



Picture: From 'Let's Fly a Kite' day



**Active
Black Country**
Creating an active, healthier region

Supporting your Community to be more active: A Toolkit for Faith Centres



Funded by



#EveryDayYourWay

Introduction

There are few groups better placed to support local people than faith-based organisation. You are trusted pillars of the community who care greatly about the health and wellbeing of those who choose to worship with you.

Active Black Country have committed considerable time to engaging with faith groups in recent years, understanding your reach and your potential in terms of improving the physical and mental wellbeing of residents in some of the most deprived parts of our region. We've carried out extensive consultation and piloted a number of initiatives through our Get Out, Get Active programme, collating learnings so that we can support you to support local people.

The primary aim of this toolkit is to provide faith organisations with the necessary information and resources to help some of the least active people; to inspire, encourage and support faith groups in their roles as community leaders, positively impacting on health across the Black Country.

Benefits of activity

It's recommended that we should be doing activity that raises our heart rate for 150 minutes per week. However, any activity is good for us and making small changes to our lifestyle can have really positive impacts on our health.



Improves life expectancy



Improves ability to do everyday tasks



Improves balance



Improves muscle strength



Improves blood cholesterol



Improves blood pressure



Reduces anxiety



Reduces pain



Improves mental health



Improves sleep

It also reduces your chances of developing a number of preventable health conditions

50% less chance of developing Type 2 Diabetes

50% less chance of developing high blood pressure

40% less chance of developing coronary heart disease

35% less chance of developing cardiovascular disease

30% less chance of having a stroke

25% less chance of developing certain types of cancer (including breast and colon)

25% less chance of developing joint and back pain

21% less chance of having a fall

The Potential of Your Role

COVID changed how we do lots of things. You adapted by broadcasting your services online and reconfigured your spaces to ensure people could worship in safety and comfort.

Active Black Country started to explore how messages about physical activity can be delivered and who it is that people trust and listen to.

In 2021, we worked with a number of faith centres in Wolverhampton, providing their leaders with the information and resources they needed to pass on positive messages about physical activity to some of the most isolated people in the community.

The Approach

Faith Leaders are in a fantastic position to influence someone's health. It's so easy to get started. Below are a couple of examples showing how local faith leaders have increased the activity levels of their community.

Fordhouses Baptist Church

Fordhouses Baptist Church wanted to provide something positive for mothers who had experienced repeated lockdowns with their young children. The Activities Coordinator from the church got a group together who had all expressed an interest in being more active. They agreed to commit to 4-weeks of walking more and generally increasing their activity levels. The Coordinator stayed in touch with everyone, doing a weekly WhatsApp broadcast to check on progress, but recognised that everyone responds differently to different approaches so, for the more private individuals, more personal messages of encouragement were sent.

These sessions and trips aren't advertised as activity-related as that would put some people off. However they enable those taking part to see how activity can be built into the day. For example, one excursion was planned to a local farm; at the end of the day, everyone was asked to check the pedometers on their smartphone, demonstrating that they'd all walked over 8,000 steps.



Congens

Congens are a registered charity with strong links to a local branch of the Jehovah's Witnesses. The group leader wanted to develop opportunities to promote health and wellbeing in the community and sought out individuals who were not taking part in any type of physical activities. He reached out to local housing groups and engaged their clients, some of whom were living with dementia, in gentle exercise sessions. No equipment was needed, and these simple chair-based sessions enabled some of the least active, most isolated members of the community to enjoy the physical and social benefits of activity sessions.



The Message



Open the Conversation

Try and find out how a person can build more activity into their everyday lives – the least active people gain the most from small increases in activity.



Understand the Barriers

What are the reasons stopping a person from being active? Be understanding and see each person as an individual.



Share the Benefits

Help them to identify how being active could benefit them. Share the information in this toolkit.



Agree a Realistic Plan

Set out a series of small changes that are manageable – don't try and do too much too quickly and try to ensure the first experience is good.

The Support

Keep in touch with people and give them encouragement through the channels they're most comfortable with – some people prefer face to face, others are more comfortable talking via text or a WhatsApp group. Reassure them, make them feel like they can do it and, if appropriate, use the positive experiences of others in the group to spur people on.

Types of Activities

Being active doesn't have to be expensive. It's possible that some appropriate clothing might be needed or, in some instances, specific equipment, however there are plenty of ways people can be active without spending a large amount of money.

Walking

Walking for 30 minutes a day or more is a great way to improve and maintain your overall health. Walk alone or with others to make the time an even more enjoyable social experience. You can also make your walks sensory to help people with complex impairments connect with their surroundings - <https://www.sense.org.uk/get-support/arts-sport-and-wellbeing/sense-sport/resources/>



Standing

Standing burns more calories than sitting. Spending less time sitting and more time standing lowers blood sugar, cholesterol, and weight. Try and do this for 2 hours per day – you could start by trying to stand whilst taking phone calls or during TV advert breaks.



Skipping

By skipping you can burn 10 calories in a minute and strengthen your legs, shoulders, stomach and arms. It's a great cardio exercise that increases the heart rate, significantly reducing the risk of heart disease and stroke, whilst improving coordination.



