

Evaluation of GoodGym

Final Report



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Executive Summary

This report presents the results of an evaluation of GoodGym undertaken by Ecorys between 2015-2016. The study was funded by Nesta's Centre for Social Action Innovation Fund as part of a grant provided by Nesta to support GoodGym's expansion.

1. Study aims and methodology

GoodGym is a community of runners who come together to provide social support visits to older people and manual labour for community projects. GoodGym runners volunteer their time for social purpose activities like weekly group runs with a physical task (like clearing leaves in a local park or shifting soil in a community garden), regular weekly runs by volunteers to visit isolated older people (referred to as 'coaches') and 'missions' which are one-off tasks for older people such as support with DIY or gardening.

Initiated in Tower Hamlets, London, in 2009, at the time this evaluation was conducted in 2015 GoodGym operated in fifteen areas across London and Bristol, with over 1,000 members (participating runners) joining group runs, coach runs and missions, and visiting 150 older people on a regular basis through the befriending scheme.

In the areas GoodGym operates, funding has predominantly come from the local authorities. Each area requires £25,000 of local funding to start and this has come from a variety of local authority teams including: Adult Health and Social Care, Sports Development, Public Health and Policy and Performance. The business model for GoodGym is based on this local authority funding, member donations, and corporate partnerships. In 2015, the organisation gained charity status.

In November 2014, GoodGym was provided with a grant through Nesta's Centre for Social Action Innovation Fund to support its expansion, with the aim of launching in over 30 areas in the UK by March 2016; by the late summer 2016 GoodGym was active in 24 areas with six more ready to launch and funding secured in several more. The grant included funding to develop an evaluation framework and systems which is the focus of this report.

The main objective of the study was to develop and then test a robust evaluation framework to support GoodGym in measuring the outcomes and impacts of its activities involving runners and older people. In developing the framework, specific outcome and impact indicators were selected in order to align with relevant strategic and policy objectives and to meet funders' preferred measurement approaches.

The basis of the evaluation framework is the underpinning drivers and objectives of GoodGym, which are specifically to improve the wellbeing of isolated older people, encourage people to run and improve their fitness, and to support wider community development objectives (through enhanced volunteering activity).

The evaluation methodology consisted of both quantitative and qualitative components:

- Analysis of GoodGym's monitoring data with respect to targeting and engagement of runners and older people.
- In-depth qualitative interviews with older people and runners – 14 interviews were completed in total.
- Interviews with GoodGym's current and potential funders to understand how GoodGym's activities help to support commissioners in meeting their objectives for physical activity, older people and the community.

- Before-and-after surveys conducted with runners and older people – 70 matched (before and follow-up) responses were returned by runners and 19 by older people (a 50% response rate). It was not possible to collect sufficient numbers of follow-up survey responses within the timescale of the evaluation to allow a statistically robust analysis of change in outcome indicators (for both runners and coaches).
- Finally, the value for money of the programme was examined by applying Sport England's MOVES model¹, to help estimate the return on investment from the running element only.

It is important to emphasise that GoodGym is currently on a journey of expansion. The purpose of this study has therefore been to trial an evaluation methodology that could potentially be scaled up in future years as the project expands. The survey numbers were necessarily limited by the timeframe for the evaluation - as the before-and-after survey could only include new members/beneficiaries within a set period. The monitoring and evaluation tools developed as part of the study can be used by GoodGym in future analysis of the project's outcomes - there is potential to generate statistically significant results as survey numbers increase in line with the growth in membership and number of older people supported. Although the surveys are limited by small sample sizes, when taken together, the quantitative and qualitative analyses show some significant achievements.

2. GoodGym's engagement and targeting

Based on analysis of GoodGym's monitoring data and responses to the baseline surveys, the key findings with regard to engagement and targeting are as follows:

- **Almost three-quarters (74%) of the registered runners were female** showing that GoodGym holds a particular appeal for female runners and highlighting the project's potential in helping to address the underrepresentation of women in terms of regular participation in sport and physical activity. This can be compared with women as a proportion of the population taking part in sport at least once a week across England (43%).
- The GoodGym befriending scheme appears to be **successfully reaching older people who feel socially isolated and lonely** as the majority of coaches (71%) felt that they needed more social contact at the time of the baseline survey or were lonely at least some of the time. Almost half experienced both loneliness and isolation. The wellbeing of older people supported by GoodGym is also below the national average for the relevant age category.
- **78% of participants were not meeting the Government's recommended minimum guidelines for moderate physical activity prior to joining GoodGym**, 12% reported that they did less than 30 minutes of moderate physical activity per week prior to joining GoodGym and 17% were not doing at least 10 minutes of vigorous physical activity. The physical activity behaviour of new members suggests that **there is scope for GoodGym to play an important role in both sustaining and raising levels of participation to more healthy levels** (alongside its other objectives to improve volunteering time and provide a social support service).

¹ MOVES was developed by the University of East Anglia's Medical School specifically for Sport England to help to demonstrate the economic benefits of participating in sport and wider physical activity.

3. Outcomes for older people

The following specific conclusions can be made with respect to older people outcomes:

- **GoodGym runners have a direct, positive impact on the older people they visit**, alleviating their feelings of social isolation and loneliness, as well as improving their mental wellbeing.
- Coaches interviewed reported positive outcomes related to their **emotional isolation**. They appreciate someone who listens to them and gives them the ability to speak about emotional topics.
- This was also the case where coaches had carers, family members, friends, neighbours, other volunteers or a combination of these visit them on a regular or irregular basis. Rather than the quantity of social contacts, **the depth and quality of the interaction with their runner is the key to achieving positive outcomes**.
- Coaches find their runners to be people who take **a genuine interest in them and care for their wellbeing**. All coaches felt happier, and 98% considered their runner a friend.
- On a scale of 1-5, **the average scores for social isolation improved from 2.44 at the baseline stage to 2.74 at follow-up** (on a scale of 1-5) while the average scores for frequency of feeling lonely improved positively from 2.11 to 2.58.
- More individuals scored their life satisfaction as high (7-8 points) or very high (9-10 points) after six months of seeing a GoodGym runner (eight in total at the follow-up stage compared to four at the baseline stage). **Average life satisfaction scores changed from 4.78 at the baseline stage to 6.11 at follow-up**.
- Beyond the key outcome areas of reduced social isolation and loneliness, **GoodGym runners facilitate the achievement of further positive outcomes for their coaches**, namely: ability to stay in their own house for longer; increased active mental engagement; inspiration to take up new activities; and improved attitude towards younger people.

4. Outcomes for runners

Overall, the qualitative and quantitative evidence pointed to the importance of GoodGym in **helping runners to maintain and increase their levels of running activity**.

The volunteering element of GoodGym also seems to give runners an **increased sense of belonging to their community**, an outcome which is positive for runners and appeals to commissioners, demonstrating GoodGym's role in getting people out and volunteering and helping to develop more **cohesive communities**.

Key findings from the longitudinal survey included:

- The majority (57%) of people would not have joined another running club instead of GoodGym.
- The average number of days spent running amongst the participants was 9.5 days per month at six months after joining (an increase of 0.7 days).

The survey findings also suggest that GoodGym helps participants to meet the Government's recommended levels of weekly physical activity, as the survey showed **some short-term overall**

increases in levels of weekly physical activity at six months after first joining GoodGym. The changes detected were:

- An average weekly increase of 0.29 days of moderate physical activity.
- An average weekly increase of 0.21 days of vigorous physical activity.
- An average weekly increase in total time spent doing vigorous activity from 93 minutes per week to 113 minutes.

5. Value for money analysis

The analysis of value for money builds up from an initial analysis of cost per participant to cost-effectiveness analysis, which examines cost per outcomes, to a more comprehensive assessment of the long-term costs and benefits of particular project interventions. The study has applied Sport England's MOVES model to show the potential Return on Investment (ROI) of the running element alone. The key findings are as follows:

- The **running element alone appears to be cost-efficient** when the unit cost per participant is compared with data from other community-based projects designed to impact on physical activity.
- Using project monitoring data and data from the surveys as input parameters, the modelling of cost-effectiveness (for the running element) **indicates that the intervention is potentially highly cost-effective (ranging from a cost per QALY of £3,498 to £7,692)** as the figures are well below the value of NICE's recommended willingness to pay threshold of £30,000 per QALY.
- **The return on investment based on willingness-to-pay for QALYs shows positive results, ranging from £2.78 to £4.56 per pound invested.**

The findings above are based on assumptions regarding the length of the programme (limited to 2 years for this analysis which reflects the initial funded period) and drop off rates of participants during the initial period. MOVES assumes that the running activity supported by the project is maintained over the longer-term (for at least five years); this is necessary for physical activity to generate sufficient positive health gains (and is consistent with GoodGym's objective to develop sustainable group runs beyond the two-year period to help people to remain active). An important limitation however is that the model does not take into account the physical activity benefits associated with increased running amongst those who join GoodGym after the initial two year period. It could be argued therefore that the analysis above reflects lower end estimates for ROI. Health savings derived from the reduced social isolation and loneliness of older people and the value of the volunteering time provided by GoodGym's community of runners provide further benefits that could potentially be assessed in a more detailed cost-benefit analysis.

6. Process lessons

Through the interviews with coaches and runners, GoodGym were keen to learn about how to improve processes and thus the experiences of both runners and older people. The key findings with regard to process lessons are as follows:

- Amongst the runners, a strong motivator for becoming involved with GoodGym appears to relate to **the opportunity to get involved in volunteering more generally** and particularly the befriending scheme. For some runners the social aspect of meeting new people and making friends was also important.

- The frequency of visits – once a week – was adhered to and considered appropriate for a befriending scheme of this nature.
- Runners suggested **more opportunities to speak to and learn from other runners** with coaches would be useful, and were positive about the website and their experience of GoodGym staff.
- Both groups had had **predominantly positive experiences of the matching process and were pleased with the resulting relationship**.
- Both coaches and runners appear to be **highly satisfied with their GoodGym experience to date**; 95% of coaches surveyed were very satisfied with GoodGym's service, with 89% 'very likely' to recommend GoodGym to a friend.

7. Methodological lessons and priorities for future monitoring and evaluation

The survey instruments and questions employed provide valid and relevant measures of change in the principal outcomes of interest to GoodGym (including physical activity, social isolation and loneliness). The survey numbers were lower than required to show statistically significant positive changes particularly for the older people survey; however there is potential to improve the accuracy and robustness of the before-and-after results by using larger sample sizes as GoodGym expands its area coverage. Larger sample sizes could also potentially consider different types and intensities of activities and effects on specific sub groups (e.g. women, less active people for the runners survey), supporting internal impact comparisons (where sub group samples are of a sufficient size).

A key challenge was ensuring sufficient numbers of responses from older people at the follow-up stage to provide a statistically robust before-after-analysis. Several attempts were made to increase the response rate from older people including the provision of a franked return envelope, asking runners to remind their coach to complete the survey and following up by phone. Challenges preventing coaches from completing the survey however remain with some being visually or otherwise physically impaired and others passing away. However, while the 19 responses received to the follow-up survey to date could only provide indicative results of how GoodGym contributed to older people's wellbeing, the response rate of 50% was good and it is hoped that robust results can be generated over time as GoodGym expands and broadens its area coverage (assuming a proactive approach to encouraging good response rates remains in place). The response rate for the runners follow-up was lower at 31% (70 out of the 224 respondents who completed the baseline survey between September 2015 and December 2015 responded to the follow-up at six months).

The MOVES model provides a useful tool for understanding the cost-effectiveness and return on investment of the physical activity element of GoodGym. The inputs and accuracy of this analysis can be tweaked in the future through access to improved data on the additionality of GoodGym, and the sustainability of involvement. For example, a key assumption of the economic analysis is that the programme leads to longer-term changes in behaviour beyond one year. For this assumption to be tested, a further longer-term follow-up survey of participants could be undertaken to help assess rates of attrition beyond 12 months, as well as the persistence of outcomes.

Finally, the report has also highlighted particular methodological issues in developing a framework for the overall assessment of GoodGym's value for money in terms of the potential cost savings to the NHS from

reduced social isolation and loneliness, the monetised benefits of volunteering time and the wider social impacts of the scheme.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Introduction

In March 2015, Ecorys was commissioned by GoodGym and Nesta to develop and then trial an evaluation framework and methodology to help GoodGym evidence the outcomes and impacts of its activities.

1.2 GoodGym

GoodGym is a community of runners who come together to provide social support visits to older people and manual labour for community projects. GoodGym runners volunteer their time for social purpose activities like weekly group runs with a physical task (like clearing leaves in a local park or shifting soil in a community garden), regular weekly runs by volunteers to visit isolated older people (known as 'coaches') and 'missions' which are one-off tasks for older people such as support with DIY or gardening.

Initiated in Tower Hamlets, London, in 2009, at the time this evaluation was conducted in 2015 GoodGym operated in fifteen areas across London and Bristol, with over 1,000 members (participating runners) joining group runs, coach runs and missions, and visiting 150 older people on a regular basis through the befriending scheme.

In the areas GoodGym operates, funding has predominantly come from the local authorities. Each area requires £25,000 of local funding to start and this has come from a variety of local authority teams including: Adult Health and Social Care, Sports Development, Public Health and Policy and Performance. The business model for Good Gym is based on this local authority funding, member donations, and corporate partnerships. In 2015, the organisation gained charity status.

In November 2014, GoodGym was provided with a grant through Nesta's Centre for Social Action Innovation Fund to support its expansion, with the aim of launching in over 30 areas in the UK by March 2016; by the late summer 2016 GoodGym was active in 24 areas with six more ready to launch and funding secured in several more. The grant included funding to develop an evaluation framework and systems which is the focus of this report.

1.3 Scope

The main objective of the study was to develop and then test a robust evaluation framework to support GoodGym in measuring the outcomes and impacts of its activities involving runners and older people. In developing the framework, specific outcome and impact indicators were selected in order to align with relevant strategic and policy objectives and to meet funders' preferred measurement approaches. The basis of the evaluation framework is the underpinning drivers and objectives of GoodGym, which are specifically to improve the wellbeing of isolated older people, encourage people to run and improve their fitness, and to support wider community development objectives (through enhanced volunteering activity).

1.4 Methodology

The methodology for the study consisted of a number of elements, which are described below.

1.4.1 Interviews with commissioners/stakeholders

The evaluation framework and recommended methodology draws on scoping research which was undertaken between April and June 2015. As part of this research Ecorys consulted with GoodGym's current and potential funders to understand how GoodGym's activities helped to support the funders in meeting their own objectives for physical activity, older people and the community. The interviews also focused on the particular metrics and KPIs that commissioners are prioritising as well as their views on preferred evaluation methods and approaches.

1.4.2 In-depth interviews with runners and older people

Ecorys also completed a series of case study interviews with runners and older people (also referred to as 'coaches') to allow an in-depth exploration of the relationship between the project's outputs, outcomes and impacts in order to support the development of the evaluation framework and identify specific learning from the execution of the activities. In particular, the case studies focused on the degree of importance attached to different outcomes for runners and older people in order to inform the framework. In total, seven face-to-face interviews were completed with older people and seven telephone interviews with runners. From the pool of runners and coaches, GoodGym and Ecorys selected a purposive² sample based on the following criteria:

Table 1.1 Sample selection criteria

Selection criteria for runners	Selection criteria for coaches
Age	Age
Gender	Gender
Length of involvement in the project	Length of involvement in the project
Borough/ GoodGym area	Borough/ GoodGym area
Type of runner: group or matched to a coach	Living arrangements (if known)

The seven runners interviewed were between 23 and 40 years old and had been paired with their coach for between four and 33 months. Two were still regularly involved in the group runs, whereas the others had participated in group runs only when they joined GoodGym. One runner was Bristol-based; the rest were involved with GoodGym in London.

The seven coaches ranged in age from early 60s to 93. Runners had been coming to their house for between three and 37 months. All coaches were London-based, living in a variety of boroughs across the capital. Whereas four of the coaches lived in their own homes, three lived in supported accommodation.

It is important to note that the runners and coaches that were interviewed were not matched. The interviews therefore gathered information on 14 different runner-coach relationships.

² For the purpose of the exploratory interviews it was important to collect views from a variety of participants rather than from a representative sample.

1.4.3 Development of evaluation framework

Following on from the above tasks, the first step in the development of the evaluation framework was to develop an agreed logic model to form the basis of the framework and capture the full range of outputs, outcomes and impacts of the activities. We then developed a set of indicators to allow measurement of the identified outputs and outcomes. The evaluation framework is detailed in chapter two.

1.4.4 Longitudinal surveys of runners

Two online surveys were undertaken with new GoodGym members over the period September 2015 to July 2016. These included a baseline survey and a follow-up survey, six months later. 70 matched responses were achieved, a response rate of 31% (70 out of the 224 respondents who completed the baseline survey between September 2015 and December 2015 responded to the follow-up at six months). The questionnaires used in the surveys are included in Annex One. The questionnaire was devised with reference to the logic model, which identified the principal anticipated outcomes for runners. Outcomes were assessed in the following ways:

- **Participation in running:** The primary outcome is overall change in running (not participation in GoodGym running activities alone) and the maintenance of running activity. The survey also included questions relating to the intensity and duration of the running sessions.
- **Overall participation in physical activity:** Measurement of total physical activity improves understanding of the impact of the intervention on overall participation in physical activity taking into account possible displacement (where participation in other sports reduces) or multiplier effects (whereby participation in GoodGym encourages runners to take up other activity). A key measure of sports participation is the number of days per week that people take part in sport and physical activity of at least moderate intensity, for at least 30 minutes. The use of this measure shows how far GoodGym is contributing to the Government's key objectives of increasing the number of people doing sport for at least 30 minutes once a week and moving people towards or reaching the Government's recommended level of physical activity to stay healthy (150 minutes per week).
- **Volunteering:** In order to measure volunteering outcomes, and GoodGym's contribution to wider community development goals, questions from the Community Life survey were included which ask participants about how often they have given unpaid help to local group(s), club(s) or organisation(s).

1.4.5 Longitudinal surveys of older people

Two paper-based surveys were administered to older people supported by the GoodGym befriending scheme (the 'coaches') over the period September 2015 to July 2016. Following the approach for the runners, these included one baseline survey and a follow-up survey, after six months with 19 matched responses achieved within the timeframe for the evaluation. While the 19 responses received to the follow-up survey to date could only provide indicative results of how GoodGym contributed to older people's wellbeing, the response rate of 50% was good and it is hoped that robust results can be generated over time as GoodGym expands and broadens its area coverage. The questionnaires used in the surveys are included in Annex One. The survey questions were designed after case study visits helped to identify the most important outcomes for older people, as follows:

- **Social isolation:** To measure change in coaches' social isolation, a single question asking for their satisfaction with their social situation was chosen. The question also appears in the Adult Social Care

Survey and gives the respondent four answer options to indicate how satisfied they are with the quantity and quality of their social contacts.

- **Loneliness:** Focusing on the frequency of loneliness that coaches experience, a single question was chosen which asks directly how often a they feel lonely. This question has also appeared in the Community Life Survey and the English Longitudinal Survey of Ageing.
- **Mental wellbeing:** The primary change in mental wellbeing was assessed by looking at trends in scores computed from the Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS)³. The survey of older people used the shortened form of WEMWBS, which is made up of seven statements each with five response categories, responses can be summed to provide a single score ranging from 7-35 (and the scores adjusted as per the WEMWBS protocol). The items are all worded positively and cover both feeling and functioning aspects of mental wellbeing. Higher scores on WEMWBS indicate better wellbeing and thus a positive change in scores indicates improved wellbeing. WEMWBS has been widely used, including in the Understanding Society survey.
- **Life satisfaction:** A simple zero to 10 scale asked coaches to indicate their current life satisfaction, from “not at all satisfied” to “completely satisfied”. This question also featured in the ONS Annual Population Survey and in the Community Life Survey.
- **Additionality:** To elicit the direct impact a runner’s visit was having on an older person, one question asked the coach how the runner made them feel, with five answer options to indicate different levels of happiness. Another question asked to what extent they considered their runner a friend with four answer options given.

Further questions related to the level of satisfaction with the runner overall, and whether the coach motivated their runner to do exercise. At the end of the survey, an empty box invited further comments from respondents. The baseline survey, sent to coaches by post at the beginning of their pairing with a runner, also collected basic demographic information (date of birth, gender and ethnic background). An information sheet was also provided, setting out the reasons and conditions of taking part in the survey. From that point onwards, a follow-up survey was sent to each coach every six months.

1.4.6 Analysis of survey responses (and response rates)

The analysis of follow-up responses focusses on the individuals who participated in both waves (referred to longitudinal research as the ‘constant sample’). In order to analyse the specific outcomes of GoodGym’s engagement with runners and older people, the primary survey analysis presented in this report uses data presented from the constant samples whether or not they claimed to be still participating in GoodGym at the follow-up stage.

1.5 Report structure

The report is structured as follows:

- **Chapter 2** introduces the context and rationale underpinning GoodGym and outlines its main aims and objectives, activities, expected outcomes and impacts.
- **Chapter 3** provides analysis of GoodGym’s engagement and targeting.

³ Tennant R., Hiller L., Fishwick R., Platt S., Joseph S., Weich S., Parkinson J., Secker J., Stewart-Brown S. (2007), *The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS): development and UK validation*. *Health Qual Life Outcomes* 2007, 5:63.

- **Chapter 4** focuses on the results of a trial methodology to measure the outcomes and impacts of GoodGym.
- **Chapter 5** develops a framework to assess the value for money of GoodGym's activities.
- **Chapter 6** provides further consideration and analysis of factors in delivery that contribute to the specific outcomes, focusing in particular on GoodGym's befriending scheme.
- **Chapter 7** brings the research findings together to report on the key findings and learning points.

2.0 Evaluation Context

2.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the context for evaluating the effectiveness and impacts of GoodGym, drawing on a review of relevant literature and secondary data. The evaluation approach is grounded in an understanding of this wider context, including the challenges and opportunities in raising levels of sports participation and the growing problems of social isolation and loneliness, the aims and objectives of GoodGym, the scope of activities supported by the project and its theory of change.

2.2 Context

2.2.1 Sports participation and physical activity: an increasing priority for public policy

The health and wellbeing benefits of participation in sport and physical activity are widely accepted. There is considerable scientific evidence linking irregular physical activity to adverse health, particularly later in life⁴. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), physical inactivity is one of the leading causes of death in developed countries, responsible for an estimated 22-23% of coronary heart disease, 16-17% of colon cancer, 15% of diabetes, 12-13% of strokes and 11% of breast cancer.⁵ There is also evidence of the specific impacts of sport on subjective wellbeing, linked to psychological health and happiness.

A number of comprehensive reviews have been conducted examining the benefits of sports participation on mental health outcomes. A recent systematic review conducted on behalf of the Culture and Sport Evidence Programme (CASE) indicates that physical activity has the potential to reduce the risk of developing mental health illnesses, such as depression, dementia, Alzheimer's, Parkinson's Disease and reduce the risk of suicide. It can also provide therapeutic benefits for anxiety, depression, eating and body dysmorphic disorders, and age-related cognitive decline.⁶ Systematic reviews have also revealed the impact of physical activity on maintaining psychological wellbeing, such as improved self-esteem, levels of subjective wellbeing,⁷ mood and sleep quality, as well as reduced fatigue and anxiety.⁸ The quality of the evidence within both reviews varies considerably depending on the type of mental health condition, with the former study utilising the hierarchy of evidence model to weight the sources, and the latter measuring the strength of evidence within each mental health condition. There is also little agreement on how mental wellbeing should be measured and a range of tools have been deployed.⁹

⁴ The Burden of Physical Activity Related Ill Health in the UK, Allender et al, Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health, 2007

⁵ World Health Organisation (2002). The World Health Report 2002 - Reducing Risks, Promoting Healthy Life.

