Go to [www.activeblackcountry.co.uk/what-we-do/health-wellbeing/social-prescribing/](http://www.activeblackcountry.co.uk/what-we-do/health-wellbeing/social-prescribing/) and complete the simple Microsoft Forms document. This includes questions on;
  - a. The location of your project
  - b. How it will tackle inactivity and reduce health inequalities
  - c. Its sustainability potential
  - d. The time period for which it will run

**Project Contact**

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