Cycling

A great way to see sights and stay fit. You don't have to purchase a bike – West Midlands Cycle Hire has launched across the area and the first ride is completely free. You can view the map of bike locations at www.wmcyclehire.co.uk



Chair Exercise

This is appropriate for any fitness level including active seniors and those recovering from an injury. It's low impact on joints, improves flexibility, reduces stress and can lead to better sleep. Try this 5-minute workout <https://www.bupa.co.uk/newsroom/ourviews/chair-yoga>



Kite Flying

Being active should be fun and kite flying is a great way to enjoy outdoor space. This activity helps strengthen both the upper and lower body and is a great way for the whole family to be active - remember to look out for and avoid overhead wires.



Places to be Active

Active at Home

Stairs



Climbing stairs is good for the heart, arms and leg muscles and bones. It's completely free and is great for cardiovascular fitness.

Gardening



This is a great way to get some fresh air and light-intensity physical activity, even if you only have a small space. If you have space, you could start a gardening group at your faith centre.



Active Outdoors

Local Streets



Lots of people explored parts of their local area that they didn't even know existed during lockdown. Take a stroll around the local streets and discover something new.

Parks and Green Spaces



Whilst the Black Country is an urban area we have some fantastic parks and open spaces. Download our brochure that includes in-depth information on some of these fantastic spaces at <https://www.activeblackcountry.co.uk/what-we-do/health-wellbeing/social-prescribing/>

You could even design your own nature trail.



Canals



The Midlands Canal system used to be one of the busiest in Europe. Nowadays they're fantastic places to go for a walk or cycle and to see wildlife.

Active at a Place of Worship

Vacant Spaces



Consider how you can use cultural, traditional and religious practices for health benefits. Many faith centres have fantastic spaces in which people can exercise.



Online

The Skipping Sikh

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCVc37Q220fbMh8tNjiNMUrg>

Amanah Fitness

Includes Ramadan workouts
<https://www.youtube.com/c/AmanahFitness>

African Dance Workout

<https://www.youtube.com/c/Afrifitness>

The Body Coach

<https://www.youtube.com/c/TheBodyCoachTV>

Sport England - Join the Movement

<https://www.sportengland.org/jointhemovement>

Being Active at a Place of Worship

Many faith centres have fantastic spaces in which people can exercise. Setting up group sessions can be approached in lots of different ways, but here are some things to consider.

1

Hold discussions with your community to understand what activities people want to do



2

Consider the types of spaces you have available which could accommodate different types of activity



3

Think about the accessibility of your building – could people with different impairments get into and out of different rooms



4

You may need to source a trained instructor – get in touch with Active Black Country if you need support
<https://www.activeblackcountry.co.uk/contact-us/>



5

Use Social Media outlets to advertise your activities to the community – you may already have Twitter or Facebook accounts. They're free and a great way to reach people



CASE STUDY: Yoga at Guru Teg Bahadur Sikh Temple

As part of our Get Out Get Active programme in Wolverhampton, Active Black Country worked closely with Elders at the Guru Teg Bahadur Gurdwara to engage with female worshippers with a view to understanding what, if any, types of activities they might like to do. From these discussions, two weekly Yoga groups were set up, using a qualified instructor – we also identified a suitable room in the building that would be accessible and available each session. By the second week, the ladies were saying that they were able to walk better and felt more flexible. Some even said they'd started getting up earlier in the morning and were finding more enjoyment through the day. This has led to two other Gurdwaras in the City approaching us to help them develop something similar.



Keeping Safe

COVID-19

Like any organisation, faith centres must take all the necessary steps to protect their employees, volunteers and members of the public who attend their facilities. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) expects you to carry out a risk assessment to decide what reasonable steps you need to take to protect your workers and others from coronavirus.

You must include the following in your assessment

- **Identify what work activity or situations might cause transmission of COVID-19**
- **Think about who could be at risk – this includes workers, visitors, contractors (including fitness instructors) and delivery drivers**
- **Decide how likely it is that someone could be exposed**
- **Identify the controls needed to reduce the risk**

As well as the assessment, it's important to monitor the controls that are in place. You should also make sure that any controls you identify don't increase other risks. HSE has produced the following guidelines;

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/working-safely/index.htm>

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/simple-health-safety/risk/index.htm>

Faith Centres can also contact their Local Authority's Environmental Health team for advice and guidance.

Safeguarding

It is imperative that organisations have a safe and secure environment for children, young people and vulnerable adults. Thus, a policy statement emphasising this is fundamental to all organisations.

Places of Worship should have Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policies and Procedures whereby it's ensured that employees and volunteers are fit to be in contact with those groups and that everybody involved with the organisation know what to do when they are concerned about the protection of a child or vulnerable adult.

For further information, please see:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/safeguarding-duties-for-charity-trustees>

There are also templates and detailed information available for safeguarding policies which can be obtained through various sites. Please see:

Children and Young people - <https://thecpsu.org.uk/>

Vulnerable Adults - <https://www.anncrafttrust.org/>

Active Black Country have a number of standards that need to be fulfilled before we'll fund an organisation or deliverer. For more information or guidance on where to start with safeguarding contact us here:

<https://www.activeblackcountry.co.uk/contact-us/>





**Active
Black Country**

Creating an active, healthier region



#EVERYDAYYOURWAY
www.activeblackcountry.co.uk

 **@ActiveBlackCountry**

 **@GOGA_Wolves**

 **@BCbeactive**

 **@activeblackcountry**

t: +44 (0)8458 15 15 15