⁶ Taylor, P, L Davies, P Wells, J Gilbertson and W Tayleur. 2015. *A review of the Social Impacts of Culture and Sport*. [online] The Culture and Sport Evidence Programme.

⁷ Caddick, N and B Smith. 2014. "The impact of sport and physical activity on the well-being of combat veterans: a systematic review." *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*.

⁸ Department of Health. 2011. *Start Active, Stay Active: A report on physical activity for health from the four home countries' Chief Medical Officers*.

⁹ Newton, J. 2007 Well-being and the Natural Environment. A brief overview of the evidence, University of Surrey <http://www3.surrey.ac.uk/resolve/seminars/Julie%20Newton%20Paper.pdf>

Participation in sport has also been shown to deliver other benefits¹⁰ including improved educational results, access to social networks and social cohesion, as well as increasing confidence and sense of self-worth.

Increasing awareness of the negative impacts of inactive lifestyles on individual as well as public health has led the UK Government to actively promote the uptake of physical activity to address the costs associated particularly with a number of chronic conditions. Department of Health advice¹¹ recommends that adults (19-64 years old) and older people (65+): should undertake 150 minutes - two and half hours - each week of moderate to vigorous intensity physical activity (and adults should aim to do some physical activity every day). Alternatively, comparable benefits can be achieved through 75 minutes of vigorous intensity activity spread across the week or combinations of moderate and vigorous intensity activity. However, vigorous intensity activity is rarely achieved by approximately 80% of the UK population (and even fewer older adults).

According to the World Health Organisation, around 23% of adults aged 18 and over globally were not active enough in 2010 (men 20% and women 27%). In high-income countries, 26% of men and 35% of women were insufficiently physically active.¹² Survey evidence has shown that around one in two women and a third of men in England are damaging their health through a lack of physical activity, costing the UK an estimated £7.4bn a year.¹³

Across many measures of participation, regular involvement in sport and physical activity in the United Kingdom has remained at a consistent level in recent years. The Active People Survey commissioned by Sport England showed that during the period October 2015 to October 2016, 15.83 million people aged 16 years or over (36.1%) played sport for at least 30 minutes at moderate intensity at least once a week. Whilst this represents an increase of 1.75 million compared with 2005/06 (the year after London's successful bid to host the London 2012 Olympics), sports participation levels have remained broadly stable since 2012/13 (figure 2.1). The proportion of people playing sport at least three times a week increased from 15.6% to 17.7% between 2005/06 and 2015/16 although the proportion has declined slightly since 2012/13.

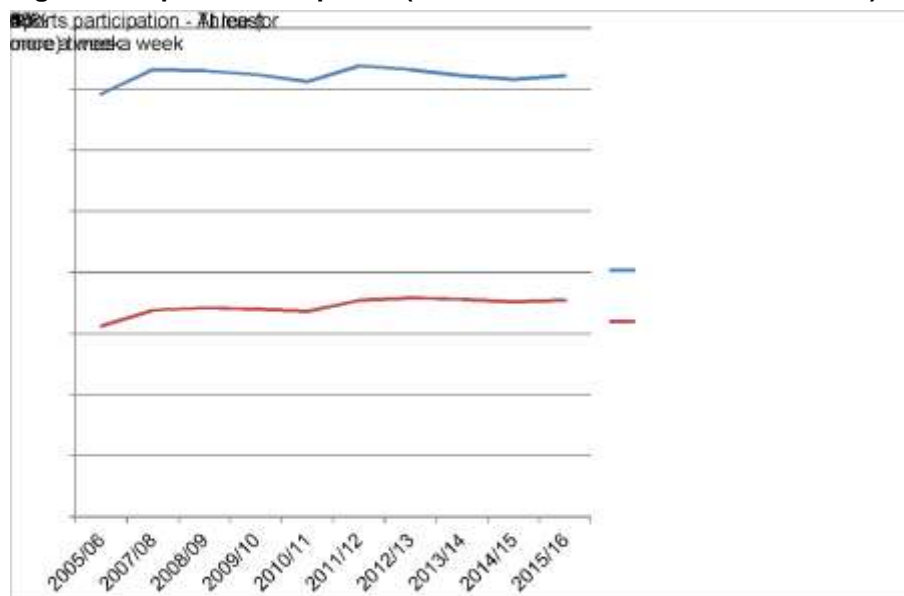
¹⁰ Ruiz (2004). A literature review of the evidence base for culture, the arts and sport policy. Scottish Executive Education Department.

¹¹ Department of Health (2011) Physical activity guidelines for Adults (19–64 years)

¹² <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs385/en/>

¹³ Public Health England (2014), *Everybody active, every day: an evidence-based approach to physical activity*.

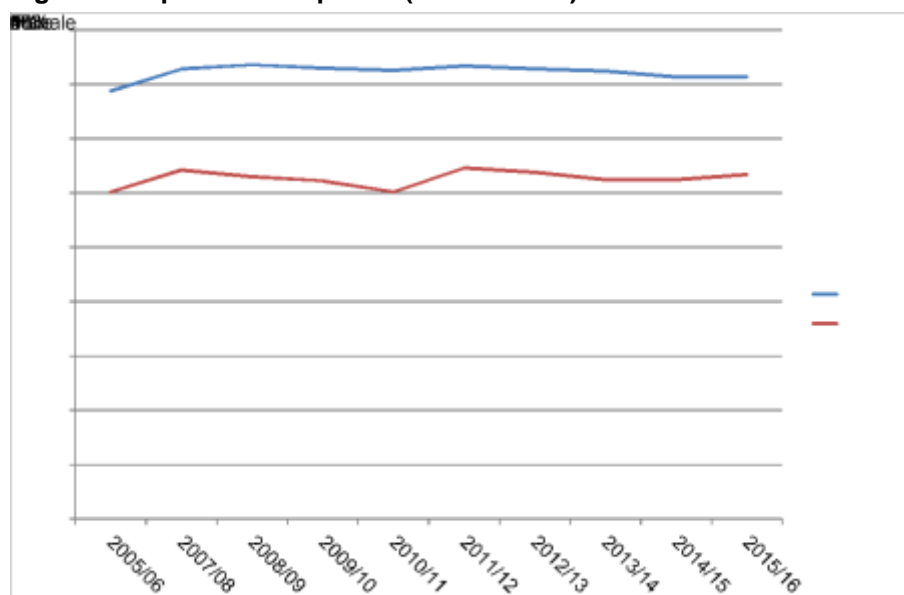
Figure 2.1 Sports Participation (once a week and three times a week)



Source: Active People Survey (waves 1-10)

Participation in sport and physical activity in the UK had remained stubbornly low amongst some groups, including individuals in lower socio-economic groups, women and girls, ethnic minorities and disabled people. Between 2005/06 and 2015/16 the proportion of women participating at least once a week in sport increased only slightly from 30% to 31%.

Figure 2.2 Sports Participation (once a week)



Source: Active People Survey (waves 1-10)

In 2015, the UK Government launched its new strategy for sport and physical activity, entitled 'Sporting Future: A New Strategy for an Active Nation'.¹⁴ Instead of purely focusing on sporting performance and

¹⁴ Cabinet Office (2015) *Sporting Future: A New Strategy for an Active Nation*. [online] London: The Cabinet Office.

excellence – which was at the core of the previous UK sport strategy¹⁵ - the new strategy also encompasses the wider, transformative aspects of sport and physical activity. To reach these outcomes, the new strategy emphasises the importance of people from all backgrounds and ages engaging in sport, maximising the success of international and domestic sport and the impact of major events, and developing a sport sector that is more sustainable, productive and responsible. The strategy sets out two high-level outcomes of sports engagement: “increase in the percentage of the population in England meeting the Chief Medical Officer guidelines for physical activities, [and] a decrease in the percentage of the population in England that are physically inactive.”¹⁶

To ensure that these transformative aspects of sport and physical activity can be translated into practice, the government developed a framework that sets out how success can be judged for five key outcomes: (1) physical wellbeing, (2) mental wellbeing, (3) individual development, (4) social and community development and (5) economic development. These outcomes represent the new strategy’s focus on redefining what success in sport looks like, by capturing the benefits that can arise from engaging in sport.¹⁷

2.2.2 Loneliness: a growing and complex issue

There are many definitions of loneliness and social isolation, which reflect the complexity of these issues. Sometimes the terms are used interchangeably. However, the evidence supports a key distinction between the two:.

- Social isolation has often been defined as the absence of contact from other people and can be further divided into two separate aspects: isolation from family and/or friends and neighbours (known as the primary social group) and from wider society (the secondary social group).¹⁸ It is estimated that 10-15% of people aged over 65 experience severe social isolation¹⁹; 17% of older people are in contact with family, friends and neighbours less than once a week, and 11% are in contact less than once a month.²⁰ Over half of all people aged 75 and over live alone.²¹
- Loneliness – or emotional isolation – is subjective and is concerned with an individual’s feelings, rather than their level of social contact.²² The concept is closely associated with feelings belonging and social integration. Various UK studies have consistently shown loneliness levels among older people to be between 10-13%.²³ Estimates state the number of people over 65 years who are often or always lonely to be over one million.²⁴

¹⁵ Department for Culture, Media and Sport (2008). *Playing to win: a new era for sport*. [online] London: Department for Culture Media and Sport.

¹⁶ *ibid*

¹⁷ Cabinet Office (2015) *Sporting Future: A New Strategy for an Active Nation*. [online] London: The Cabinet Office.

¹⁸ Tunstall, J. (1966) *Old and Alone. A sociological study of old people*. London: Routledge and Kegan

¹⁹ Victor C , Bond J, & Scambler S (2009) *The social world of older people*, Open University Press

²⁰ Victor, C et al, (2003) *Loneliness, Social Isolation and Living Alone in Later Life*

²¹ Office for National Statistics, 2010

²² Dahlberg and McKee (2004) Correlates of social and emotional isolation on older people: evidence from an English community study. *Ageing & Mental Health*, 18,4:2014

²³ Local Government Association (2016) *Combating Loneliness: A guide for local authorities*.

²⁴ TNS survey for Age UK, April 2014

Loneliness and social isolation can affect anyone, but certain groups are more likely to experience these conditions. The key socio-demographic factors correlated to loneliness include age, gender and ethnicity.²⁵ Factors that are seen to make people more vulnerable to loneliness include widowhood, poor health²⁶, unmet expectations of health and financial resources in later life, and time spent alone.

Impacts of loneliness and social isolation on individuals and society

Loneliness is associated with a range of negative physical health outcomes²⁷, including elevated physiological parameters such as cardiovascular health and immune function. It is also associated with negative health behaviours including smoking, excess alcohol consumption and lack of exercise.²⁸ The link between loneliness and increased mortality is well-established. A recent systematic review found that loneliness can increase the risk of premature death by 30%.²⁹

Loneliness is also closely related to negative mental health outcomes. The link between loneliness and depression as both a cause and a consequence is well-established.³⁰ Disrupted sleep is associated with loneliness.³¹ Levels of loneliness are higher among those with dementia; however, it is not clear whether loneliness is a cause or consequence of the condition.³² Loneliness has been shown to affect cognitive behaviours, such as encouraging a more negative outlook and being less attentive to what other people are feeling.³³

Older people's quality of life depends greatly on their social relationships³⁴ and loneliness has been shown to profoundly compromise general quality of life³⁵. Supporting older people to maintain a connection to their neighbourhoods also improves social cohesion.

Finally, loneliness is associated with increased use of services. A recent discussion paper by Social Finance modelled that older people who are lonely are on average:

²⁵ Dykstra, P. A. (2009) Older adult loneliness: myths and realities. *European Journal of Ageing*, 6, 2,91-100; Victor CR, Burholt V, & Martin W. (2012). Loneliness and ethnic minority elders in Great Britain: an exploratory study. *Journal of Cross Cultural Gerontology*, 27, 1,65-78

²⁶ Victor C (2015) Loneliness, social isolation and dementia. Report prepared for Alzheimer's Society, London (in press); Hodge and Eccles (2014) Loneliness, Social Isolation and Sight Loss: A literature review. Thomas Pocklington Trust

²⁷ Hawkey L.C. Thisted R.A., Masi C.M., & Cacioppo JT.(2010a) Loneliness predicts increased blood pressure: 5-year cross-lagged analyses in middle-aged and older adults. *Psychology and Aging*, 25, 1, 132-41; O'Luanaigh, C. & Lawlor, B.A. (2008) Loneliness and the health of older people'. *International Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry*, 23, 1213-1221

²⁸ Hawkey L.C., Thisted R.A., & Cacioppo JT.(2009). Loneliness predicts reduced physical activity: cross-sectional & longitudinal analyses. *Health Psychology*; 28,3,354-63; Lauder, W., Mummery, K., Jones, M. & Caperchione, C. (2006). A comparison of health behaviours in lonely and non-lonely populations. *Psychology, Health & Medicine*;11, 2,233-245

²⁹ Holt-Lunstad J, Smith TB, Baker M, et al. 'Loneliness and Social Isolation as Risk Factors for mortality – a Meta Analytic review. *Perspectives on Psychology*. 2015

³⁰ SCIE (2012), Preventing loneliness and social isolation among older people

³¹ Age UK (2012), Loneliness – the state we're in

³² Boss et al (2015) Loneliness and cognitive function in the older adult: a systematic review. *International Psychogeriatrics*, 27:4, 541-553

³³ Age UK (2012), Loneliness – the state we're in

³⁴ Bowling, 2011, "Good Neighbours: measuring Quality of Life in Older Age"

³⁵ Bowling, A. (2005) Ageing well: quality of life in old age. Open University Press, Maidenhead, UK

- 1.8 times more likely to visit the GP.
- 1.6 times more likely to visit A&E.
- 3.5 times more likely to enter local authority-funded residential care.³⁶

These findings suggest that reducing the prevalence of loneliness could have a significant impact on the use of services, generating savings to the public purse.

National policy context

The impact of social isolation on health and mental wellbeing has been formally recognised since 2001, when the National Service Framework for Older People acknowledged the role that isolation can play in relation to falls and depression.³⁷ In 2010, the Marmot Review Team emphasised the importance of social loneliness and social isolation in the promotion of health and wellbeing and in tackling inequalities.³⁸ Social isolation is enshrined in the *Adult Social Care Outcomes Framework* and the *Public Health Outcomes Framework*, through a target measuring the proportion of people and their carers who report they had as much social contact as they would like. This data will enable local authorities to identify areas where older people suffer most acutely, enabling better targeting of interventions.

The call to action from national movements such as the *Campaign to End Loneliness*³⁹ is now being picked up across the country by local commissioners.

"We're getting reports from GPs who see five or six people every day whose primary issue is that they are depressed and isolated and they tend to be elderly." - Local commissioner

To support these local responses, resources have been developed. The Local Government Association and Campaign to End Loneliness (2016) recently published their second guide for local authorities, recommending that loneliness should be taken up in Joint Strategic Needs Assessments.⁴⁰ Similarly, the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (2014)⁴¹ has produced a guide to commissioning befriending, drawing on the evidence base as well as feedback from commissioners and befriending providers.

2.3 Overview of GoodGym activities

GoodGym offers a number of strands of activities to runners in its areas of operation:

- **Group runs** involve running to a local community organisation in need of help with manual labour and take place on the same evening each week (Mondays, Tuesdays or Wednesdays depending on

³⁶ Social Finance (2015) Investing to tackle loneliness: A discussion paper

³⁷ Department of Health (2001) National Service Framework for Older People. London: Department of Health

³⁸ Marmot Review (2010) Fair society, healthy lives [Online: <http://www.instituteofthehealthequity.org/projects/fair-society-healthy-lives-the-marmot-review/fair-society-healthy-lives-full-report>, Accessed: 02/02/15]

³⁹ Campaign to End Loneliness (2014) *The Cost of Loneliness*. London: Campaign to End Loneliness

⁴⁰ <http://campaigntoendloneliness.org/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2012/03/A-guide-for-local-authorities-combating-loneliness.pdf>

⁴¹ Local Government Association and Campaign to End Loneliness (2016) Combating Loneliness: A guide for local authorities. <http://www.thinklocalactpersonal.org.uk/Regions/SouthWest/Resources/Resource/?cid=8735>

the area). The group runs are organised and led by trained run leaders. GoodGym employs one personal trainer or running coach per area of operation to fulfil multiple functions. Each trainer is responsible for organising one run every week, leading the run, organising the task, telling runners about coach runs, checking their DBS documents, following up from the run (writing a run report), supporting runners with their training goals on an ongoing basis and being the point of contact for both local community organisations and runners.

- **Missions** are one-off, time limited, practical help to an older/vulnerable member of the community or non-profit organisation that needs help. Organisations or individuals who would like to receive help from a group of GoodGym runners have to submit a mission request form, providing details of the tasks required. Past examples include gardening, cleaning, painting walls and volunteering at sport events. All runners are made aware of the possible health and safety hazards related to the mission, and they do take part in these activities at their own risk. GoodGym central organises missions as and when they are required and they usually take place on weekends. This involves receiving and assessing the Mission request forms and liaising with the relevant organisations and individuals, and following up after the mission (generating run report, seeking feedback from the task owner).
- **Coach runs** involve a runner being matched to an older person, who then becomes their coach. Coaches are all over 60 years old and identify as lonely or isolated. Many are limited in their mobility due to age or illness and are hence house-bound, although a small number of coaches are also carers. The runner agrees to visit their coach once a week by running to their house and spending time with them by having a chat and keeping them company. This gives the runner an incentive to do exercise and provides the coach with regular social contact. Runners and coaches are matched based on the distance between their places of residence. The runner can express a wish as to the number of miles they are prepared to run to their coach. Before being able to visit an older person, they have to be checked by the Disclosure and Barring Service and complete an online training course. This covers topics such as the boundaries in a runner-coach relationship, issues affecting older people, confidentiality and safeguarding, health and safety, effective communication and relationship building. Runners also have to submit two references, professional and personal, and attend an informal interview with their local trainer.

Coaches are referred to GoodGym through housing associations, supported housing providers and organisations such as Age UK. GoodGym then contacts new coaches by phone and letter and informs them of what being a coach involves. Prior to the first visit, the coach is given the name of their runner and they are told to look out for the red GoodGym T-shirt which every runner has to wear for recognition purposes during their coach runs. The day after the first visit, GoodGym follows up with a phone call to ascertain what the experience was like for runner and coach.

To further create the feeling of being a community of runners, GoodGym facilitates for its members to compare their achievements and encourage each other via the GoodGym website. Runners can monitor the distance of their runs through a free running app and upload their results onto the website. Equally, they can log every 'good deed' they have done either as part of a group run, mission or coach visit on the GoodGym website. This allows for peer-comparison across the network as well as per area. Members can also 'cheer' each other on.

2.4 Rationale for GoodGym approach

From a public policy perspective it is understood that there are broadly two strands or drivers underpinning GoodGym's approach. GoodGym was initially designed around the needs and motivations

of its core target groups – runners and older people. However an important element of the GoodGym model was the potential to encourage greater levels of volunteering particularly amongst groups who were reluctant to sign up to more time-consuming volunteering commitments.

The Active People Survey (APS) shows that demand for running is strong and growing with the number of people taking part in athletics weekly rising from 1.4 million in 2005-06 to over 2.2 million today. From April 2014 to March 2015 2.2 million people aged 16 and over took part in athletics for at least 30min a week. This was an increase on the figure of 2.1 million for the previous year.

Data is not available on participation in group running as opposed to running in general, for example the Active People Survey does not make this distinction. However, the benefits of running in groups, as opposed to solo running, are well-documented and include social benefits, encouragement to run regularly, motivation and enjoyment from running with others, advice from experienced runners, and improved safety.⁴²

The national priority to increase participation in sport through running activities was epitomised by Sport England's Running Programme developed in 2011. Funding was made available for the recruitment of individuals interested in establishing a running group focused on beginner runners and training them through a 'Leadership in Running and Fitness' (LiRF) qualification to enhance their ability to understand the needs of beginner runners and tailor sessions appropriately. Reflecting this, a Key Performance Indicator (KPI) of the programme was the number of active new runners participating once per week⁴³.

The GoodGym approach responds well to general trends and demand for more informal and flexible opportunities to take part in sport and physical activity. As recognised by commissioners interviewed for this study, GoodGym avoids duplicating activity which is focused on event-based group running, as running groups can offer a greater level of social interaction in comparison to mass participation events (such as parkrun).

Commissioners also noted the appeal of GoodGym as providing entry-level opportunities to take part in running. A key 'selling point' for one authority was the potential role of GoodGym in encouraging more women to take up running given the evidence from other areas on the high proportion of women participants in the scheme (also confirmed by analysis the registration data - see chapter three).

A further strength of the model is that it has the potential to be highly cost-effective in raising participation in running. Because of its grounding in group leaders engaging multiple participants, it is thought that the model can have substantial impacts on participation at a low unit cost.

Befriending has been defined as 'an intervention that introduces the client to one or more individuals, whose main aim is to provide the client with additional social support through the development of an affirming, emotion-focused relationship over time'.⁴⁴ The form of support offered can vary, but usually involves volunteers or paid workers visiting an individual in their own home or contacting them by telephone on a regular basis.

⁴² See for example: Shipway, R. and Holloway, I. (2010) Running free: Embracing a healthy lifestyle through distance running, *Perspectives in Public Health*, Vol 130 No 6.

⁴³ Defined as the number of individuals new to running, completing group runs 6 times over a 9 week period.

⁴⁴ Mead N., Lester H., Chew-Graham C., Gask L and Bower P (2010) Effects of befriending on depressive symptoms and distress: systematic review and meta-analysis

There is a nascent evidence base highlighting the value of befriending schemes:

- A systematic review of Mead et al. in 2010 has shown that befriending has a modest but significant effect on depressive symptoms in the short term.⁴⁵
- People who use befriending services have reported that they were less lonely and socially isolated following the intervention⁴⁶ and that they valued the personal relationship that was established.⁴⁷
- One of the main building blocks of quality of life in old age is having good social relationships with friends and feeling supported. Respondents in a 2011 study mentioned the importance of having someone for 'companionship' and 'to know there is someone there willing to help me'.⁴⁸
- Regular one-to-one contact can be particularly important for people who are frail and housebound (as in the case of many GoodGym coaches).⁴⁹
- People with long-term mental illness have reported befriending improved their confidence in social situations.⁵⁰

Further to the value befriending services provide, an advantage of such interventions is that they are low-cost. By targeting at-risk groups, they potentially offer worthwhile returns on investment in improving quality of life for older people.⁵¹ However there is not yet any specific evidence on the relationship between befriending schemes and cost savings to health authority budgets.

2.5 Evaluation framework

2.5.1 Theory of change

The logic model diagram below provides an interpretation of the key relationships linking the rationale for the GoodGym approach and its activities, outputs, outcomes and impacts. This leads to a specific set of outcomes, as described further in the sections below.

⁴⁵ Mead N., Lester H., Chew-Graham C., Gask L and Bower P (2010) Effects of befriending on depressive symptoms and distress: systematic review and meta-analysis

⁴⁶ Windle, K., Francis J & Coomber C (2011) Preventing loneliness and social isolation: interventions and outcomes.

⁴⁷ Dean K., and Goodlad, R. (1998) The role and impact of befriending.

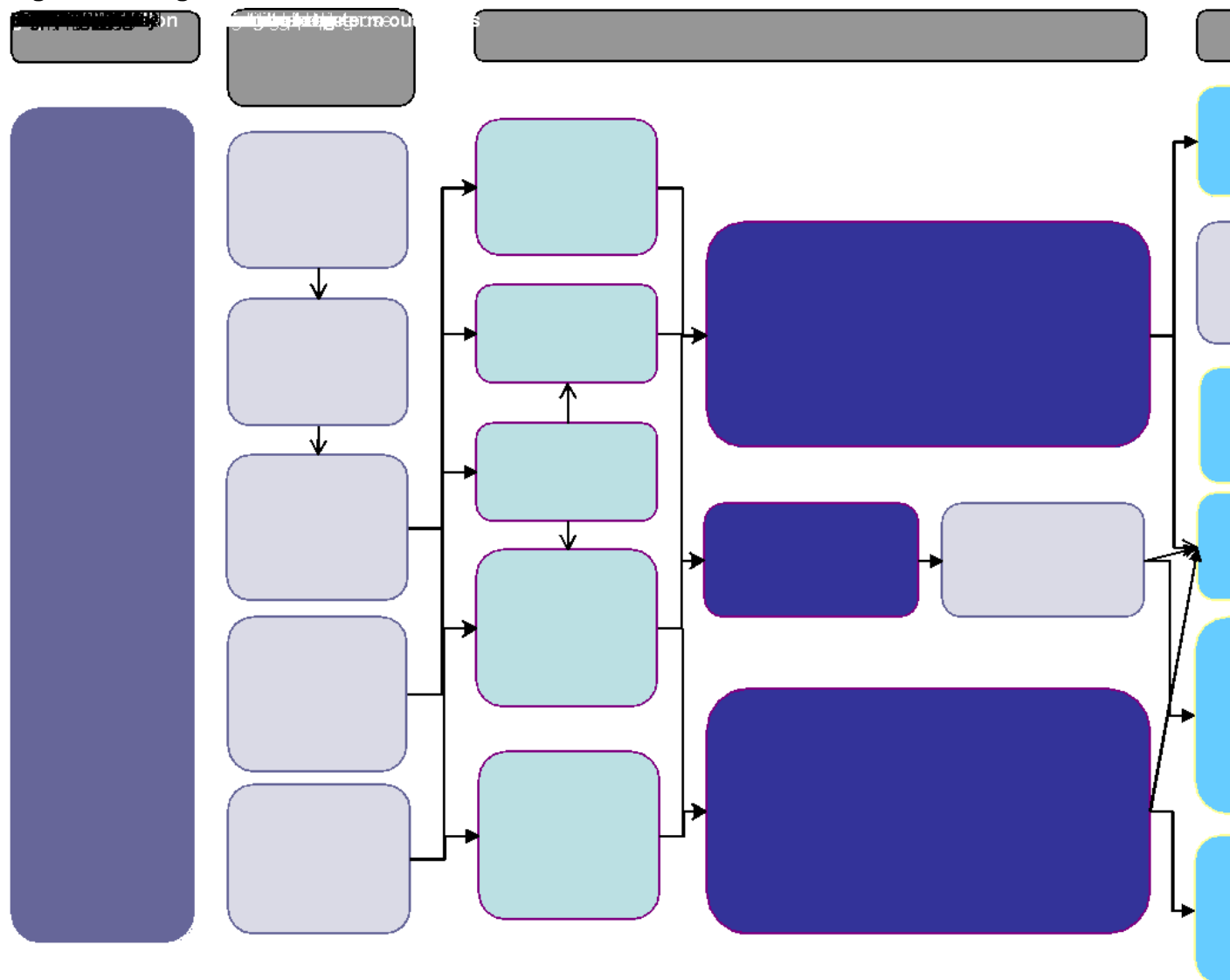
⁴⁸ International Longevity Centre (2011) "Good Neighbours: Measuring Quality of Life in Older Age"

⁴⁹ SCIE, 2012

⁵⁰ Bradshaw, T and Haddock, G (1998) Is befriending by trained volunteers of value to people suffering from long-term mental illness? *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 27:4, 713-720

⁵¹ Bernard (2013) Loneliness and Social Isolation Among Older People in North Yorkshire

Figure 2.3 Logic Model



2.5.2 Key outcomes

This section draws together the findings from the above review of national policy frameworks, secondary research evidence, case study analysis and feedback from commissioners to identify key outcomes to be measured through the evaluation research. The main focus of the research completed to date has been outcomes and impacts for runners and older people.

Outcomes for runners

According to the Standard Evaluation Framework (SEF), for Physical Activity⁵² if the intervention focuses on increasing a specific type of activity this should be the main outcome measure. This should also help in selecting the type of instrument (and scales) to measure change. If change in physical activity is the primary outcome there are a number of types of physical activity outcomes that programme or project may want to measure. The SEF uses the acronym FITT to describe the four main ways to classify measurement in physical activity.

- Frequency (measured using the key indicators of number of days of participation in the specific sport per week).
- Intensity (which could relate to type of sport/activity).
- Time (duration).
- Type.

Participation in GoodGym may therefore lead to change in terms of frequency (running more often), intensity (running faster to increase intensity), and duration (increasing the time spent running). Physical activity may also be classified as a combination of frequency, intensity and duration, which SEF refers to as the 'volume of physical activity'.

The framework above should therefore be applied in the analysis of GoodGym's impact on participation in running activities. However, measurement of participation in all types of physical activity is also important as it improves understanding of the overall impact of the intervention on sports participation and would take into account displacement and multiplier effects (as explained below) - joining a running group may have wider positive or negative effects on participation in other sports: running may act as a platform to inspire individuals to increase the amount of other activities they participate in or alternatively, participants may reduce the amount of other sports they do to make time for more running.

A particular appeal of GoodGym for commissioners is its role in supporting community activities and getting people out to volunteer who perhaps had not previously volunteered in the local community. This was borne out by the interviews with runners which suggested that GoodGym has provided a hook for young people to get involved in volunteering activity in their local communities.

Feeling a greater sense of belonging to their community was also highlighted as an important outcome by many of the runners. The case studies suggest that GoodGym activities enable people to build new friendships and feel needed and appreciated by their community members, increasing their place attachment and identity (or sense of belonging).

⁵² National Obesity Observatory (2012) Standard Evaluation Framework for physical activity interventions

Outcomes for older people

For the older people or 'coaches', the initial scoping work and the case studies in particular suggested that the evaluation should focus on three outcome areas: reducing social isolation, reducing loneliness and increasing wellbeing.

Although academic research around social isolation and loneliness has a long history, concentrated interventions in this field and specific attention and funding from government are more recent developments. Methods of measuring degrees of social isolation and loneliness are therefore still being developed and contested. Moreover evaluations of recent interventions to address loneliness and social isolation have generally not met Nesta's minimum standards of evaluation evidence with many studies limited to providing qualitative evidence only on the impacts of befriending schemes. Evidence on the cost-effectiveness of interventions to address social isolation and loneliness is also limited.

As shown in chapter four, qualitative evidence gathered from the interviews with older people for this study indicates that older people receiving regular visits from their runners are likely to benefit from reduced social isolation and feeling less emotionally isolated. The case studies confirmed wellbeing as a key outcome for both runners and coaches and there was a desire amongst local commissioners for the future evaluations to consider GoodGym's effect on the wellbeing of older people in particular.

The Department of Health remains interested in exploring more widely how tackling loneliness and social isolation can be measured in the general population in a way that will support local authorities.⁵³ The Adult Social Care Outcomes Framework 2015/16 suggests that social isolation can be used as a proxy for loneliness. However, as explored further in chapter four, more evidence is available linking loneliness to negative health outcomes and increase in use of services.

2.5.3 Assessing outcomes and impact

The general framework often used in assessing the outcomes and impacts of policies, programmes and projects funded by the public sector follows the Government's recommended approaches on evaluation as set out in publications such as HM Treasury's Green Book⁵⁴. The framework provided by the Green Book was designed to support economic impact analysis of policies and programmes. With that in mind the framework is more suitable for analysing impacts on measures which lend themselves to quantitative assessment and/or assessment of monetary impacts. Nevertheless the framework is a useful starting-point for developing impact evaluation frameworks for many public policy interventions. In this framework, the impact of programmes and projects is given by:

Net impact = Gross impact x (1 – Deadweight) x (1 – Leakage) x (1 – Displacement) x (1 – Substitution Effects) x Multiplier Effects

Three of these factors have potential relevance to the evaluation of GoodGym, as described below.⁵⁵

⁵³ Department of Health (2014) Improving outcomes and supporting transparency Part 2: Summary technical specifications of public health indicators Updated December 2014

⁵⁴ HM Treasury (2014) The Green Book: appraisal and evaluation in central government.

⁵⁵ Leakage, substitution effects and multiplier effects are not relevant in the context of this evaluation. Leakage is a concept that only applies to programmes that are targeted at a sub-national level where benefits of programmes might 'leak' outside of the target area. Substitution and multiplier effects should only be considered in evaluations

Gross impacts (participation)

The starting point for assessing the impact of GoodGym on the outcomes listed in the logic model is to establish appropriate outcome measures, as outlined above. Gross changes in measurable indicators, such as sports participation levels and wellbeing outcomes, can be detected through survey approaches.

Analysis of deadweight (what outcomes would have happened anyway?)

Deadweight specifically equates to the proportion of outcomes that would have occurred in the absence of the intervention. Counterfactual impact evaluation can be used to help determine the causal effect of participation in a programme, project or intervention on those outcomes. In the case of GoodGym, counterfactual impact evaluation would be used to answer two questions:

- 'Do we see a change in coach and runner outcomes after participation?', and
- 'Is GoodGym responsible for these changes?'⁵⁶

The second question of attributing outcome changes to the project is crucial, as outcomes could be affected by a range of factors other than the project itself. Impact evaluation aims to exclude those alternative explanations with the aim of attributing changes in outcomes to the programme. Supporting this, counterfactual analysis compares the real observed outcomes of the programme beneficiaries with the outcomes of an alternative reality – the outcomes programme beneficiaries would have achieved had the programme not been in place. Ideally, counterfactual analysis is applied when we are dealing with a well defined intervention targeted at a well defined population with the aim of inducing a change in well-defined state and/or behaviour of participants.

In this case, while it is necessary to explore impact and to assess the effect of the project on involvement on relevant outcomes, it was not feasible in this case to explore the counterfactual through assembling a control or comparator group. This could be done in principle using a difference-in-differences estimation approach (which controls for the differences between participants and non-participants at baseline); however this approach would require resource-intensive data collection from a comparison group (with likely high non-response and attrition at follow-up unless costly incentives are implemented). It would also be challenging with the available resources to assemble the requisite matched groups of non-users for a comparator group, given the nature of activities and their locations.

The basis of our suggested evaluation approach is therefore implementing panel data analysis methods using the data on runners and coaches collected at baseline and follow-up and assessing the distance travelled by individuals (longitudinal design). It should be kept in mind that the type of longitudinal analysis suggested does not definitively take into account the counterfactual, i.e. whether an outcome change would have occurred in the absence of programme participation. The impact evaluation methodology has therefore been supplemented with a self-reporting approach, which allows respondents to estimate, based upon considered judgements, the specific contribution of the activity to specific outcomes (additionality).

Participants may have also been able to gain access to alternative projects providing similar activities in the local area (and potentially leading to similar outcomes), in the absence of GoodGym. The survey for

where the primary outcome of projects are economic in nature as they relate primarily to the factor inputs and production processes used by businesses.

⁵⁶ HM Treasury (2011) The Magenta Book: Guidance for evaluation

runners therefore included a question on how far any alternative running projects were available and how likely participants would have been to take up these alternatives (project additionality).

3.0 GoodGym's Engagement and Targeting

3.1 Introduction

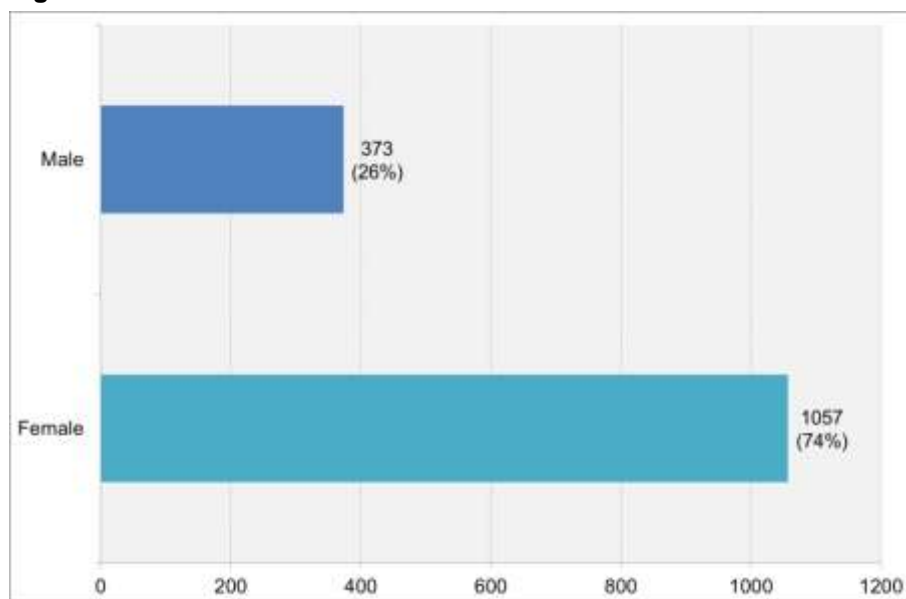
This chapter provides an analysis of GoodGym's engagement and targeting, as set out in the logic model. The analysis is generally based on the GoodGym registration database and the results of the evaluation baseline survey which provided additional data on the demographic characteristics of participants. Illustrative evidence provided through the qualitative research is also considered.

3.2 Profile of runners

3.2.1 Gender

As of July 2016, a total of 1,437 runners had registered as members on the GoodGym database (including both active and inactive members). As shown in figure 3.1, almost three-quarters of the registered runners were female (74%). This suggests that GoodGym holds a particular appeal for women runners. Anecdotal evidence from the interviews with runners and commissioner stakeholders suggests that the social aspects of the group runs can be more appealing to some women than running alone. The interviews also showed that the volunteering opportunities provide a particular motivation for women to take part in the running activities.

Figure 3.1 Gender of members

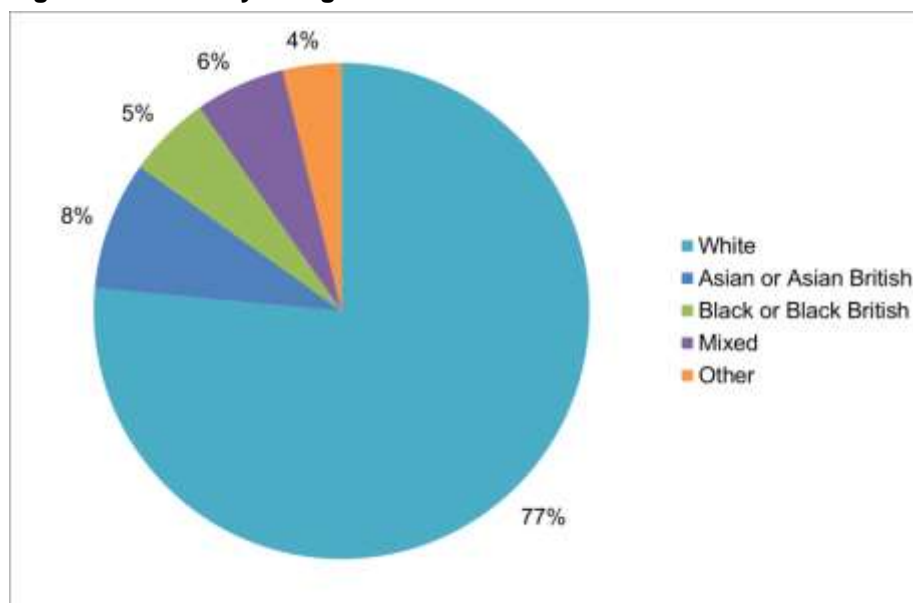


Source: GoodGym registration data (n=1430)

3.2.2 Ethnicity

As shown in figure 3.2, GoodGym attracts participants from a diverse range of backgrounds, however of those declaring their ethnicity, 23% were from non-white groups which compares to 15% of the population.⁵⁷

Figure 3.2 Ethnicity of registered members



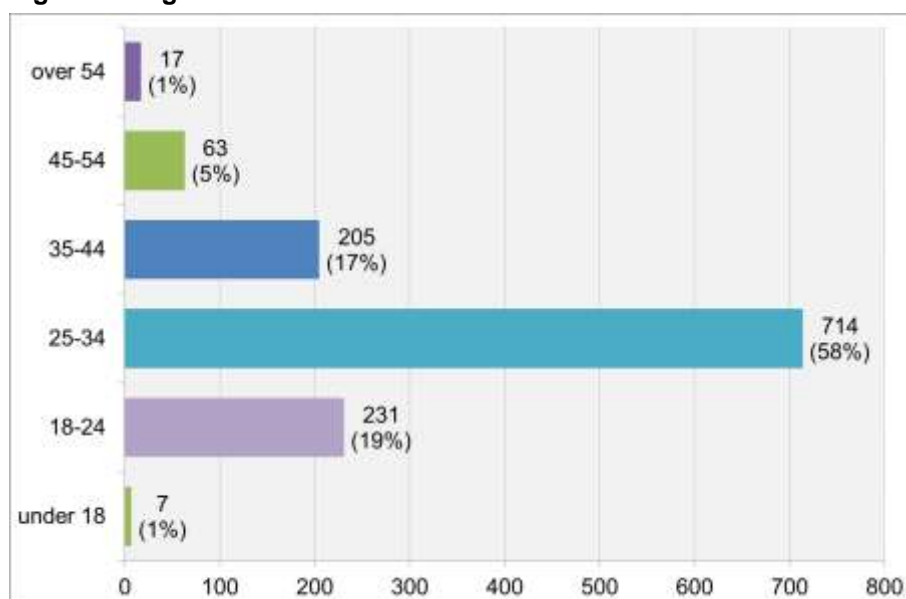
Source: GoodGym registration data (n = 1071)

3.2.3 Age

The distribution of ages among registered runners is shown in the figure below. For ease of analysis these have been grouped into five broader bands: under 18, 18 to 24, 25 to 34, 35 to 44, 45 to 54, and over 54. Most respondents were between the ages of 25 to 34, with the average age of respondents at around 30; however the data shows that the project has had some success in attracting people from older age groups, as 23% of participants were over the age of 35.

⁵⁷ Source: Census of Population, 2011

Figure 3.3 Age of members



Source: GoodGym registration data (n = 1237)

3.2.4 Comparison between baseline sample and all participants

The table below provides a basic comparison of the characteristics of the respondents to the baseline survey with the whole population of GoodGym participants. The table shows that the sample was similar to the gender profile of runners who took part in the baseline and follow up surveys; however, the proportion from BAME groups was slightly lower in the survey sample.

Table 3.1 Characteristics of GoodGym participants

Group	GoodGym registered runners	Baseline survey of runners
Women	74%	72%
BAME	23%	18%
Under 54	99%	99%

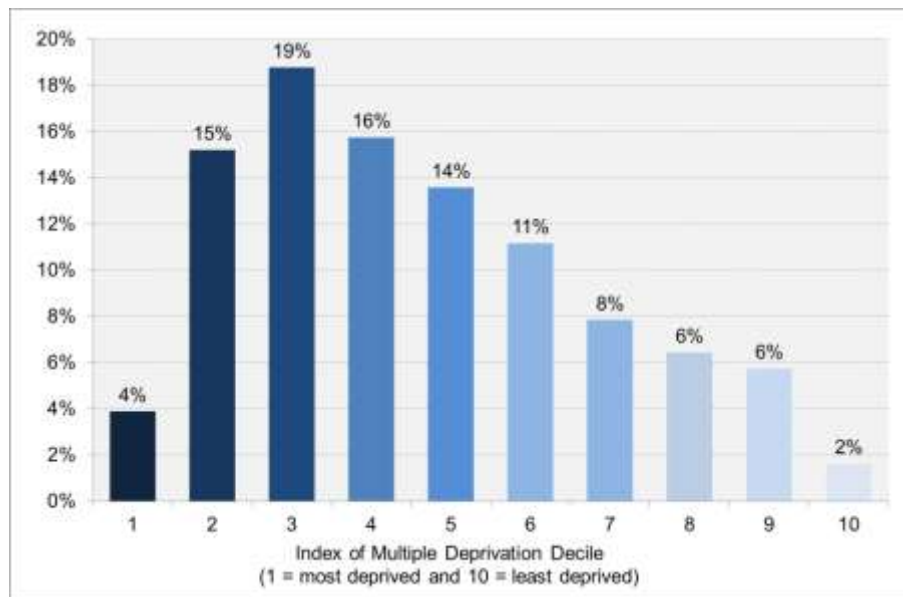
Source: GoodGym registration data (n = 1437); Baseline survey of runners (n=594)

3.2.5 Deprivation

Of the 1,437 members there were 1,289 valid postcodes provided by runners (90% of members). These postcodes were matched up with the indices of deprivation data to calculate the proportion of runners from the most deprived neighbourhoods in England.⁵⁸ Overall, 4% of runners were from the 1st decile or top 10% most deprived and 15% were from 2nd decile or top 20% most deprived neighbourhoods in England. 68% of the runners lived in the 50% most deprived areas.

⁵⁸ Based on ranking of deprivation of lower level super outputs areas matched to the GoodGym participant postcode data.

Figure 3.4 Deprivation data on members

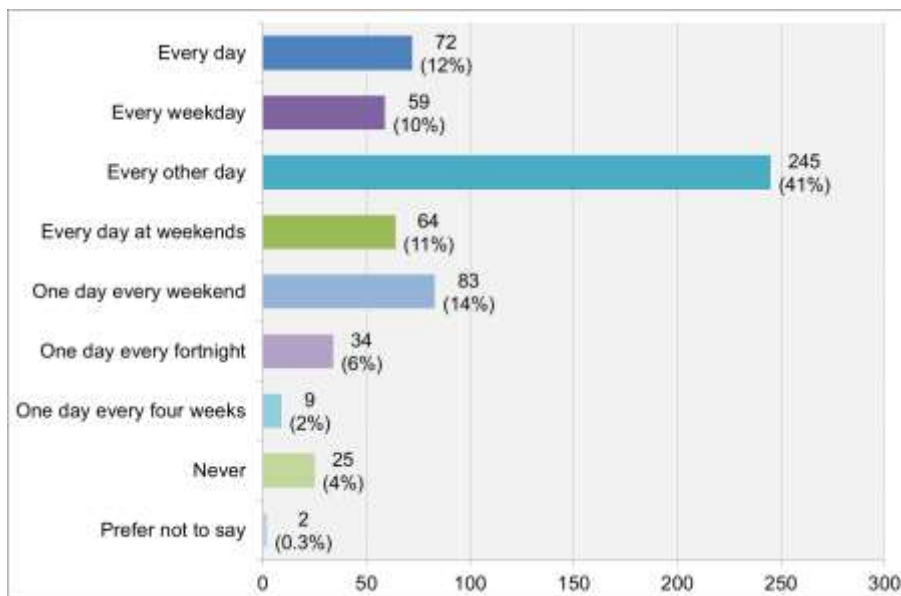


Source: GoodGym registration data ($n = 1237$) and <http://imd-by-postcode.opendatacommunities.org/>

3.2.6 Physical activity levels

As shown in chapter two, the Government has a strategic objective to increase the availability of and participation in sport and physical for people who are currently inactive, that is, active for less than 30 minutes a week. The responses to the baseline survey show that 78% of runners taking part in GoodGym were not meeting the Government's guidelines, that is, they were not taking part in moderate physical activity for at least 30 minutes on at least five days each week (equivalent to the 150 minutes recommendation); 41% reported doing 30 minutes of moderate physical activity every other day (close to the five day threshold) and 14% reported one day every weekend. 12% of respondents reported that they do less than 30 minutes of moderate physical activity per week.

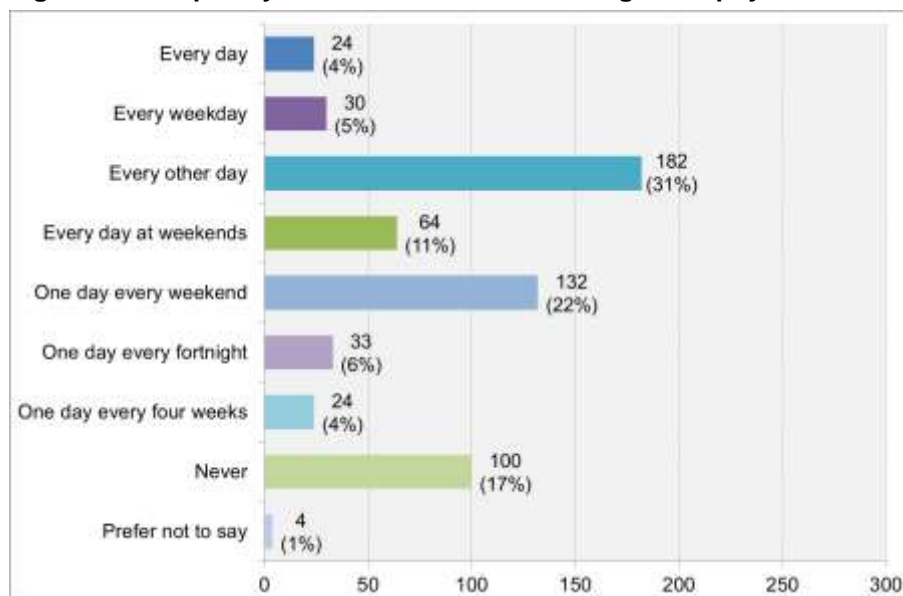
Figure 3.5 Frequency of at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity



Source: Baseline survey of runners (n=594) includes 1 blank response

Respondents were also asked how many days they had carried out at least 10 minutes of vigorous physical activity in the last four weeks. Of the 593 runners responding to the baseline, 31% reported doing 10 minutes of vigorous physical activity every other day and 22% reported one day every weekend. However 17% reported that they never carry out at least 10 minutes of vigorous physical activity, therefore for almost 1 in 5 runners GoodGym provides an entry point to more vigorous physical activity.

Figure 3.6 Frequency of at least 10 minutes of vigorous physical activity



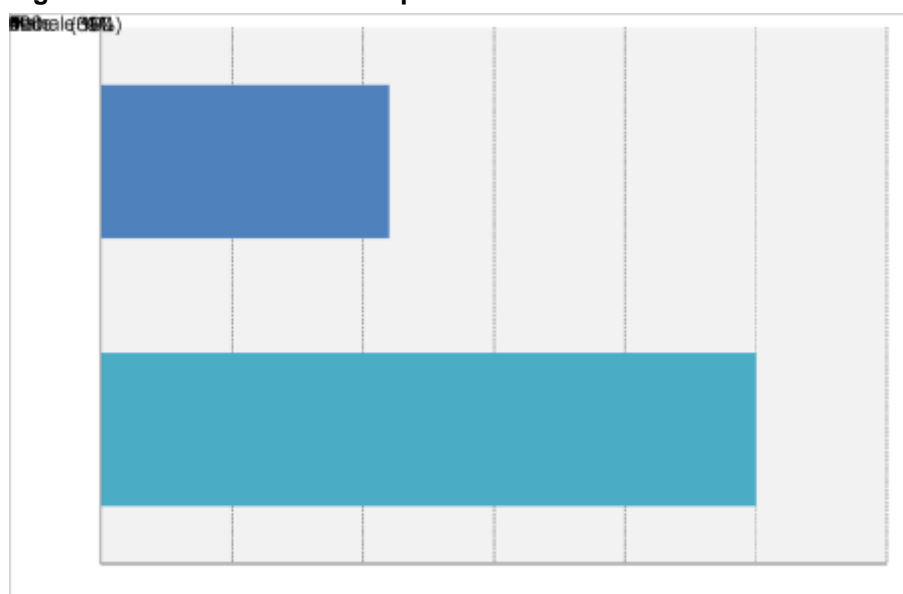
Source: Baseline survey of runners (n=594) includes 1 blank response

The average time spent doing vigorous physical activity amongst the respondents to the matched baseline survey was 37 minutes. Taking into account the data on average numbers of days, this implies an average total time spent doing vigorous activity of 93 minutes per week which is above the Government's recommended weekly level of 75 minutes. Over one-quarter of people who are GoodGym members are not generally meeting the Government's recommended healthy levels of physical activity.

3.3 Profile of coaches

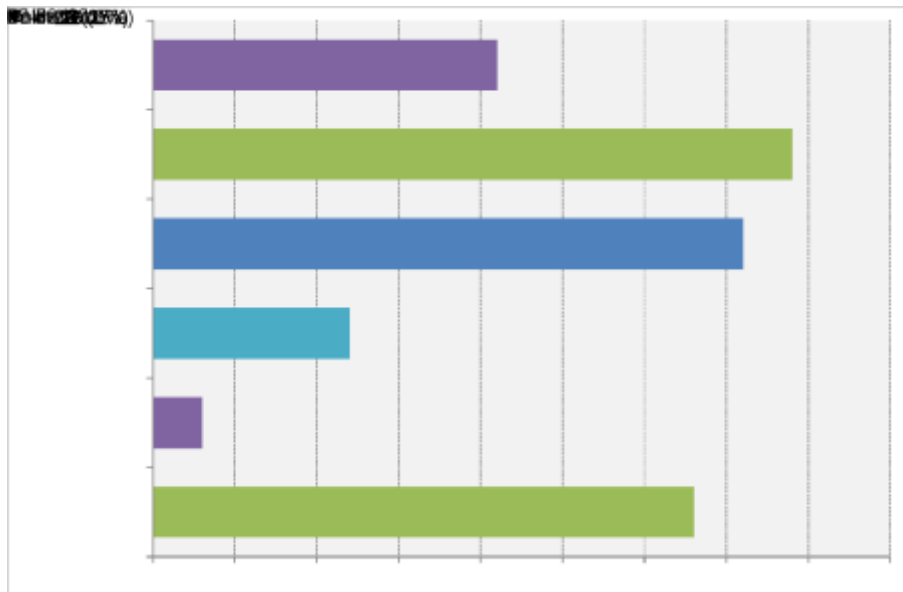
During the period of this evaluation, GoodGym was supporting 144 active pairs of older people (referred to hereafter as 'coaches') and runners. As shown in figures 3.7 and 3.8, 69% are female and the majority are in their 70s (25%) or 80s (27%).

Figure 3.7 Male-female ratio of paired coaches



Source: GoodGym internal monitoring data

Figure 3.8 Age range of paired coaches

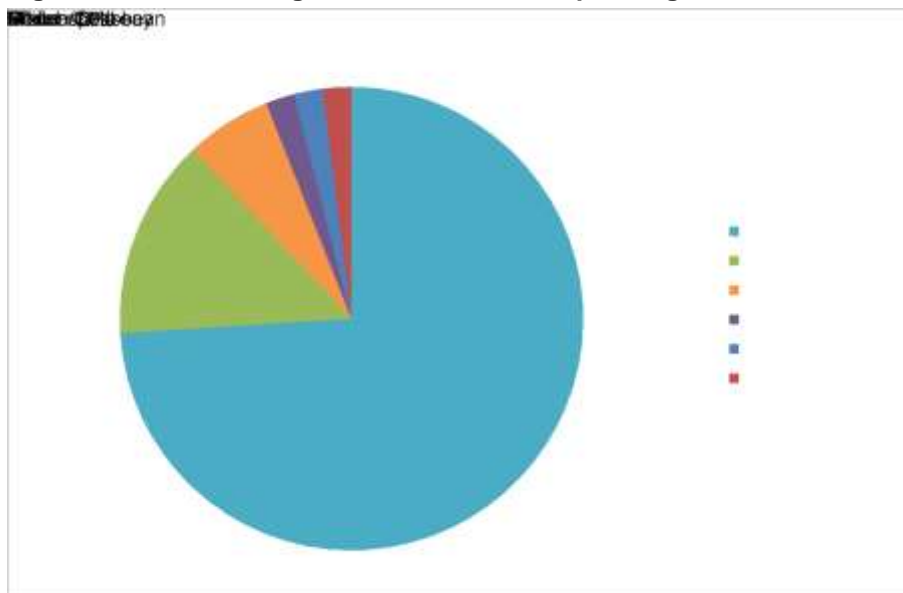


Source: GoodGym internal monitoring data

Comparing this with the demographic data of those coaches who completed the baseline survey at the beginning of their pairing shows that the sample of coaches who responded to the survey is broadly representative of the overall group. Out of the 51 respondents, 73% of respondents are female and most of them are in their 70s (31%) or 80s (35%).

In addition, data on the ethnic background of coaches was collected through the baseline survey, showing that most describe themselves as 'white'.

Figure 3.9 Ethnic background of coaches responding to baseline survey



Source: Baseline survey older people (at time of pairing)

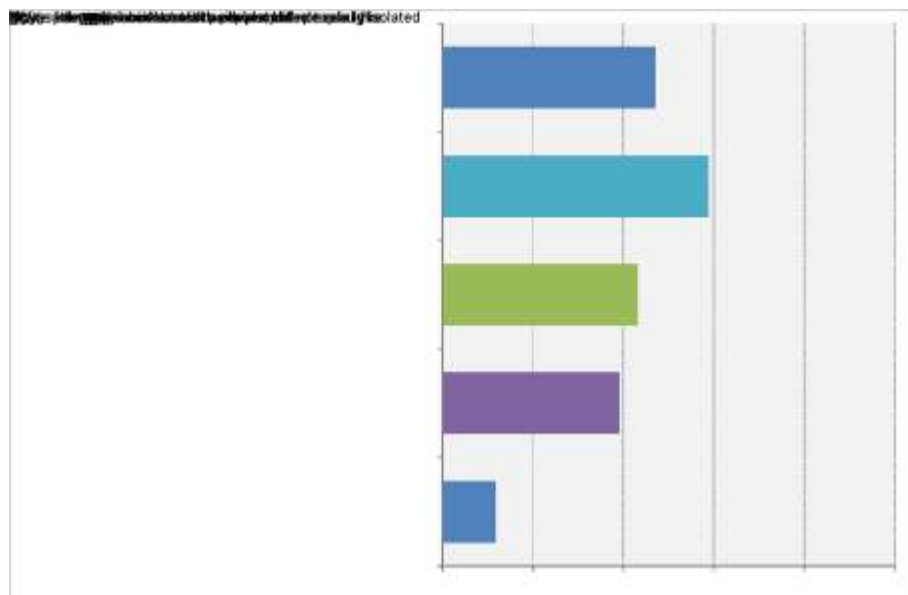
The baseline survey shows that GoodGym is successfully reaching older people who feel socially isolated and lonely and who experience low mental wellbeing. 29% of coaches responded that they had some social contact but did not feel that it was enough, and 24% felt socially isolated. The majority of coaches felt lonely often (43%) or some of the time (29%). National data on social isolation and loneliness is not available by age group (therefore it is not possible to compare the loneliness of GoodGym's beneficiaries with the general population). However, coaches scored their average mental wellbeing at baseline to be 20 (out of 35) while the average for older people aged 65 and above in the UK is around 25 (using the SWEMWBS).

"I am very lonely and isolated because no one comes to see me. It would be very nice to see another human being my only friends are people on the telly." Coach in Bath in baseline survey

"I am spending too much time in bed and indoors and not going out much nor mixing much with local people and am perhaps in danger of relapsing into depression and anxiety. However, I welcome the idea of a weekly visit from a GoodGym running befriender." Coach in Haringey, London, in baseline survey

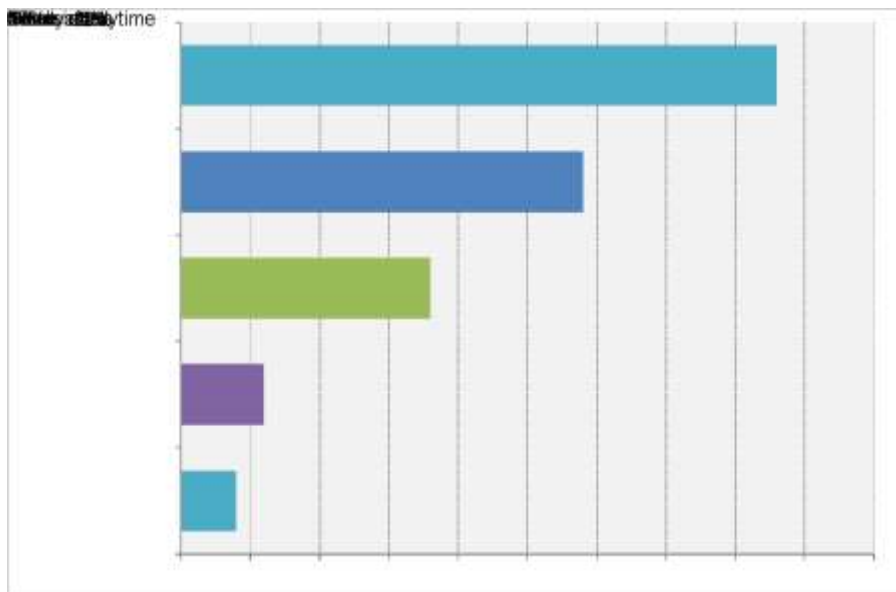
It is worth noting that close to half (23) of the 51 baseline respondents experienced both social isolation and loneliness (i.e. they stated that they had "not enough" or "little" social contact with people they liked, and felt lonely "often" or "some of the time".) The data also showed that older people may experience social isolation, but do not feel lonely; in reverse, some report feeling lonely whilst reporting to have adequate or enough social contact. This data reinforces what previous research has found on the complex relationship between social isolation and loneliness.

Figure 3.10 Coach survey responses: satisfaction with social situation



Source: Baseline survey older people (at time of pairing)

Figure 3.11 Frequency of feeling lonely (coaches)



Source: Baseline survey older people (at time of pairing)

3.4 Summary

This chapter has focused on the key characteristics of runners and coaches (older people) in order to provide a contextual basis for the analysis of GoodGym's outcomes and impacts. The analysis of the participation data also contributes to analysis of GoodGym's progress in meeting some specific high level policy aims and objectives. The key findings from this chapter are as follows:

- Almost three-quarters (74%) of the registered runners were female showing that GoodGym holds a particular appeal for female runners and highlighting the project's potential in helping to address the underrepresentation of women in terms of regular participation in sport and physical activity.
- Around a quarter of the runners were from ethnic minority groups which compares to 15% of the population of England.
- GoodGym tends to attract people between the ages of 25 and 34, with the average age of respondents at around 30. This appears to conform to the general perception amongst stakeholders that GoodGym holds a particular appeal for younger people.
- The GoodGym befriending scheme appears to be successfully reaching older people who feel socially isolated and lonely as the majority of coaches felt that they needed more social contact at the time of the baseline survey or were lonely at least some of the time. The wellbeing of older people supported by GoodGym is also below the national average for the relevant age category.
- The baseline survey shows that 78% of participants were not meeting the Government's recommended minimum guidelines for moderate physical activity, 12% reported that they did less than 30 minutes of moderate physical activity per week prior to joining GoodGym and 17% were not doing at least 10 minutes of vigorous physical activity. The physical activity behaviour of new members suggest that there is scope for GoodGym to play an important role in both sustaining and raising levels of participation to more healthy levels (alongside its other objectives to improve volunteering time and provide a social support service).

4.0 GoodGym Outcomes and Impacts

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter explored GoodGym's outputs in terms of engagement and reach largely drawing on registration data to begin to assess GoodGym's fit with particular policy objectives around physical activity and support to older people who are socially isolated. The focus of this chapter is on the outcomes and impact of GoodGym, with reference to the charity's overarching aims and the logic model developed by the evaluation team.

A central component of GoodGym's approach is to support a befriending scheme, whereby a regular visitor provides social support to older people with the aim of reducing social isolation and helping to improve and sustain older people's wellbeing. GoodGym also aims to help to get people more active and to help them stay active. GoodGym's achievements with respect to improving the wellbeing of older people and enabling runners to increase their level and intensity of physical activity are explored.

The combined analysis draws upon the perspectives of participants, gathered mainly through baseline and follow-up surveys and qualitative interviews with participating older people and runners. It is worth noting at the outset that it was not possible to collect sufficient numbers of follow-up survey responses within the timescale of the evaluation to allow a statistically robust analysis of change in outcome indicators (for both runners and coaches). The survey numbers were necessarily limited by the timeframe for the evaluation - as a before-and-after survey can only include new members/beneficiaries. The number of follow-up survey responses for the coaches survey are particularly small. It does not necessarily reflect the response rate at the follow-up stage (as with more time more responses can be generated to produce a more robust sample).

4.2 Outcomes for older people

This section analyses responses from qualitative interviews and surveys to show how GoodGym impacts on older people's social isolation, loneliness, mental wellbeing, life satisfaction and other aspects of their lives.

The in-depth interviews with coaches and runners provided qualitative evidence on the variety of ways in which the older people benefit from their involvement with GoodGym. Because of the reasons outlined above, the survey analysis is based on a small sample of only 19 matched responses from older people out of the 144 which were paired with runners at the time of the evaluation. Although the survey results are generally positive regarding the impacts of GoodGym, it is only possible to provide some illustrative analysis of quantitative outcomes at this stage. As sample sizes build, it should be possible to replicate the approach to test whether changes are statistically significant.

4.2.1 Changes in social isolation and loneliness

The qualitative interviews showed how GoodGym runners are valued social contacts for their coaches and provide company which they would otherwise not have. Coaches appreciated the regularity of the social contact with runners and their reliability. Different coach and runner pairings use their time together in different ways, mostly catching up on the week's events or exchanging stories about the past, but also

watching television, sharing a pot of tea, and helping with simple tasks such as reading out mail, writing letters or listening to voice messages on the phone.

Runners visited their coaches on a regular basis, only missing visits if they were on holiday or ill. The most immediate benefit for the coaches is having a regular visitor, who otherwise would not come. Coaches reported that the time they spend with their runner is “quality time”; it is a positive change from their day-to-day life and their usual activities. One runner reported that their coach had called their presence “refreshing”. This immediate benefit must be understood in the context that most coaches interviewed are limited in their physical functioning, particularly their mobility, which makes them house-bound. In those cases, their day time is often mostly filled by TV entertainment (as reported by some runners and observed during interviews).

Runners reported that they feel their coach benefitted from exercising their minds whilst in conversation with them. Particularly when speaking about the past, coaches have to recall names and places they have been to, but they also make an effort to remember what their runner told them during past visits. Again, this must be understood in the context of lack of social interaction and activities most coaches live in. Coaches also felt more useful as a result of the runner coming to visit and discussed the pace and routes of their runner regularly.

Coaches interviewed reported positive outcomes related to their emotional isolation. They appreciate someone who listens to them and gives them the ability to speak about emotional topics. It was found that coaches find in their runner someone who takes a genuine interest in them and cares for their wellbeing. Runners also reported that, during their visits, their coaches are able to release thoughts and feelings they would otherwise store up – they like to be able to “share their worries”.

Case study 1

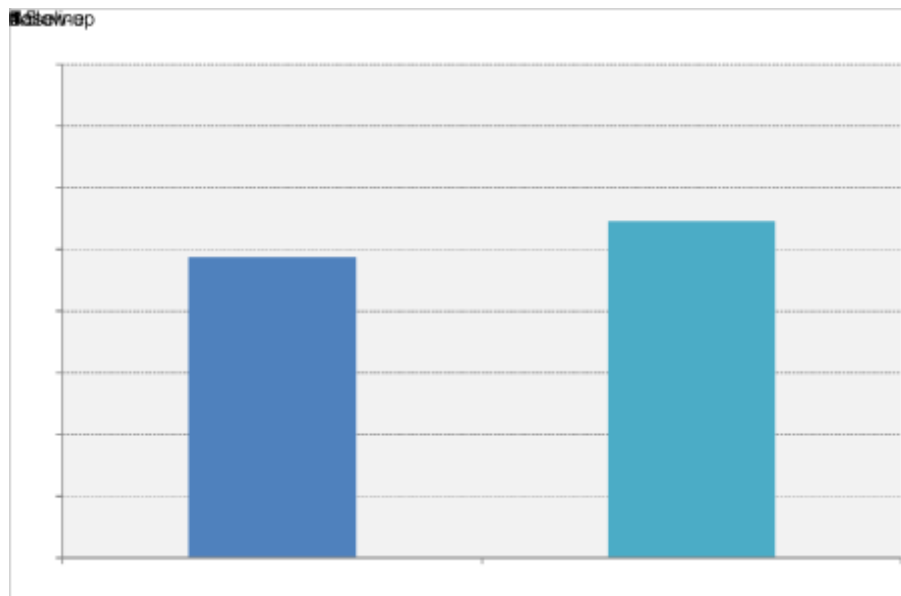
Andy is 62 and suffers from swollen legs, painful skin infections, arthritis and partial hearing loss. His conditions inhibit his mobility and make social interactions with other people more difficult. A GoodGym runner has been visiting him for over two years and Andy remembers his first phone conversation with her; when she asked whether she could visit him in his home on a weekly basis he responded: “I’m happy to do it because it’s a lonely existence.” In the beginning, Andy took his role as a coach very seriously, keeping a record of his runner’s time and advising her which routes to take to his house. But now, he says, they have “gone way past that”. Andy considers his runner a friend, and awaits her with a cup of tea and a snack to be a good host. The runner also sometimes helps Andy with tasks he struggles to do alone. Andy appreciates having someone to talk to with whom he shares some interests and someone to keep him company in addition to the carers that visit him daily.

“The benefit to me is her company. She’s a young mind, someone that I like, and it breaks up my day.” Andy, 62

To measure change in coaches’ social isolation, a single question asking about levels of satisfaction with their current social situation was used in conjunction with the following scoring system: 1 = feel socially isolated, 2 = some social contact but not enough; 3 = adequate social contact; 4 = as much social contact as I like. The question also appears in the Adult Social Care Survey and gives the respondent four answer options to indicate how satisfied they are with the quantity and quality of their social contacts. As GoodGym provides one additional social contact to an older person in the form of the runner, it seemed appropriate to focus on the quality of social contacts rather than specific numbers of contacts over any given period.

In responding to the question most coaches expressed that they did not have enough social contact with people they like both at baseline and in the follow-up six months after being paired. However, on average there was some improvement in the social isolation scores, with fewer coaches responding that they felt socially isolated. As shown in figure 4.1, the average scores changed from 2.44 at the baseline stage to 2.74 at follow-up, on a scale of 1-5.

Figure 4.1 Average social isolation scores

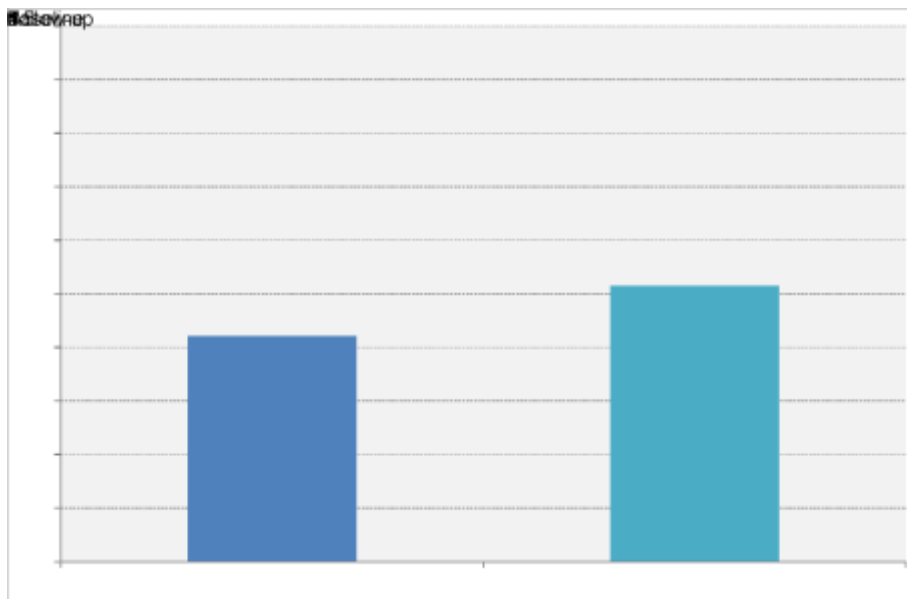


Source: Matched baseline and follow up survey of coaches (n=19)

Focusing on the frequency of loneliness that coaches experience, a single question was used in the baseline and follow-up surveys which asks directly how often a coach feels lonely with the following scoring system: 1= often, 2 = some of the time, 3 = occasionally, 4 = hardly ever and 5 = never.⁵⁹ After six months of being visited by a GoodGym runner, fewer coaches reported feeling lonely 'often' in comparison to the baseline; instead more coaches were 'occasionally' lonely. Overall, the survey suggested an improvement in the average frequency with which loneliness was experienced by coaches. The average scores in terms of frequency of feeling lonely changed from 2.11 at the baseline stage to 2.58 at follow-up.

⁵⁹ This question has also appeared in the Community Life Survey and the English Longitudinal Survey of Ageing.

Figure 4.2 Average loneliness scores



Source: Matched baseline and follow up survey of coaches (n=19)

Qualitative evidence also showed how GoodGym runners can alleviate feelings of loneliness in their coaches. The interviews showed that coaches appreciate someone who listens to them and gives them the ability to speak about emotional topics. Coaches find their runners to be people who take a genuine interest in them and care for their wellbeing:

"I like to see my new friend once a week. It means someone cares about me. My family live too far away and have their own families, which happens when you get old. So thank you for my friend." Coach in Lambeth in follow-up survey

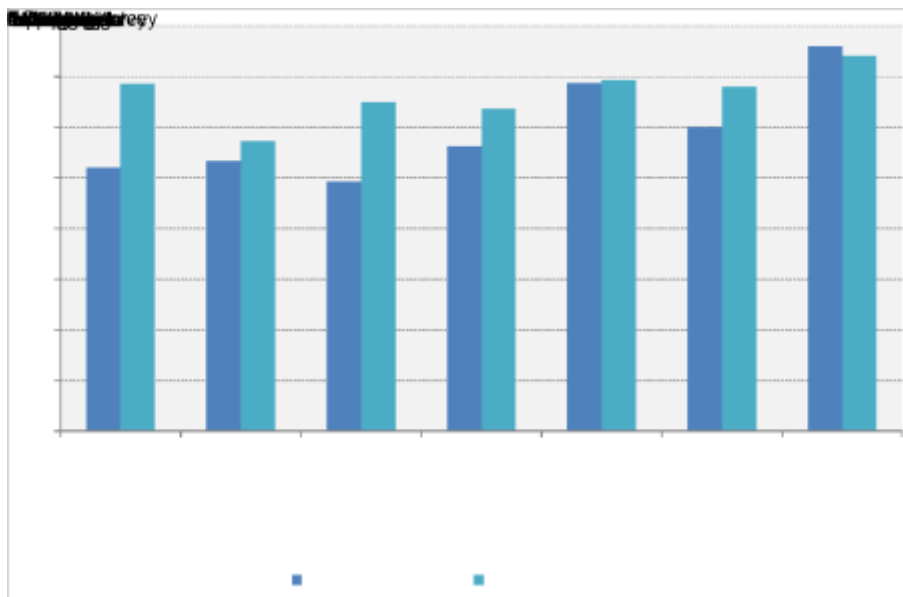
"Thank you so much for sending me [a GoodGym runner]. She is kind, willing to help me all the time and she talks to me always with a big smile. She encourages me, I encourage her running. Thank you so much for helping people like me without friends - you make me happy and smile." Coach in Camden in follow-up survey

4.2.2 Changes in mental wellbeing and life satisfaction

In the in-depth interviews coaches reported several positive feelings associated with or triggered by their runner, which contribute to improvements in mental wellbeing and life satisfaction. This included: feeling livelier, happier; looking forward to something; spending quality time; and being given peace of mind by someone being able to go out to buy necessities if they urgently need them. One runner reported that their coach had called their presence "refreshing".

The primary change in mental wellbeing can be assessed by looking at trends in scores computed from the Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS). The survey data shows some improvement in the mental wellbeing of coaches between baseline and follow-up. Figure 4.3 shows average scores reported across all seven statements at both survey periods. Although the changes are not statistically significant, on some of the measures there is a noticeable improvement in scores such that participants are generally moving from experiencing positive wellbeing from between 'rarely' and 'some of the time' to between 'some of the time' and 'often'.

Figure 4.3 Average WEMWBS scores



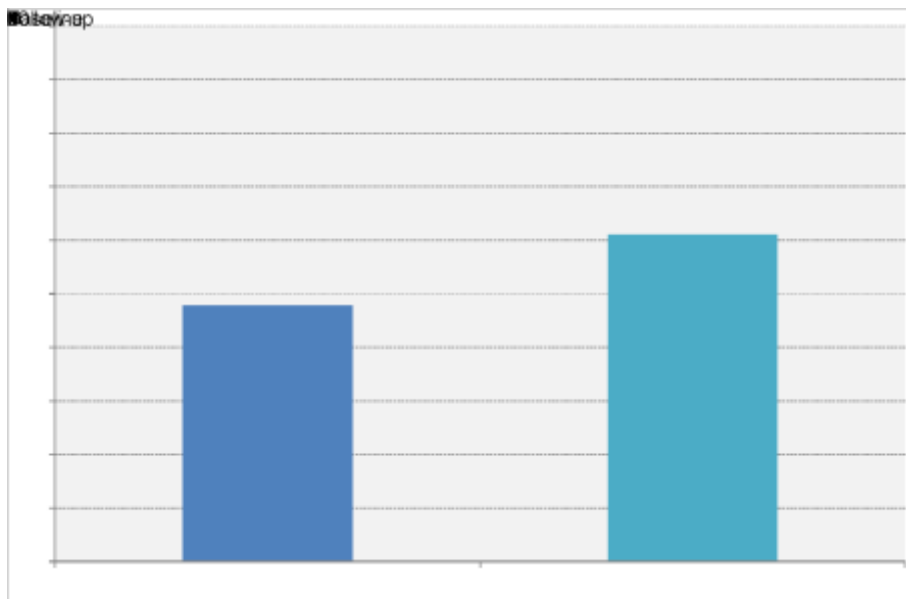
Source: Matched baseline and follow up survey of coaches (n=19)

The total metric score increased from 20.1 to 21.8 – a change of 1.7 points. Although the small sample could not show any meaningful change (a change of at least two points is regarded as meaningful⁶⁰), five individuals who responded to the follow-up survey did experience meaningful positive change towards better mental wellbeing.

A simple zero to 10 scale was also used to ask coaches to indicate their current life satisfaction, from “not at all satisfied” to “completely satisfied”. This scale is used in the ONS Annual Population Survey and in the Community Life Survey. The survey responses suggest that coaches’ average life satisfaction also improved slightly between baseline and follow-up (by 1.5 points on the 0 to 10 scale). More individuals scored their life satisfaction as high (7-8 points) or very high (9-10 points) after six months of seeing a GoodGym runner (eight in total at the follow-up stage compared to four at the baseline stage). As shown in figure 4.4, the average life satisfaction scores changed from 4.78 at the baseline stage to 6.11 at follow-up.

⁶⁰ Stansfield, J., Collins, B., Timpson, H., Whelan, G. (2013). Using and analysing WEMWBS to measure the impact of interventions in improving wellbeing. Coventry City Council, NHS Coventry and Warwick Medical School.

Figure 4.4 Average life satisfaction scores



Source: Matched baseline and follow up survey of coaches (n=19)

Additional comments provided in the survey show how the regular contact with the runners helps to improve the mental wellbeing of the coaches:

"Talking to my runner is a tonic - sometimes I start thinking sad thoughts but she knows how to jerk me out of these thoughts. I like the way she understands me, despite the difference in generations and I am grateful to GoodGym and my runner for her company."

Coach in Islington in follow-up survey

"The runner started coming to visit me when I was at a particularly low ebb and finding it difficult to cope with work, my mother passing away, etc... She with her commitment to visit every week has contributed to my recovery. I now feel much more optimistic."

Coach in Camden in follow-up survey

4.2.3 Further outcomes

Beyond the four key outcome areas, GoodGym runners facilitate the achievement of further positive outcomes for their coaches. These were identified during the interview stage of the research.

- **Ability to stay in own house:** Runners choosing to help their coach with additional tasks around everyday living can contribute to their coach being able to stay in their home for longer. For example, this outcome was observed where a coach was not able to manage their garden alone and was not able to pay for professional gardening services.

Case study 2

Since her knee operation Sandra has some trouble walking and a few years ago her husband passed away. 73 years of age, she lives alone with her cats in the house which has a back garden. As Sandra cannot manage all the garden work by herself, she asked GoodGym for help. A female runner who shares Sandra's love for gardening has been coming to her house for one year now and Sandra reflected on how their relationship has changed over time from being very polite to a feeling of great familiarity: "It's evolved so much that I can say

anything to her. She is really like a friend." Apart from helping in the garden, the runner and Sandra talk about many topics ranging from family, to holidays to making jokes and sharing pictures. Without the help from the runner, Sandra is sure that she would have moved out of the house as she could not take care of the garden herself and would not be able to pay someone to do so. She also got more out of GoodGym than she expected by finding a friend in her runner, and changing her attitude to young people with whom she had little interaction otherwise.

"It makes a difference that somebody keeps me company. It makes a big difference to how you feel because you look forward to someone coming in instead of sitting alone all the time. The neighbours haven't got time to sit for an hour or help in the garden because they have a life of their own. It's quality time with somebody you can talk to instead of the cats." Sandra, 73

- **Increased active mental engagement:** Runners reported that they feel their coach benefitted from exercising their minds whilst in conversation with them. Particularly when speaking about the past, coaches have to recall names and places they have been to, but they also make an effort to remember what their runner told them during past visits. This outcome must be understood in the context of lack of social interaction and diverse activities most coaches live in.

- **Inspiration to take up new activities:** In some cases, coaches were encouraged by their runner to become engaged in new (social) activities, such as using a computer and accessing the internet.

"GoodGym has opened up a new world for me. I am now online! I thought the 21st century had left me behind but with the help of my runner I now find it hasn't. Thank you GoodGym."
Coach in Tower Hamlets in follow-up survey

- **Improved attitude towards younger people:** Coaches reported that they have developed a more positive view of younger people as a result of interactions with their runner. They explained this by having had little contact with younger people before GoodGym and the negative media coverage this demographic group receives.

"The introduction of a young fit and healthy person into my life has had a remarkably beneficial effect on my own self-esteem and confidence. A regular change of views, coupled with my runner's progress give me an interest that I was lacking." Coach in Tower Hamlets in follow-up survey

Case study 3

Janet lives in sheltered accommodation as she has been diagnosed with dementia, is half deaf and is blind on one eye. With her 79 years she is still relatively mobile and goes to a nearby day centre three times a week. Although she has carers coming to see her every day, she admitted going to her long-standing GP just to chat to someone and be listened to. For over three years a GoodGym runner has been coming to visit Janet and she recalls that they "hit it off straight away". Together they watch wrestling on TV, which they both enjoy, but also speak about emotional topics such as the death of Janet's son. Reflecting back on the time before her runner came to visit, Janet says that she was lonely and her flat was "too quiet". In contrast to the cleaners and carers that Janet interacts with daily, she feels that her runner is different because "she takes more interest".

"We get on great. [My GoodGym runner] is a lovely girl. She has a lovely nature. I feel content and happy when she comes." Janet, 79

4.2.4 Additionality

It is important to acknowledge that a variety of factors beyond the scope of this evaluation may affect a coaches' social isolation, wellbeing and life satisfaction, such as a change in health conditions, friendship or family relations or their housing situation. GoodGym runners constitute one element of a coach's social and emotional world, which for some older people will be a significant contribution whereas for others it will bear less weight. Therefore the interviews and surveys for coaches also included questions on the additionality of outcomes in order to understand how outcomes could be attributed to the GoodGym activity.

The interviews revealed that coaches already had carers, family members, friends, neighbours, other volunteers or a combination of these visiting them on a regular or irregular basis. However the interviews provided a clear suggestion that the visits from runners make a positive contribution to the coaches' wellbeing that cannot be provided by other visits. The quotes below provide further evidence on the 'additionality' of GoodGym's befriending service.

"It makes a big difference to me. It makes a difference that somebody keeps me company. It makes a big difference to how you feel because you look forward to someone coming in instead of sitting alone all the time. [It is] Quality time with somebody you can talk to instead of the cats." Coach, 73 years old, paired for 1 year

"I feel like my coach really values me. He always seems happy when I arrive. He says it quite often 'I'm alone'." Runner, paired for 7 months

"[The runner makes a] Hell of a difference. A big difference to know that on Wednesday night I have a person to come, I can have a conversation with them, tell them what has happened to me. You never had that before, it's hard to explain. When you're in a stroke situation you're on your own a lot and they've taken that loneliness away." Coach, 67 years old, paired for 3 months

"All [my coach] does is talk for 45 minutes. She stores up all of her chats from a whole week and just gets it out. It's really evident that it's important that she can do this." Runner, paired for 3 months

"The benefit to me is her company. She's a young mind, someone that I like, and breaks up my day." Coach, 60's, paired for 2 years

"I feel content and happy when she comes." Coach, 79 years old, paired for 3 years

"We just talk and I feel a bit livelier to see [my runner] come. I can't go outside by myself." Coach, 81 years old, paired for 6 months

All 19 respondents to the follow-up survey said they felt a little (4) or a lot happier (15) as a result of the visits from their runner while 98% of coaches (18) consider their runner a friend. Triangulating these results with the information gathered during interviews and comments left by coaches in the survey demonstrate that GoodGym runners have a direct positive impact on the older people they visit,

alleviating their social isolation and loneliness, as well as improving their mental wellbeing. This was also the case where coaches had carers, family members, friends, neighbours, other volunteers or a combination of these visit them on a regular or irregular basis. Rather than the quantity of social contacts, the depth and quality of the interaction with their runner is the key to achieving positive outcomes.

4.3 Outcomes amongst runners

This section explores whether general physical activity and running levels tend to increase (or are maintained) amongst new GoodGym participants, how levels of activity (and inactivity) change over the six month period, and the specific contribution and impact of GoodGym.

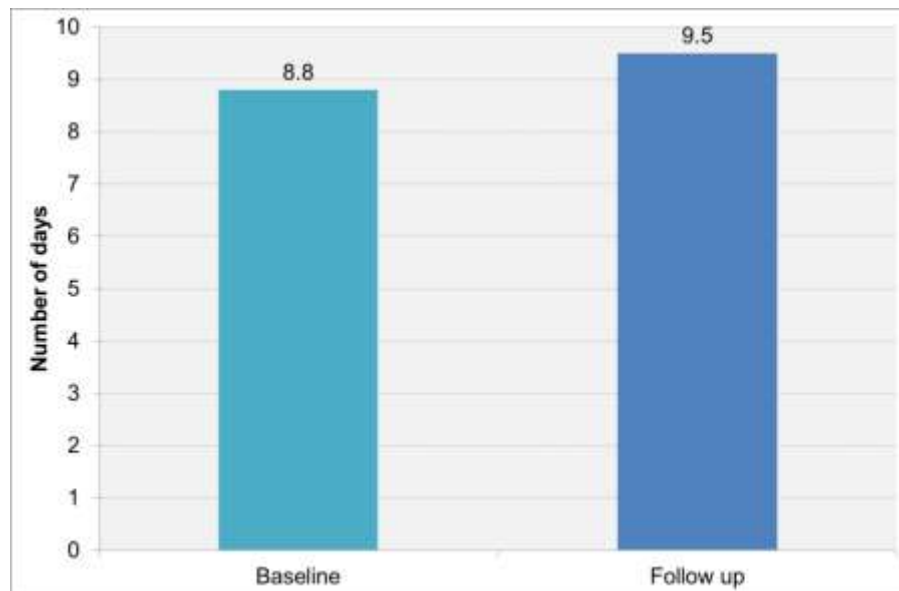
The broad finding is that across all measures of self-reported physical activity, there was an increase or improvement between the baseline and follow-up surveys (six months); however the current sample of follow-up respondents is not sufficiently large enough to detect statistically significant changes.

4.3.1 Changes in running activity

Change in number of days spent running

Firstly, participants were asked at each wave of the survey how many days in the last four weeks they had done some running. Amongst the 70 runners that responded to both the baseline and follow up surveys, the average number of days spent running increased from 8.8 days in the four weeks prior to joining GoodGym to 9.5 days at six months after joining (an increase of 0.7 days).

Figure 4.5 Average number of days running



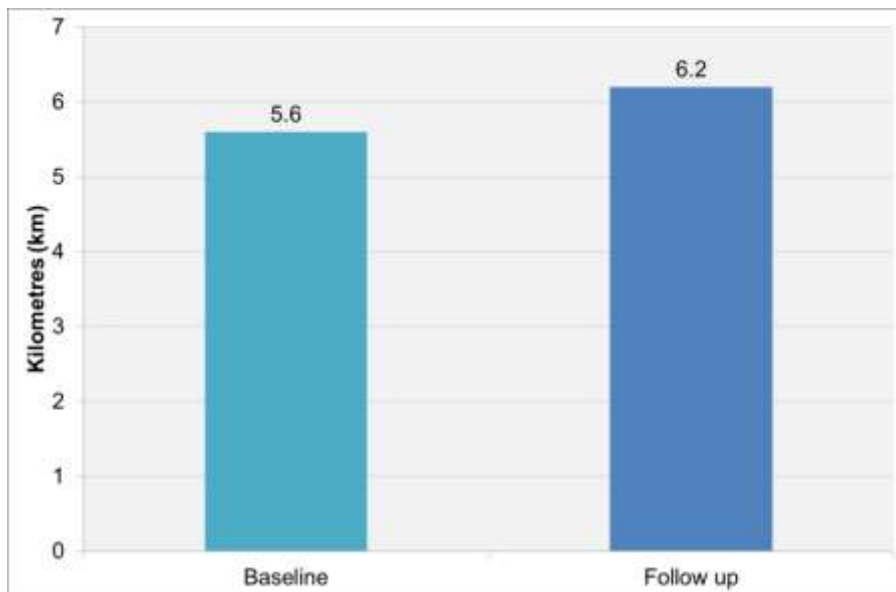
Source: Matched baseline and follow up survey of runners (n=70)

A comparison between the baseline and follow-up results shows that 25% of the matched sample reported an increase in the number of days spent running in the six months after joining GoodGym (a small proportion reported a reduction). More runners reported running 'every day at weekends' (6 percentage point increase) and 'every other day' (3 percentage point increase). Likewise, there was a reduction in the number of runners reporting that they 'never' ran in the last 4 weeks (3 percentage point decrease) and 'one day every weekend' (3 percentage point decrease).

Change in average distance spent running

At both waves of the survey the runners were also asked how far they normally run. On average participants ran 5.6km prior to joining GoodGym, compared with 6.2km six months after joining (a 0.6km increase). More runners reported running 5km – 10km (3 miles – 6.miles) (16 percentage point increase) while there was a reduction in the number of runners that reported running 2.5km – 5km (1.5 miles – 3 miles) (11 percentage point decrease).

Figure 4.6 Average distance per run

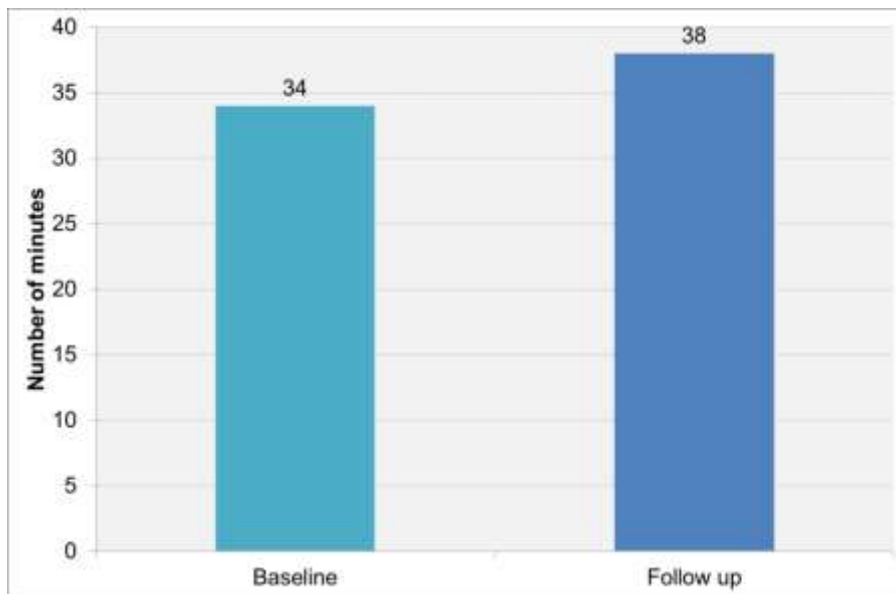


Source: Matched baseline and follow up survey of runners (n=70)

Change in average time spent running

The average time spent running also increased. Runners had on average ran for 34 minutes prior to joining GoodGym, compared with on average 38 minutes roughly six months later (4 minutes increase). More runners reported running 31 - 45 minutes (7 percentage point increase). Likewise, there was a reduction in the number of runners that reported running 16 - 30 minutes (9 percentage point decrease).

Figure 4.7 Average time spent per run



Source: Matched baseline and follow up survey of runners (n=70)

Some responses from runners in the qualitative interviews demonstrated the positive impacts of GoodGym on running:

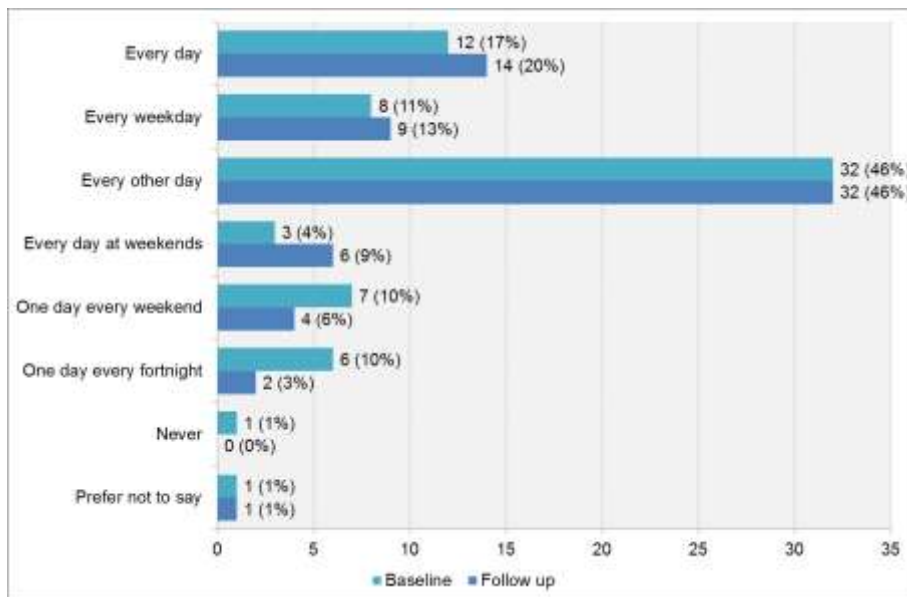
"Since I joined GoodGym my [running] times did start coming down for some of the distances that I was doing". Runner, paired for 1 year

"[Taking part in the group runs] really improved my running and made me much more ambitious." Runner, paired for one year

4.3.2 Changes in overall physical activity and inactivity levels

Runners were asked at both the baseline and follow-up stages of the survey to estimate on how many days in the last week they had undertaken 30 minutes or more physical activity "which was enough to raise your breathing rate". This is the equivalent of physical activity undertaken at a moderate or greater intensity and reflects the Government's definition used in guidelines on recommended levels of physical activity. As shown in figure 4.8, overall, there was a small increase in respondents undertaking moderate physical activity every day (a 3 percentage point increase) and every weekday (2 percentage point increase). The proportion doing less than one day of moderate physical activity per week in the matched sample changed from 7% at baseline to 2% at follow-up.

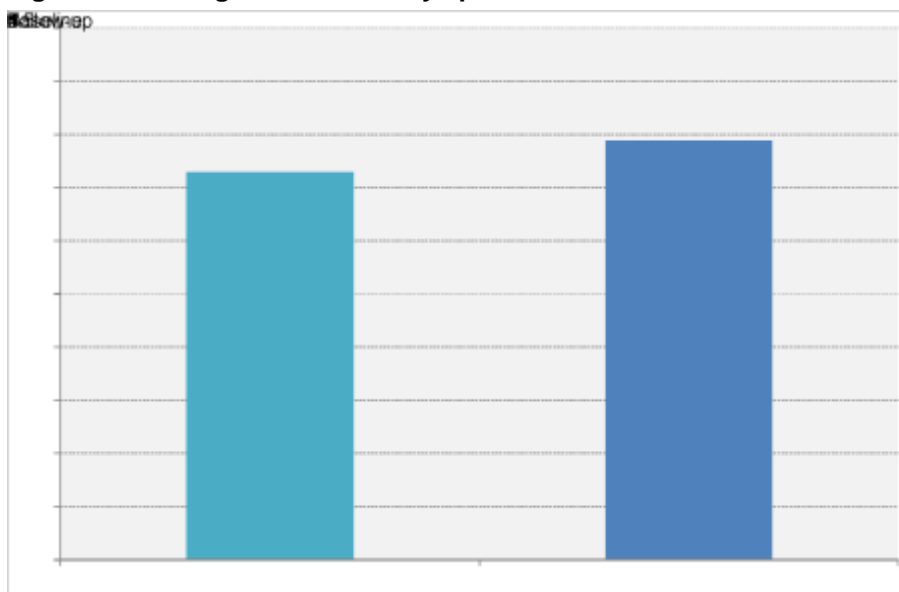
Figure 4.8 Change in frequency of least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity



Source: Matched baseline and follow up survey of runners (n=70)

Overall, the survey results show an average increase from 3.65 days of moderate physical activity to 3.94 days per week amongst the runners (figure 4.9).

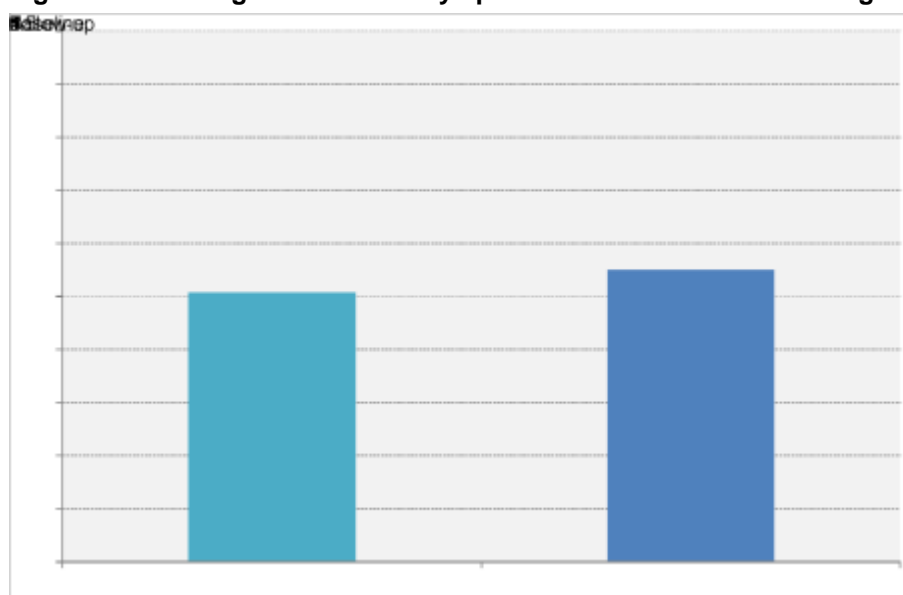
Figure 4.9 Average number of days per week of at least 30 mins moderate activity



Source: Matched baseline and follow up survey of runners (n=70)

Runners were asked at both the baseline and follow-up stages of the survey to estimate on how many days in the last week they had undertaken 10 minutes or more of vigorous physical activity which refers to all the activities that take “hard physical effort and make you sweat and breathe much harder than normal.” This definition is also applied in the Government’s definition in guidelines on recommended levels of physical activity (75 minutes of vigorous activity is recommended as the equivalent to undertaking the Government’s recommended 150 minutes of moderate activity). The survey results suggest an average increase from 2.54 days of vigorous activity to 2.75 days per week amongst the runners.

Figure 4.10 Average number of days per week of at least 10 mins vigorous activity



Source: Matched baseline and follow up survey of runners (n=70)

The table below provides an indication of the impact of GoodGym on time spent doing vigorous activity. The average time spent doing vigorous physical activity amongst the respondents to the follow-up survey was 41 minutes compared to 37 minutes for the matched baseline sample. Taking into account the data on average numbers of days, this implies an increase in the total time spent doing vigorous activity from 93 minutes per week to 113 minutes between the baseline and follow-up stages. There is a strong suggestion here that the project is helping people to increase their levels of activity.

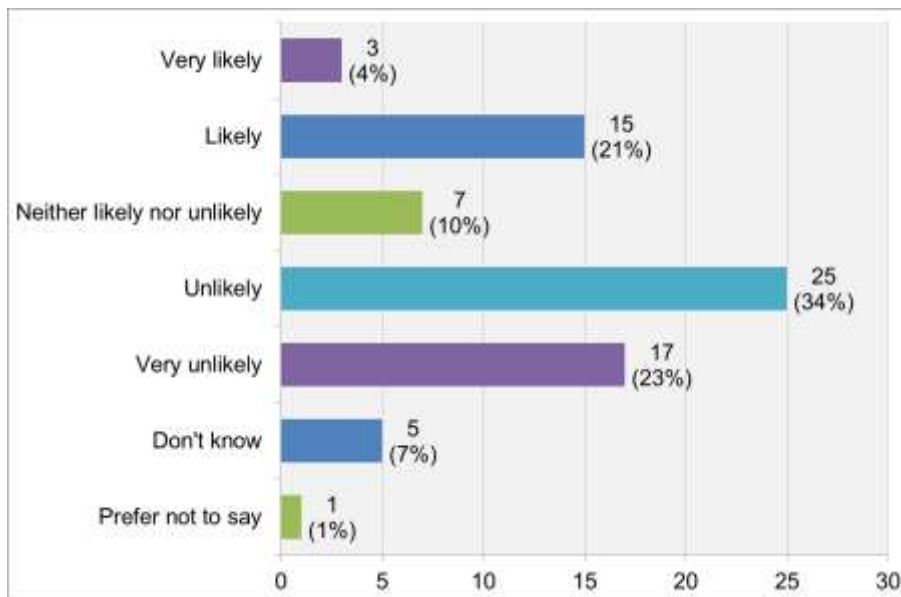
Table 4.1 Time spent doing vigorous physical activity

Stage	Number of days doing at least ten minutes of vigorous activity	Average time (in minutes) spent doing vigorous physical activities on one of those days	Total time
Baseline	2.54	37	93
Follow-up	2.75	41	113

4.3.3 Additionality of GoodGym

As a further way of examining the attribution of GoodGym (and the specific GoodGym approach used to encourage people to take up running), participants were asked how likely it is that they would have joined another running club in the absence of GoodGym. The majority of participants would not have joined another running group: 34% of respondents reported that it was 'unlikely' and 23% reported that it 'very unlikely'. Only 25% were either likely or very likely to have joined another running club.

Figure 4.11 Likelihood of joining another running club in the absence of GoodGym

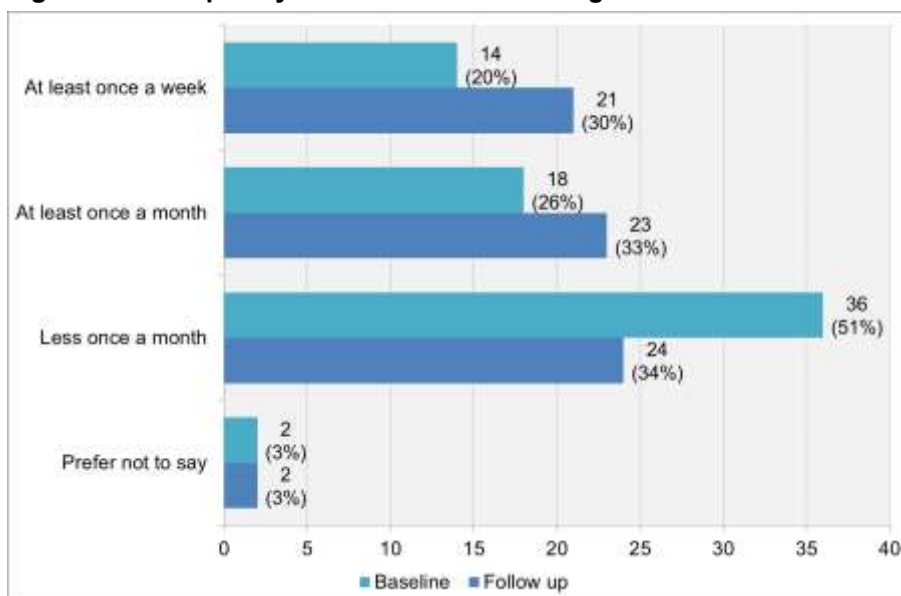


Source: Follow up survey of runners (n=73)

4.3.4 Volunteering impacts

There was a positive effect on runners' level of volunteering. For example, 20% of respondents had volunteered at least once a week over the previous 12 months prior to GoodGym, compared with 30% of respondents roughly six months after. Those that volunteered at least once a month also increased from 26% of respondents to 33% of respondents.

Figure 4.12 Frequency of runner's volunteering



Source: Matched baseline and follow up survey of runners (n=70)

However, there was only a slight change in the number of hours respondents had volunteered in the last four weeks, from an average of 5 hours 26 minutes at the baseline survey to an average of 5 hours 38 minutes at the follow up survey.

4.3.5 Changes in wellbeing

The primary change in mental wellbeing was assessed by looking at trends in scores computed from the Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS). The mean WEMWBS score of respondents was 49.04 at the baseline survey and 50.88 at the follow up survey. The change in the mean scores was 1.84. However, a 'meaningful' change is considered to be a change of at least three points.⁶¹ Comments provided in the follow-up surveys show how GoodGym helps the runners to improve their mental wellbeing:

"GoodGym was an essential cornerstone in revolutionising my life for the better, and it continues to be an essential element in terms of maintaining health and happiness in my life. Without GoodGym I would struggle so much more with depression, anxiety, isolation and loneliness, and I would certainly feel less positive about myself and my place in the world". (Female runner, aged 35-44, London)

"I am in a much better place physically and mentally with GoodGym in my life!" (Male runner, aged 25-34, London)

"I am so glad to be a part of this community. The positivity all around is so infectious and so good for the soul! Thank you to everyone involved with this concept. Bravo!" (Female runner, aged 35-44, London)

"For the runner it is a good opportunity to give something back to the community." Runner, paired for one year

The quotes below from the interviews with runners who were visiting older people illustrate how the befriending volunteering impacts positively on the runner's wellbeing as well as their physical health.

"When I run to my coach I always feel as if I am already achieving something just by running there. And when I'm running there, spiritually I feel different. I feel as if I have helped somebody." Runner, paired for one year

"Knowing that there is someone who I need to support is a huge motivator." Runner, paired for four months

"I have definitely learned attitudes from [my coach] which have been valuable to me. He is very forgiving which is something I really like in him and I would like to develop that in myself." Runner, paired for seven months

"I feel [my coach does] provide me with inspiration. After visiting him I feel uplifted. It helps my state of mind and wellbeing" Runner, paired for one year

"[In my coach I have] a friend from a completely different world to me. I could have never have had him as a friend without being matched with him. [Visiting him] is almost therapeutic, like I can leave my world behind for that hour." Runner, paired for seven months

⁶¹ Stansfield, J., Collins, B., Timpson, H., Whelan, G. (2013). Using and analysing WEMWBS to measure the impact of interventions in improving wellbeing. Coventry City Council, NHS Coventry and Warwick Medical School.

"I just really enjoy [the relationship with my coach] and it's nice to get someone else's perspective and life view on things. All people I know in London are in their 30s. It's just really refreshing to have a relationship with someone who is much older." Runner, paired for three months

"As somebody who was new to London it has given me a sense of community and belonging. It has helped me to lay down some roots in London." Runner, paired for two and a half years"

4.4 Summary

This section highlights some specific conclusions with respect to the participant outcomes and impacts of GoodGym.

Taken together, the qualitative interviews and survey results suggest that the visits from the runners are having a positive effect on the social isolation, loneliness and wellbeing of the older people they visit as part of GoodGym's befriending service.

The interviews with a small sample of older people were clear that the visits from runners make a positive contribution to the coaches' wellbeing.

Responses from a small sample of older people who have taken part in a longitudinal survey provide further evidence that the visits from the runners are having a positive effect on social isolation, loneliness and wellbeing; however, the sample of matched responses is small and can only provide illustrative analysis of quantitative outcomes at this stage.

All 19 respondents to the follow-up survey said they felt a little (4) or a lot happier (15) as a result of the visits from their runner while 98% of coaches (18) consider their runner a friend. More individuals scored their life satisfaction as high (7-8 points) or very high (9-10 points) after six months of seeing a GoodGym runner (eight in total at the follow-up stage compared to four at the baseline stage).

Beyond the four key outcome areas, GoodGym runners facilitate the achievement of further positive outcomes for their coaches, namely: ability to stay in their own house for longer; increased active mental engagement; inspiration to take up new activities; and improved attitude towards younger people.

Case studies focused on GoodGym's befriending service provide additional insight into how the relationship with the runner has helped to improve the wellbeing of older people.

Responses from a longitudinal survey of GoodGym running participants show how the activities help runners to maintain and increase their levels of running activity (there is potential to improve the accuracy and robustness of these results through larger sample sizes as GoodGym expands its area coverage):

- The average number of days spent running amongst the participants was 9.5 days per month at six months after joining (an increase of 0.7 days).
- The average distance run by GoodGym participants was 6.2km (an increase of 0.6km).

- 25% of the matched sample reported an increase in the number of days spent running in the six months after joining GoodGym.

The survey findings also suggest that GoodGym helps participants to meet the Government's recommended levels of weekly physical activity, as the survey showed some short-term overall increases in levels of weekly physical activity at six months after first joining GoodGym. The changes detected were:

- An average weekly increase of 0.29 days of moderate physical activity.
- An average weekly increase of 0.21 days of vigorous physical activity.
- An average weekly increase in total time spent doing vigorous activity from 93 minutes per week to 113 minutes.

GoodGym also seems to give runners an increased sense of belonging to their community, an outcome which is positive for runners and appeals to commissioners, demonstrating GoodGym's role in getting people out and volunteering, helping to develop more cohesive communities.

5.0 Value for Money Framework

5.1 Introduction

This chapter considers how existing tools could be used to assess the value for money of GoodGym's activities. It provides illustrative analysis of the value for money for comparison (where GoodGym data and evaluation evidence allows) and provides suggestions on how a comprehensive assessment of value for money could be taken forward when more robust evaluation evidence becomes available.

5.2 Efficiency

It is possible to complete efficiency analysis for the running element of the project as comprehensive data is available on actual funding per local authority area and numbers of participants that are typically engaged in each area. Table 5.1 shows how a unit cost figure was derived based on the funding amount per area and the numbers of participants engaged, using information provided by GoodGym.

Table 5.1 Participation strand - unit cost per participant engaged

Total funding	Number of participants typically engaged	Unit cost per participant engaged
£25,000	250	£100

Source: GoodGym monitoring data and Ecorys analysis

Analysis shows that the GoodGym model is generally cost-efficient when the unit cost (£100 per participant) is compared with other programmes focused on increasing physical activity. GoodGym's unit cost should be expected to be higher than other physical activity schemes due to the additional services provided through the project (i.e. support to older people and community groups). For example, Ecorys' 2012 evaluation found the unit cost of the Big Lottery Fund's Fit as a Fiddle programme, which funded community based physical activities for older people (including walking and exercise referral) across England to be £77 per participant. The unit cost per participant of the national Walking for Health programme was found to be £76 by Ecorys in a recent evaluation.⁶² Sport England's Running Programme provides a more comparable example. According to Sport England's programme data, the average cost per participant recruited was just under £65 whilst the cost per participant new to running was just under £80.

It is also worth noting that the unit cost analysis is based on the initial funding investment only. In areas where GoodGym has been running for several years (e.g. Tower Hamlets, Camden etc) many more runners have been engaged. As GoodGym presence is sustained over a longer period in any given area, the unit cost is likely to reduce significantly making the activity even more cost-efficient (in terms of the initial public sector grant value).

The estimated unit cost per participant (£100) therefore provides a good indicator of the efficiency of the GoodGym model in attracting participants, as well as a basis for comparison (over time and with other schemes). It should be expected that a more specific targeting approach (focused on less active people)

⁶² France, J., Sennett, J., Jones, A. Fordham, R. et al (2016) Evaluation of Walking for Health, The Ramblers and Macmillan.

would drive up the unit cost per participant (as it is expected that engagement costs will need to increase); however, overall value for money would improve if these costs are outweighed by additional physical activity (and health) outcomes and the unit cost could decrease as the programme continues beyond the initial funding period.

5.3 Cost-effectiveness analysis

Cost effectiveness analysis (CEA) compares costs with the outcomes generated to identify approaches that appear relatively cost-effective in delivering outcomes. Through measuring physical activity and via using existing evidence on the link between physical activity and health and quality of life, longer term cost effectiveness can be expressed in terms of costs per quality adjusted life years (QALYs)⁶³ gained. QALYs can be examined for particular projects using the MOVES modelling approach⁶⁴ (explored in detail below) as this takes into account the health benefits of participation in physical activity based on the duration, frequency and, intensity of participation associated with the project intervention. The analysis for specific projects can be compared to nationally recommended thresholds on cost per QALY.

As shown in table 5.2, the net cost per QALY gained for each of the additionality scenarios (detailed below) are both well below the £30,000 cost per QALY benchmark value recommended by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) to assess the acceptability of a new technology or investment in the NHS.

Table 5.2 Cost per QALY gained

Scenario	Incremental cost-effectiveness ratio (net cost per QALY gained)
A (100% additionality)	£3,498
B (61% additionality)	£7,692

Source: MOVES / Ecorys analysis

5.4 Cost-benefit analysis

Cost-effectiveness approaches do not provide an indication of the *value* of the outcomes achieved, relative to costs. Cost benefit analysis (CBA) is a more detailed approach that compares (as far as possible given the available evidence) the full social costs of public sector interventions with the social value of the benefits achieved. In the context of the GoodGym model of delivery, the key components of this analysis for the physical activity component are described below:

⁶³ A QALY is a measure of disease burden, with a value of 1 representing a year of life in perfect health, a value of 0 representing death, and values between representing the quality of life attained under conditions of disease or other adverse physical and mental health conditions.

⁶⁴ MOVES was developed by the University of East Anglia's Medical School specifically for Sport England to help to demonstrate the economic benefits of participating in sport and wider physical activity. It is intended for use by those commissioning these types of activities.

- **Project costs:** The overall resource cost of the project should incorporate all relevant costs of delivery at the local area level.⁶⁵
- **Health impacts:** The primary health benefit of the programme is likely to be in terms of the reduced probability of disease related to inactivity. There has been considerable scientific research establishing a link between physical inactivity and a range of diseases, including Type II Diabetes and Coronary Heart Disease. In valuing the health impacts of the programme we make use of a model that has recently been developed for Sport England (MOVES). The model is underpinned by a systematic understanding of the relationship between physical activity and health outcomes. The key benefits monetised by the model are savings to the healthcare system from not having to treat disease and a value derived from the willingness to pay for QALYs gained.
- **Data** was inputted into the MOVES model in order to derive cost-benefit ratios. The input assumptions are generally derived from GoodGym's monitoring data and the survey responses regarding participation levels, changes in levels of physical activity (attributed to the project) and analysis of project expenditure. Details on the key assumptions are included below:
 - o Demographic data, such as a median age and male/female breakdown are estimated using the monitoring and survey results.
 - o Baseline physical activity levels are derived from the survey data and in particular assumptions regarding the extent to which the projects were able to engage with people who are inactive.
 - o Frequency, intensity and duration of activity are estimated based on the survey data.
 - o The length of the project intervention and rates of drop out are based on assumptions regarding the number of participants over the two-year period of funding for each area.
 - o Time horizon of benefits associated with the project which accounts for the health benefits from physical activity, which is cumulative over the medium to longer-term, assumes that the same level of physical activity is continued throughout this period and therefore that the project changes not only peoples' attitudes towards and enjoyment of physical activity, but also their medium to longer-term behaviours. A five year time horizon, for example assumes that health benefits from the intervention (or wider participation in physical activity) will accrue up to five years.

The key parameters underpinning the model and their application to GoodGym are set out in the table below.

Table 5.3 MOVES model inputs

Category	Parameters	Assumptions	Values
Demography	Age Group	Modal age-band in monitoring data taken as age group	16-30
	Gender ratio	Based on monitoring data	75% female
	Starting Activity Level	Based on analysis of starting physical activity behaviour of participants (using survey data)	Moderately active

⁶⁵ While individuals may incur costs as a result of participation in projects (in terms of their time, as well as complementary spending on equipment), it will be assumed that these costs will at least offset by the enjoyment they derive from participating in sports. As such, both the costs and direct enjoyment accruing to individuals benefitting from the programme resulting from the programme are not addressed in the cost-benefit analysis.

Activity/ scale of intervention	Type	Type of sport (could include multi-sport)	Running
	Intensity	Assumed in model	Normal pace
	Duration of sessions	Based on average response in follow-up survey	30 minutes
	Frequency	Numbers of sessions per week or month based on survey data	2 days per week
	Length of Programme	Length of programme (limited to the duration of the funding period therefore does not take into sustainability of GoodGym activity in local areas and its expansion which is an objective of the project)	2 years
	Total Number of Sessions	Length of the programme/frequency	200
	Time Horizon	As there is no primary data on the time horizon (or sustainability of participation) a five-year time horizon is assumed; however this assumption is reasonable given GoodGym's sustainability objectives and experience in specific areas.	5 years
	Begins with	The total number of project participants	250
	Ends with	The number of participants still involved at the end of the programme period (based on proportion who become regular participants)	200
	Drop-outs rate	Drop-outs per week	0.5
Costs	Total Cost	Project cost	£25,000
	Average Cost	(£Total cost/no of participants)	£100

The MOVES model assumes that the physical activity undertaken for any evaluated programme or project is additional to what would have occurred in its absence. A different additionality scenario is presented in the results table below based upon participants being more likely to have engaged in a similar physical activity in the absence of GoodGym. The scenario is based on responses to the follow-up survey question, where participants were asked how likely it would have been for them to have joined a different running group if the GoodGym group was not available at the time they joined. Based on assumed probability weightings for each of the response categories, it is estimated that around 61% of respondents (152 out of the 250 runners) would not have found a similar group elsewhere (table 5.4).

Table 5.4 Additionality of GoodGym

If GoodGym was not available at the time you joined, how likely is it that you would have joined a different running group?	Percentage	Assumed probability respondents would not have attended a similar group
Very likely	4%	0.1
Likely	22%	0.3
Neither likely nor unlikely	10%	0.5

Unlikely	37%	0.7
Very unlikely	25%	0.9

Sources: Evaluation follow-up survey

Base: All respondents (excluding don't knows) (67)

The MOVES model generates two alternative outputs with each estimating the value of different types of benefit. The financial return on investment to the NHS is a measure of the amount of money saved in treatment costs by the NHS brought about as a result of the programme. The net investment of the programme is calculated as the NHS costs avoided minus the total project investment. The calculation of the financial return on investment can be presented as follows:

$$\frac{(\text{Treatment Costs Saved} - \text{Project Investment})}{\text{Project Investment}} = \text{Financial Return on Investment}$$

The health outcome return on investment is calculated as the measure of the benefits achieved by the programme monetised in terms of the willingness to pay for the benefits. The calculation of the health outcome return on investment can be presented as follows:

$$\frac{\text{QALYs Gained} \times \text{Willingness to Pay Threshold}}{\text{Programme Investment}} = \text{QALY Return on Investment}$$

The Return on Investment results are displayed in tables 5.5 and 5.6. The financial return on investment to the NHS is presented in table 5.6. The NHS costs avoided comprise of the treatment costs saved from treating type 2 diabetes, coronary heart disease, cerebrovascular disease (stroke), and depression, as a consequence of taking part in the projects sessions and continuing to take part in regular physical activity.

Table 5.5 Financial return on investment (physical activity impacts)

Scenario	Cumulative costs of Project	Cumulative Benefits of Programme (reduction in health expenditure)	Difference between programme costs and benefits	Return on Investment (NHS Expenditure avoidance)
A (100% additionality)	£25,000	£11,700	-£13,300	-£0.53
B (61% additionality)	£25,000	£7,137	-£17,863	-£0.71

Source: MOVES / Ecorys analysis

Table 5.6 Return on investment based on willingness to pay for QALYs (physical activity impacts)

Project	Cumulative costs of Programme	QALYs gained	Total value of QALYs gained (WTP * QALYs)	Return on Investment (QALY)
A (100% additionality)	£25,000	4	£114,011	£4.56
B (61% additionality)	£25,000	2	£69,546	£2.78

Source: MOVES / Ecorys analysis

The financial return on investment to the NHS for the Participation Fund projects ranges between £0.47 and £0.29 for every £1 invested (or a loss of between £0.53 and £0.71 for every £1 invested). The negative number therefore indicates that the programme costs more to deliver than the costs saved in

terms of treatment costs (at a given rate of participation, retention and baseline level of physical activity) based solely on GoodGym's contribution to raising levels of physical activity. However, the return on investment based on willingness-to-pay for QALYs shows more positive results ranging from £4.56 to £2.78 per pound invested.

The findings above are based on assumptions regarding the length of the programme (2 years, which reflects the initial funded period) and drop off rates of participants during the initial period. However MOVES also assumes that the level of physical activity is maintained over the longer-term (for 5 years or more); this is necessary for physical activity to generate sufficient positive health gains (as well as being consistent with GoodGym's objective to develop sustainable group runs beyond the two-year period to help people to remain active). However the model does not take into account other potential benefits associated with the sustainability of GoodGym in particular the physical activity benefits associated with increased running amongst those who join the local projects after the initial two year period. The results of the MOVES analysis are positive, from the perspective that if assumptions regarding the retention and longer-term behaviour change of participants (in the initial two year funded period) hold true then the physical activity elements of the programme are relatively cost-effective.

5.5 Limitations and methodological issues

The sections above provide an illustration of how the value for money of the running element of the GoodGym initiative can be addressed using Sport England's recommended model for assessing value for money (MOVES). It has not been possible with the available data and resources to derive a return on investment figure for all of the activities; however particular methodological issues in developing a framework for the overall assessment of GoodGym's value for money are considered below.

5.5.1 Older people

It is beyond the scope of this study to undertake a detailed cost-benefit analysis to demonstrate the value of GoodGym's work with older people. However, recent modelling of the cost of loneliness to the public sector indicates that GoodGym is likely to be contributing to savings to the healthcare sector. Social Finance (2015) cautions that causality between loneliness and health is complex and difficult to evidence⁶⁶ which is why there is relatively few robust cost-benefit analyses in this area. However, it finds that in the short term, lonely people more frequently use public services due to a lack of support networks and "eroded personal resilience". When compared to people who are *never* lonely, older people who are *always* or *often* lonely are on average:

- 1.8 times more likely to visit their GP.
- 1.6 times more likely to visit A&E.
- 1.3 times more likely to have emergency admissions.
- 3.5 times more likely to enter local authority-funded residential care.

⁶⁶ Investing to tackle loneliness: A discussion paper (June 2015), Social Finance

Further, the report estimates that a chronically lonely older person costs the public sector £12,000 per person over a medium term (15 years). An effective intervention could lead to a reduction in future service use and save the public sector something in the range of £770 to £2,040 per person in their lifetime. Given the indicative finding that fewer coaches stated that they were ‘often’ lonely after receiving weekly visit by a GoodGym runner for six months, GoodGym’s work is likely contributing to reducing the extent to which coaches rely on public health services to ease their loneliness. Further data will need to be collected to be able to assess the magnitude of this contribution.

5.5.2 Volunteering impacts

While it has not been possible to collect systematic impact data on volunteering time, it is clear that the volunteering resources would enhance the return on investment figures for GoodGym. The simplest method of calculating the economic value of volunteers’ contribution is to use the living wage rate as a lower bound estimate for the value of volunteering time⁶⁷ i.e.:

The number of volunteers x average number of hours x average hourly wage.

Using this method the additional value of volunteering time for each initial two year period of the project in each area could be estimated as follows:

Table 5.7 Calculating additional volunteering time

Steps in calculation	Values
The survey results suggest a change from an average of 5 hours 26 minutes per month at the baseline survey to an average of 5 hours 38 minutes at the follow up survey	Increase of 12 minutes per person
X 24 months for the initial two year period	288 minutes
Estimated number of participants taking part over initial two years	225
Total additional volunteering time	64,800 minutes / 60 = 1,080 hours
Value based on living wage of £7.85 per hour	£8,478

Source: Ecorys analysis

It should be noted that the estimation above reflects a lower bound estimate for the value of additional volunteering time as this only reflects the initial two year period of the project and assumes the additional amount of volunteering time is equivalent to the difference between baseline and follow-up values (in reality volunteering may have been lower at the follow-up stage without the GoodGym project).

The approach of simply using an hourly wage also overlooks the wellbeing benefits of volunteering to volunteers themselves.⁶⁸ The wellbeing approach measures the increase in an individual’s subjective (self-reported) wellbeing associated with frequent formal volunteering. It then calculates the amount of

⁶⁷ Known as the replacement cost approach – see ONS (2013) Household Satellite Accounts – Valuing Voluntary Activity in the UK.

⁶⁸ Fujiwara, D, Oroyemi, P, and McKinnon E. (2013) Wellbeing and civil society Estimating the value of volunteering using subjective wellbeing data, DWP Working Paper No. 112

monetary compensation that they would need to maintain their level of wellbeing if they stopped volunteering.

5.5.3 Wider social outcomes for runners and older people

Physical activity is used as the key outcome measure in the economic analysis above since comparable cost-effectiveness benchmarks are more readily available for this outcome, more robust work has been undertaken to place a financial value on undertaking physical activity, and because in our view the maintenance of moderate physical activity levels is a clear and attributable benefit of the running element of the project. Moreover, there is limited evidence upon which to draw in relation to the economic value of the social benefits such as increased social interaction and wellbeing, which have been realised by a wide range of participants (as shown by the survey results in chapter four) and in particular the potential cost savings to the NHS from reduced social isolation and loneliness.

5.6 Summary

This chapter has examined the value for money of GoodGym's activities, focusing in particular on the physical activity element of delivery. The analysis of value for money builds up from an initial analysis of cost per participant to cost-effectiveness analysis, which examines cost per outcomes, to a more comprehensive assessment of the long-term costs and benefits of particular project interventions. The key findings are as follows:

- The running element alone appears to be cost-efficient when the unit cost per participant is compared with data from other community-based projects designed to impact on physical activity.
- Using project monitoring data and data from the surveys as input parameters, the modelling of cost-effectiveness (for the running element) indicates that the intervention is potentially highly cost-effective (ranging from a cost per QALY of £3,498 to £7,692) as the figures are well below the value of NICE's recommended willingness to pay threshold of £30,000 per QALY.
- The MOVES model indicates that the financial return on investment to the NHS of the running element range from £0.29 to £0.47 for every £1 invested. However, the return on investment based on willingness-to-pay for QALYs shows more positive results, ranging from £2.78 to £4.56 per pound invested.

The findings above are based on assumptions regarding the length of the programme (2 years, which reflects the initial funded period) and drop off rates of participants during the initial period. However MOVES also assumes that the level of physical activity is maintained over the longer-term (for 5 years or more); this is necessary for physical activity to generate sufficient positive health gains (as well as being consistent with GoodGym's objective to develop sustainable group runs beyond the two-year period to help people to remain active).

The MOVES model provides a useful tool for understanding the cost-effectiveness and return on investment of the physical activity element of GoodGym. The inputs and thus accuracy of this analysis can be tweaked in the future through access to improved data on the additionality of GoodGym, and the sustainability of involvement. For example, a key assumption in the economic analysis is that the programme leads to longer-term changes in behaviour beyond one year. For this assumption to be tested, a further longer-term follow-up survey of participants could be undertaken to help assess rates of attrition beyond 12 months, as well as the persistence of outcomes.

Health savings derived from the reduced social isolation and loneliness of older people and the value of the volunteering time and wellbeing benefits provided by GoodGym's community of runners provide further benefits that could potentially be assessed in the cost-benefit analysis.

6.0 Process Lessons

6.1 Introduction

Whilst the focus of this evaluation were the outcomes of GoodGym's work with coaches and runners, the interviews and survey data also revealed insights and lessons on the processes through which these outcomes are achieved. These are summarised below under thematic headings. Particular suggestions for improvements that were made by the interviewees that may be helpful for GoodGym going forwards are highlighted in boxes. The main focus of the chapter is the befriending element (as this was the main focus of the case study interviews); however, insights are also provided in relation to runners' general experience of GoodGym.

6.2 Hearing about GoodGym

Most coaches were unable to remember how they had been put in touch with GoodGym. Referral paths that did emerge from the interviews included the managers of a supported housing scheme contacting GoodGym, or neighbours passing on a leaflet about GoodGym.

Runners had heard about GoodGym in a variety of ways, for example a lecture at university, an article in the Guardian newspaper or through friends. Some also remarked positively upon a video clip they saw on the TV or online. Some runners had heard about the coach runs initially and then later found out about the group runs, while for others it was the opposite order.

Suggestion from a coach on advertising GoodGym:

GoodGym should advertise in local papers to make it more likely that older people themselves read or hear about the charity and do not only rely on others to refer them.

6.3 Expectations and motivations

Most coaches did not have any particular expectations about what the visits involved when their runner started visiting or they were not able to recall them. However, one coach reported that he found the name of the charity misleading; he thought that the name GoodGym indicated that it was about getting older people involved in physical activity. Another coach admitted that he initially thought that such short visits would be a "waste of time" although he had since changed his mind. Other coaches very much identified with their role as a coach and were expecting to assist their runner in their training.

From the perspective of the runners, the motivations for becoming involved with GoodGym were either related to the befriending scheme in particular or the opportunity to get involved in volunteering more generally. Runners also highlighted the social aspect of the group runs and the physical/fitness aspect. Phrases used to describe their motivation for taking part included: "meeting like-minded people"; "to give something back"; "to help someone in the community that I live in" and "to get fit and healthy".

When asked specifically why runners had signed up to be matched with a coach, their answers included:

- Old age or isolation of older people in cities was an issue runners cared about.
- Desire to improve the life of an older person and provide them with company.
- Appreciation of older people's input because of their life experience.
- Time requirement being flexible and relatively short.
- Desire to increase motivation to go for regular runs.

6.4 Signing-up process and introduction to GoodGym

Most runners found signing up to the website and the group runs very easy and straightforward. Some remarked positively on the website's feature to log one's runs and cheer other people on. One runner also welcomed the fact that the membership fee was not compulsory.

Suggestions from a runner on online registration:

It should not be necessary to provide one's email address in order to view the group run schedule on the website. It may put people off who are cautious of receiving too many marketing emails.

The opening page does not give potential runners enough information about GoodGym for them to decide whether they want to sign up or not.

Suggestion from runners and coaches on information provided to coaches:

Coaches should be provided with more information on what being part of GoodGym involves, prior to the first visit of their runner. Although the coaches receive a letter from the charity beforehand, several runners reported that their coach did not understand the purpose of the visits or what GoodGym did as a charity. It was suggested that a personal visit by GoodGym staff would be helpful.

6.5 Group runs and missions

All runners that were interviewed had a positive experience of the group runs. In terms of the particular things the runners enjoyed, their responses can again be divided into volunteering, social and physical activity benefits.

- The missions and community tasks gave runners the opportunity to discover what projects and organisations work in their local area. Many respondents felt they were able to contribute positively to someone's life or the community and found satisfaction in seeing the impact of their work and the gratitude of the people they had helped.
- For some runners the social aspect of meeting new people and making friends was most important about the group runs. The runs were described as '*easy, casual and friendly*' and they found that there was '*good camaraderie*' between the participants.
- Several runners had joined the group runs to be motivated by others to exercise or challenge themselves physically. Some runners enjoyed that they could run at their own pace and that the improvement in pace or fitness was not the focus of the runs. Others welcomed the opportunity to learn from more experienced runners about how to train or stretch correctly.

"[The group runs are] one of the highlights of my week." Runner

"You really feel like you are making a difference." Runner

"Wherever we turned up, we were greeted with open arms." Runner

It was noted that most runners started doing group runs, whereas their focus shifted, sometimes exclusively, to coach runs. This was either due to a lack of time to attend group runs any longer or because the emotional attachment to their coach had become more important, making those visits a priority.

Suggestions from runners on group runs and missions:

Encourage experienced runners to speak to new runners to tell them about how GoodGym works in general and the coach runs in particular.

Offer group runs on different days of the week in each borough to allow more runners to take part.

Ensure that the amount of runners enrolled for a mission is proportionate to the manpower needed for the set task.

Form partnerships with organisations and people and return to them for tasks regularly. This will allow the runners to see whether their work has made a difference.

Ensure group leaders make all participants aware of potential health and safety hazards of the particular task before embarking on it.

6.6 Matching process

None of the runners and coaches knew how the matching was conducted or the criteria that were used in the matching process. Some assumed that personal interests and characteristics were taken into account. Runners welcomed the ability to determine the distance to their coach, whereas few runners expressed a wish to know how the matching process works. Similarly, none of the coaches expressed having a problem with them being assigned a runner instead of choosing one.

Suggestion from runners on information provided about their coach:

The levels of information runners received about their coach prior to their first visit appeared to vary significantly. Many runners said they would have welcomed more information about their coach such as whether their coach lived with family members or not, their medical conditions, their nationality or age.

Many runners reported that the matching process took longer than expected but it was generally understood that finding a good match and completing the DBS check demanded close attention.

Both coaches and runners were asked what they thought constitutes a 'good match'. Coaches expressed that a runner needs to be able to listen as well as be easy to converse with. Runners found it essential for anyone who wanted to be matched with a coach to show enough commitment.

Opinions were divided as to whether similar interests and characteristics were necessary to make a good match. Runners who did find themselves matched with a coach with a very different background, personality or values did report that they struggled initially and had to be patient to find a common ground and allow the relationship to grow. The matched runners who felt more 'similar' to their coach were able to enjoy their relationship more from the start, as conversational topics were easy to find. Some coaches too commented in the survey that they would like to see someone of their age and with the same interests, out of fear of having little to talk about.

"We get on well because we can talk to each other." Coach, 73 years, matched for 1 year

"Runners have to go into [the relationship with their coach] with a very open mind as to what to expect." Runner, paired for 1 year

6.7 Training and advice for runners

Runners paired with a coach remembered varying degrees of detail about the initial training they received. Details included learning about possible hazards in the coach's home, the responsibilities of a runner, advice on how long the visits should be, and what issues to report to GoodGym. Although the majority of runners interviewed found the training useful and interesting, a few thought that it perhaps needed to be more detailed in light of their experience with the coach. Those runners who spoke to GoodGym's Befriending team found it very useful for filling in the gaps in their knowledge and answering questions not covered by the training.

In terms of the format of the training, the majority of the runners found the online training and test to be useful. Some suggestions were made on how further and ongoing training and advice could be provided.

Suggestions from runners on how to provide training and advice:

Informal chats with a group of runners to learn from their experience before first visiting one's own coach

Regular catch-ups amongst runners to discuss issues that arise and share learning

Clearer information on the 'helpline' number they could call if they came up against any issues (although some runners did know that they could call GoodGym and had found staff very helpful in the past)

Ongoing telephone and face-to-face support from GoodGym staff for runners for whom the relationship with their coach does not run smoothly (this has since been made available for the runners).

6.8 Frequency and length of visits

Runners and coaches reported that the frequency of visits – once a week – was adhered to and was appropriate. The visits always take place in the coach's house or the supported accommodation they may live in. The length of visits varied between 20 minutes and one hour, some runners sticking very much to a maximum time period they had set themselves, others making the length of their visit depend on such factors as the flow of the conversation, the mental state of their coach on the day, or whether the coach gave them a task in the household such as gardening or putting together furniture.

Generally, the coaches reported being satisfied with the length of time their runner came to visit. Some welcomed that their runner was flexible about when they had to leave.

6.9 Activities at the visits

Most coaches and runners spent their time together by sitting down and having a conversation. It varied significantly who the dominant speaker in these conversations is and how personal the topics become: some coaches liked to speak about their past, their family, their daily life and issues, whilst the runner talked little. A coach who is matched with a runner from a foreign country reported that he likes to ask her about the food and people in her home. In other cases the runner does most of the talking and updates the coach on current affairs. Some runners are able to speak about philosophical topics with their coaches, whereas others avoid conversations which may involve a clash of values and generations. The minority of coaches take an active role as a trainer and discuss running-related topics. The survey showed that 21% of coaches motivate their runner “a lot”, whereas 42% do so “a little”.

Besides having “a good old natter” some runners do accept food and drink in their coach’s house. Other activities include watching television, occasionally helping with small household tasks. The combination of activities varies depending on whether the coach lived in supported accommodation or with family and whether they have specific needs or disabilities.

6.10 Requirements for a good relationship

The success factors contributing towards a good relationship were mainly commented on by the runners as the coaches found it difficult to answer this question. The most important factors highlighted by runners included:

- The need for trust and patience on both sides;
- The need for the coach to be open-minded on who they are they are matched to;
- Being smiley and welcoming;
- Being caring and thoughtful;
- Having a “generous spirit”;
- Being non-judgemental and open; not expect a certain type of coach; and
- Ability to listen and not wanting to talk about one’s own topics and issues only.

6.11 Change in relationships over time

Whereas some runners and coaches felt that they instantly got along with each other, many reported a change in the quality and depth of the relationship over time. Several coaches described their runners as being shy initially and very polite. However, they became more familiar and spoke about more topics such as family, holiday plans and feelings (although this was not always the case) as the relationship developed. The survey showed that, after six months, 89% (17) coaches considered their runner a friend.

“[We talk about] about every subject under the sun.” Coach, 67 years old, matched for 3 months

"[Our friendship] evolved so much that you can say anything to her (the runner)." Coach, 73 years old, match for 1 year

"[The relationship] is more intimate now and trusting." Runner, matched for 7 months

6.12 Overall levels of satisfaction

The vast majority of runners and coaches reported that their expectations of GoodGym had been met or surpassed.

At the end of the follow-up surveys, participants were asked if they had any further comments to make on their experience of GoodGym. The responses to this question also provided insights into key success factors. Each response was classified according to whether it was generally positive, negative, or neutral about GoodGym. The sample of coaches is small however 15 of the 19 respondents to date provided additional comments on the GoodGym service and all were positive. Moreover, none of the interviewees who contributed to the case studies have had any negative experiences, either in their dealings with GoodGym or in the relationship with their match. Examples of additional comments provided by coaches in the surveys are provided below:

"GoodGym has opened up a whole new world for me. I have had 4 runners so far and each one has been a friend. Thank you GoodGym."

"I would like to say a very big thank you for all you at GoodGym"

"My runner Lucy is a kind and understanding person and I enjoy her conversation. She is always punctual."

After six months of receiving visits from a GoodGym runner, 95% of the coaches who responded to the survey were very satisfied with the service while and 89% were 'very likely' to recommend GoodGym to a friend (scoring between 8 and 10 on the scale provided).

Additional comments were provided by 18 of the 71 respondents to the runners follow-up survey. The vast majority of the comments were positive or neutral with suggestions on how the service might be improved.

Some examples of the additional comments provided by runners included:

"This is such a great group of people that have been brought together by a simple, yet far reaching idea."

"I love the tasks, but they are often repetitive and this has been mentioned by people I have invited i.e. picking up leaves at Castlehaven is nearly every third week."

In the interviews and surveys, runners and coaches made further suggestions on possible improvements GoodGym could make to its services and processes.

Suggestions made by coaches in relation to services provided:

Provide physical activities and advice for older people to get them active or more mobile.

Offer more activities outside of the home such as going to the movies or going cycling.

Make it a core part of the service to provide help with housework and shopping.

Suggestion by a runner in relation to facilitating progress in running:

The website should send automated messages or a trainer should send tailored messages to the runners, commenting on their logged runs and cheering them on to reach their targets.

Suggestion by a runner in relation to general quality assurance:

GoodGym should ask for member feedback on the various trainers in the boroughs to get a picture of satisfaction levels.

6.13 Summary

Through the interviews with coaches and runners, GoodGym were keen to learn about how to improve processes and thus the experiences of both runners and older people. The key findings with regard to process lessons are as follows:

- Amongst the runners, a strong motivator for becoming involved with GoodGym appears to relate to the opportunity to get involved in volunteering more generally and particularly the befriending scheme. For some runners the social aspect of meeting new people and making friends was also important.
- The frequency of visits – once a week – was adhered to and considered appropriate for a befriending scheme of this nature.
- Runners suggested more opportunities to speak to and learn from other runners with coaches would be useful, and were positive about the website and their experience of GoodGym staff.
- Both groups had had predominantly positive experiences of the matching process and were pleased with the resulting relationship, with 89% of coaches considering their runner a friend after six months.
- Both coaches and runners appear to be highly satisfied with their GoodGym experience to date; 95% of coaches surveyed were very satisfied with GoodGym's service, with 89% 'very likely' to recommend GoodGym to a friend.

7.0 Evaluation Conclusions

7.1 Introduction

This chapter sets out the overall conclusions from the research. These have been structured in line with the main objectives of the study. It also highlights some particular learning points from the evaluation.

7.2 Relevance

GoodGym's aims are grounded in a strong rationale, based upon evidence of the importance of physical activity in reducing long-term health risks and recognition of the increasing problems of social isolation and loneliness associated with the growth of the ageing population. The project also fits well with the new strategic setting for sports policy which, as well as the physical and mental wellbeing benefits, emphasises the wider transformative benefits of sport for individual, social and community development.

7.3 Outcomes and impacts

An important focus of the evaluation framework is the measurement of the extent to which GoodGym generates positive outcomes and impacts for participants. The study has developed an evaluation framework to answer the following questions:

- To what extent has GoodGym increased/sustained older people's health and wellbeing?
- To what extent has GoodGym increased/sustained fitness and physical activity levels among participants?
- To what extent does GoodGym assist local public health delivery and community development objectives?

7.3.1 Older people

Taken together, the qualitative interviews and survey results suggest that the visits from the runners are having a positive effect on older people's social isolation, loneliness and wellbeing.

All 19 respondents to the follow-up survey said they felt a little (4) or a lot happier (15) as a result of the visits from their runner while 98% of coaches (18) consider their runner a friend. More individuals scored their life satisfaction as high (7-8 points) or very high (9-10 points) after six months of seeing a GoodGym runner (eight in total at the follow-up stage compared to four at the baseline stage)

Triangulating these results with the information gathered during interviews and comments left by coaches in the survey demonstrates that GoodGym runners have a direct, positive impact on the older people they visit, alleviating their social isolation and loneliness, as well as improving their mental wellbeing. This was also the case where coaches had carers, family members, friends, neighbours, other volunteers or a combination of these visit them on a regular or irregular basis. Rather than the quantity of social contacts, the depth and quality of the interaction with their runner is the key to achieving positive outcomes.

Beyond the four key outcome areas, qualitative evidence suggests that GoodGym runners facilitate the achievement of further positive outcomes for their coaches, namely: ability to stay in own house for longer; increased active mental engagement: inspiration to take up new activities and improved attitude towards younger people.

7.3.2 Runners

Overall, the qualitative and quantitative evidence pointed to the importance of GoodGym in helping runners to maintain and increase their levels of running activity.

The volunteering element of GoodGym also seems to give runners an increased sense of belonging to their community, an outcome which is positive for runners and appeals to commissioners, demonstrating GoodGym's role in getting people out and volunteering and helping to develop more cohesive communities.

The longitudinal survey numbers were slightly lower than required to show statistically significant positive changes; however there is potential to improve the accuracy and robustness of the before-and-after results by using larger sample sizes as GoodGym expands its area coverage. Key findings from the survey included:

- The average number of days spent running amongst the participants was 9.5 days per month at six months after joining (an increase of 0.7 days).
- The average distance run by GoodGym participants was 6.2km (an increase of 0.6km).
- 25% of the matched sample reported an increase in the number of days spent running in the six months after joining GoodGym.

At baseline, 78% of runners were not meeting the Government's recommended level of weekly physical activity. The survey findings also suggest that GoodGym helps participants to meet the Government's recommended levels of weekly physical activity, as the survey showed some short-term overall increases in levels of weekly physical activity at six months after first joining GoodGym. The changes detected were:

- An average weekly increase of 0.29 days of moderate physical activity.
- An average weekly increase of 0.21 days of vigorous physical activity.
- An average weekly increase in total time spent doing vigorous activity from 93 minutes per week to 113 minutes between the baseline and follow-up stages.

7.4 Cost-effectiveness

The study has also considered how existing tools can be used to analyse how GoodGym contributes to benefits for local health and social care economies.

- Using project monitoring data and data from the surveys as input parameters, the modelling of cost-effectiveness (for the running element) indicates that the intervention is potentially highly cost-effective (ranging from a cost per QALY of £3,498 to £7,692) as the figures are well below the value of NICE's recommended willingness to pay threshold of £30,000 per QALY.

- The MOVES model indicates that the financial return on investment to the NHS of Participation Fund projects range from £0.29 to £0.47 for every £1 invested. However, the return on investment based on willingness-to-pay for QALYs shows more positive results, ranging from £2.78 to £4.56 per pound invested.

Health savings derived from the reduced social isolation and loneliness of older people and the value of the volunteering time provided by GoodGym's community of runners provide further benefits that could potentially be assessed to enhance the cost-benefit analysis.

The findings above are based on assumptions regarding the length of the programme (2 years, which reflects the initial funded period) and drop off rates of participants during the initial period. However MOVES also assumes that the level of physical activity is maintained over the longer-term (for 5 years or more); this is necessary for physical activity to generate sufficient positive health gains (as well as being consistent with GoodGym's objective to develop sustainable group runs beyond the two-year period to help people to remain active).

7.5 Process lessons

The evaluation has highlighted some specific lessons regarding engagement and targeting and the management of the runners relationship with their coaches:

- Almost three-quarters of the registered runners were female showing that GoodGym holds a particular appeal for female runners and highlighting the scheme's potential in helping to address the underrepresentation of women in terms of regular participation in sport and physical activity. The social aspects of the group runs and volunteering opportunities appear to provide a particular motivation for women to take part in the running activities.
- The GoodGym befriending scheme is successfully reaching older people who feel socially isolated and lonely as the majority of coaches felt that they needed more social contact at the time of the baseline survey or lonely at least some of the time. The wellbeing of older people supported by GoodGym also appears to be below the national average for the relevant age category.
- More specific targeting could engage true beginner runners and contribute more to increased participation in sport. A more targeted approach might require developing stronger links with health providers, workplaces, County Sports Partnerships, other charities and voluntary sector groups, for example.
- Amongst the runners, a strong motivator for becoming involved with GoodGym appears to relate to the opportunity to get involved in volunteering more generally and particularly the befriending scheme. For some runners the social aspect of meeting new people and making friends was also important.
- The frequency of visits – once a week – was adhered to and considered appropriate for a befriending scheme of this nature.
- Both coaches and runners appear to be highly satisfied with their GoodGym experience to date.

7.6 Methodological lessons and priorities for future research and analysis

The earlier sections have highlighted the challenges and limitations of the methodology. As it was not possible within the confines of the evaluation to use a comparator group methodology, the evaluation framework adopted a longitudinal approach to the assessment of impact additionality with the baseline effectively acting as the counterfactual reference point for the analysis.

The survey instruments and questions employed provide valid and relevant measures of change in the principal outcomes of interest to GoodGym (including physical activity, social isolation and loneliness). The survey numbers were lower than required to show statistically significant positive changes particularly for the older people survey; however there is potential to improve the accuracy and robustness of the before-and-after results by using larger sample sizes as GoodGym expands its area coverage. Larger sample sizes could also potentially consider different types and intensities of activities and effects on specific sub groups (e.g. women, less active people for the runners survey), supporting internal impact comparisons (where sub group samples are of a sufficient size).

A key challenge was ensuring sufficient numbers of responses from older people at the follow-up stage to provide a statistically robust before-after-analysis. Several attempts were made to increase the response rate from older people including the provision of a franked return envelope, asking runners to remind their coach to complete the survey and following up by phone. Challenges preventing coaches from completing the survey however remain with some being visually or otherwise physically impaired and others passing away. However, while the 19 responses received to the follow-up survey to date could only provide indicative results of how GoodGym contributed to older people's wellbeing, the response rate of 50% was good and it is hoped that robust results can be generated over time as GoodGym expands and broadens its area coverage (assuming a proactive approach to encouraging good response rates remains in place). The response rate for the runners follow-up was lower at 31% (70 out of the 224 respondents who completed the baseline survey between September 2015 and December 2015 responded to the follow-up at six months).

The MOVES model provides a useful tool for understanding the cost-effectiveness and return on investment of the physical activity element of GoodGym. The inputs and accuracy of this analysis can be tweaked in the future through access to improved data on the additionality of GoodGym, and the sustainability of involvement. For example, a key assumption the economic analysis is that the programme leads to longer-term changes in behaviour beyond one year. For this assumption to be tested, a further longer-term follow-up survey of participants could be undertaken to help assess rates of attrition beyond 12 months, as well as the persistence of outcomes.

Finally, the report has also highlighted particular methodological issues in developing a framework for the overall assessment of GoodGym's value for money in terms of the potential cost savings to the NHS from reduced social isolation and loneliness, the monetised benefits of volunteering time and the wider social impacts of the scheme.

Annex One: Research tools

Welcome

We would like to ask you to complete this survey before your runner comes to visit you for the first time. If you agree, we will send you a similar survey every six months. By answering our questions, you can help us to find out whether your GoodGym runner is making a difference to your life and how we can improve our service.

You do not have to answer the questions if you do not want to. If you cannot answer a question, just leave it and go on to the next question. We would like to assure you that your responses will remain confidential. If you have any questions about the survey, please contact GoodGym.

1. What is your date of birth?

(Please write day/month/year in the box below)

/	/
---	---

2. What is your gender? (Please make a tick next to one answer option below)

Male	<input type="checkbox"/>
Female	<input type="checkbox"/>
Prefer not to say	<input type="checkbox"/>

3. How would you describe your ethnic background? (Please choose one answer)

White	<input type="checkbox"/>	Mixed	<input type="checkbox"/>
Asian	<input type="checkbox"/>	African/Caribbean	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	Prefer not to say	<input type="checkbox"/>

4. Thinking about how much contact you've had with people you like, which of the following statements best describes your social situation? (Please choose one answer)

I have as much social contact as I want with people I like.

I have adequate social contact with people.

I have some social contact with people, but not enough.

I have little social contact with people and feel socially isolated.

5. How often do you feel lonely? (Please choose one answer)

Often

Some of the time

Occasionally

Hardly ever

Never

6. Below are some statements about feelings and thoughts. Please circle the number that best describes your experience of each over the last 2 weeks.⁶⁹

	None of the time	Rarely	Some of the time	Often	All of the time
I've been feeling optimistic about the future	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling useful	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling relaxed	1	2	3	4	5
I've been dealing with problems well	1	2	3	4	5
I've been thinking clearly	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling close to other people	1	2	3	4	5
I've been able to make up my own mind about things	1	2	3	4	5

7. We would like to ask you how satisfied you are with your life nowadays.

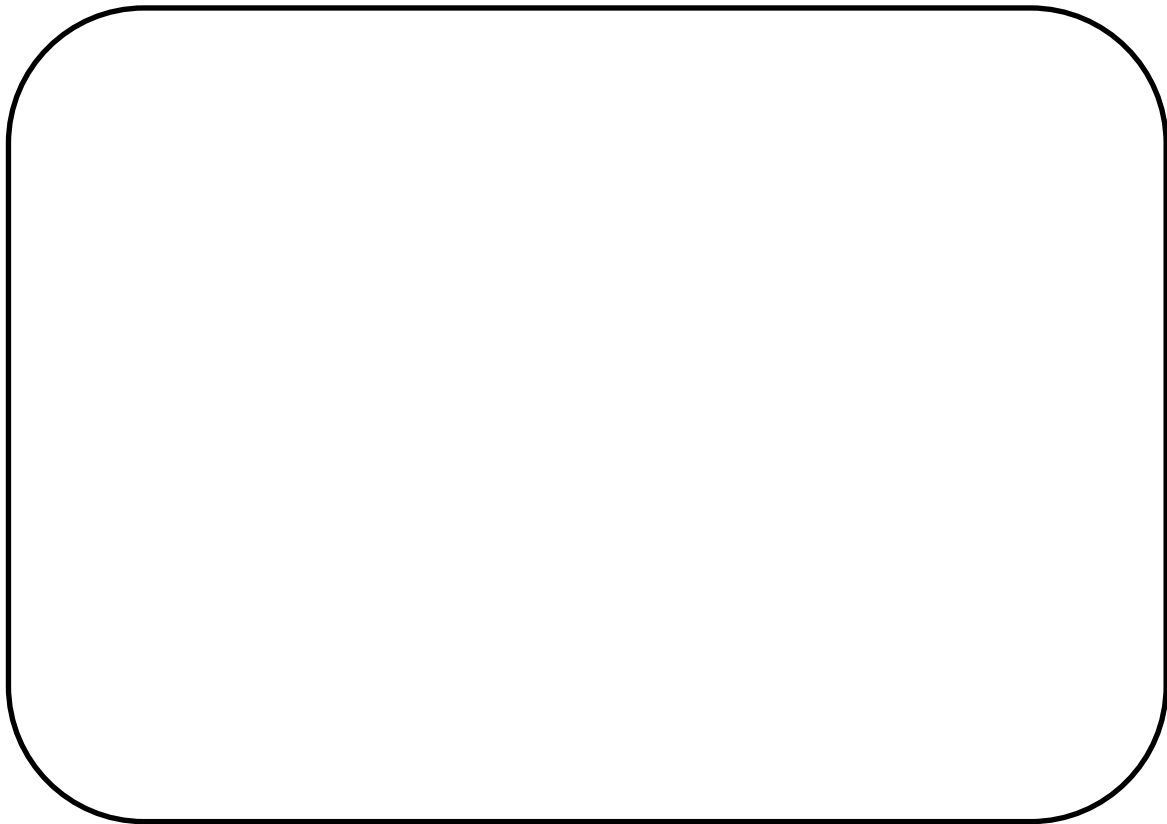
Please make a circle around a number on this scale of nought to 10, where 0 is “not at all satisfied” and 10 is “completely satisfied”.

0 Not at all satisfied	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10 Completely satisfied
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⁶⁹ Warwick Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale (WEMWBS)

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8. Is there anything else you would like to tell us?
Please write any comments in the box below.

A large, empty rounded rectangular box with a black border, intended for participants to write any additional comments or feedback.

Thank you for completing our survey. Please send your completed survey together with your completed GoodGym participant consent form back to us in the pre-paid envelope we sent you with this letter.

Survey

We would like to ask you to complete this survey. Thank you for completing a similar one in the past. To remind you, this survey is part of GoodGym's ongoing monitoring activities and many other people like you receive this survey. We are trying to understand whether your runner makes a difference to your life and how we can improve our service.

You do not have to answer the questions if you do not want to. If you cannot answer a question, just leave it and go on to the next question. We would like to assure you that your responses will remain confidential. If you have any questions about the survey, please contact GoodGym.

1. Thinking about how much contact you've had with people you like, which of the following statements best describes your social situation? (Please make a tick next to one answer option below)

I have as much social contact as I want with people I like.	<input type="checkbox"/>
---	--------------------------

I have adequate social contact with people.	<input type="checkbox"/>
---	--------------------------

I have some social contact with people, but not enough.	<input type="checkbox"/>
---	--------------------------

I have little social contact with people and feel socially isolated.

2. How often do you feel lonely? (Please choose one answer)

Often

Some of the time

Occasionally

Hardly ever

Never

3. Below are some statements about feelings and thoughts. Please circle the number that best describes your experience of each over the last 2 weeks.⁷⁰

	None of the time	Rarely	Some of the time	Often	All of the time
I've been feeling optimistic about the future	1	2	3	4	5

⁷⁰ Warwick Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale (WEMWBS)

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I've been feeling useful	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling relaxed	1	2	3	4	5
I've been dealing with problems well	1	2	3	4	5
I've been thinking clearly	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling close to other people	1	2	3	4	5
I've been able to make up my own mind about things	1	2	3	4	5

4. We would like to ask you how satisfied you are with your life nowadays.

Please make a circle around a number on this scale of nought to 10, where 0 is “not at all satisfied” and 10 is “completely satisfied”.

0 Not at all satisfied	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10 Completely satisfied
------------------------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	-------------------------------

5. Overall how satisfied or dissatisfied have you been with the visits from your runner? (Please choose one answer)

Very satisfied	<input type="text"/>
Fairly satisfied	<input type="text"/>
Neutral	<input type="text"/>
Fairly dissatisfied	<input type="text"/>

6. Do you motivate your runner to do exercise?
(Please choose one answer)

Yes, a lot

Yes, a little

No, not really

No, not at all

I don't know

7. Please choose one answer to complete this sentence:

The visits from my runner make me feel:

A lot happier

A little happier

No different

8. Do you consider your runner a friend?

(Please choose one answer)

Yes	
-----	--

No	
----	--

Somewhat	
----------	--

I'm not sure	
--------------	--

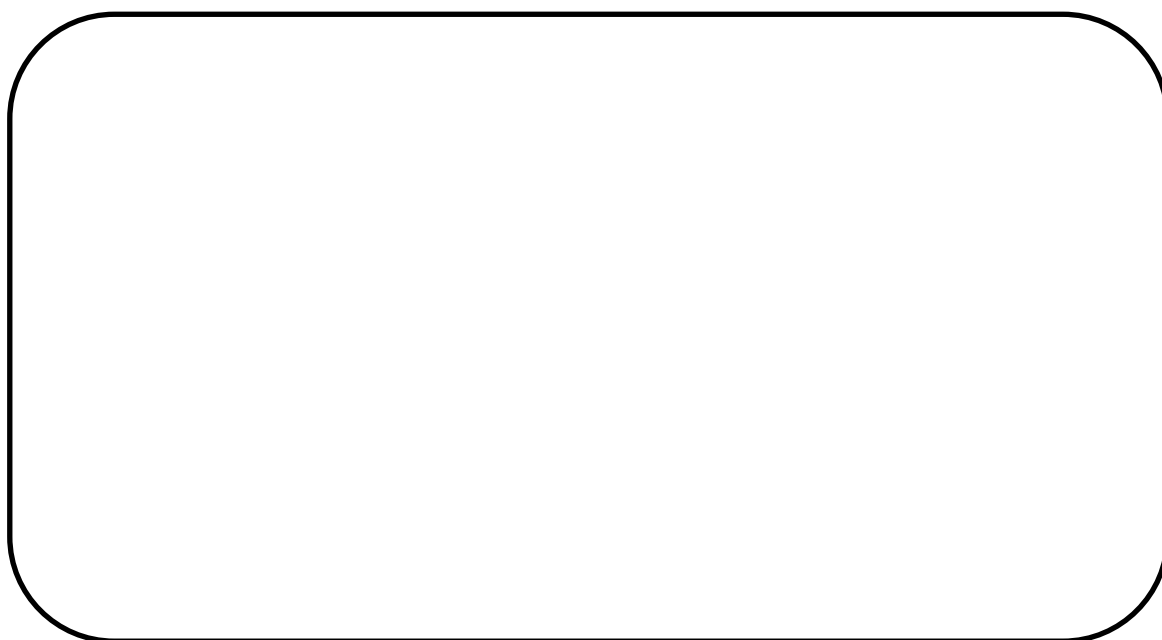
9. How likely or unlikely would you be to recommend GoodGym to a friend?

Please make a circle around a number on this scale of nought to 10, where 0 is “not at all likely” and 10 is “extremely likely”.

0										10
Not at all likely	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Extremely likely

10. Is there anything else you would like to tell us?

Please write any comments in the box below.



Thank you for completing our survey. Please send your completed survey back to us in the pre-paid envelope we sent you with this letter.

MEASURE YOUR WELLBEING

These questions aim to find out whether GoodGym has made any difference to you and your life. You will be helping us to see how we are doing and it will also allow you to monitor your own well-being. It takes less than five minutes to complete and we will ask you to complete the survey again in 6 months.

We ask questions for a wide range of people, so if you cannot answer or don't want to answer a question you can go on to the next one.

Physical Activity

On average, how often do you participate in the following GoodGym activities?

Group runs:

Missions:

Visits to coaches:

If GoodGym was not available at the time you joined, how likely is it that you would have joined a different running group?

* On how many days in the last four weeks have you done running?

* On average, how far do you normally run for?

* And how long do you usually run for?

* On how many days in the last four weeks, in total, have you done a total of 30 minutes or more of physical activity, which was enough to raise your breathing rate?

This may include sport, exercise, and brisk walking or cycling for recreation or to get to and from places, but should not include housework or physical activity that may be part of your job.

Think about all the vigorous activities that you did in the last 7 days. Vigorous physical activities refer to all the activities that take hard physical effort and make you sweat and breathe much harder than normal. Think only about those physical activities that you did for at least 10 minutes at a time.

* During the last 7 days, on how many days did you do vigorous physical activities like heavy lifting, digging, aerobics, fast bicycling or team sports such as rugby, hockey or football?

* How much time (in minutes) did you usually spend doing vigorous physical activities on one of those days?

Volunteering

* Over the last 12 months, how often have you given unpaid help to local group(s), club(s) or organisation(s)?

* Now just thinking about the past 4 weeks, approximately how many hours have you spent helping this/these group(s), club(s) or organisation(s) in the past 4 weeks?

Warwick Edinburgh Wellbeing Score

Below are some statements about feelings and thoughts. Please select the value that best describes your experience of each over the last 2 weeks:

* Feeling useful

* Feeling relaxed

* Feeling interested in other people

* Energy to spare

* Dealing with problems well

* Thinking clearly

* Feeling good about myself

* Feeling close to other people

* Feeling confident

* Able to make up my mind about things

* Feeling loved

* Interested in new things

* Feeling cheerful

* Feeling optimistic about the future

Your experience

Given your complete experience of GoodGym, how likely would you be to recommend GoodGym to a friend or colleague:

Any other comments:

Coach runners

As part of your Runner duties, we do not expect you to refer your Coach to any services or support them with practical tasks in the household. But some Runners might choose to do so and we are interested in finding out about it.

Have you given your coach information about where to get extra help or advice (for example other local services, helplines or help with benefits)?

Have you given your coach extra help or support with things (for example help with reading their mail, help with a computer, collecting a prescription, tidying the garden)?