

# Project Evaluation Report

## Family Residential – Festival of Walking



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# Family Residential

End of project evaluation

## Project Funder/Sponsor

YHA – Outdoor Citizens

## Project Partners

Yuvanis Foundation, Become United, and Rochdale Dawah Centre

## Project Timescale

7-9 September 2023

## Project Purpose

This project aimed to support community engagement in movement/physical activity and connect people with nature for the YHA Festival of Walking, with a particular focus on overcoming financial barriers caused by Covid-19 and/or the cost-of-living crisis. The target audience for this project was families from South Asian backgrounds who are less likely to be physically active.

The idea for the project emerged from conversations with community members who described barriers to walking and outdoor activities faced by many South Asian families. Factors like lack of familiarity with outdoor spaces, concerns over safety, limited free time, and financial constraints were frequently cited as obstacles. Additionally, cultural norms and gender dynamics in some households discourage or restrict activities like hiking for women and girls.

In response to this feedback, the collaborative team felt an immersive residential experience could provide a supportive environment to address these barriers. By covering costs of transportation, accommodation, gear, and food, financial limitations could be removed. Having guides familiar with the area would mitigate safety concerns and navigation challenges. And the culturally tailored trip would feel welcoming to families unsure of outdoors recreation.

## Expected Benefits and Outcomes

- Better physical and mental health for adults and children
- Healthier family parent/child relationships
- Increased confidence in both parents and children to become physically active

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- Better connection with nature/walking
  - Catalyst for future engagement in physical outdoor activities.
  - Encourage participants to walk after the residential

## Summary of Findings

Through thorough research and community consultations in Oldham and Rochdale, it was evident that South Asian adults, in particular, engaged infrequently in leisure and fitness walking. In response, the collaborative efforts of three BAME-led organisations led to the inception of the Family Residential project. This innovative initiative targeted not just individuals but entire families, aiming to instill a culture of regular walking.







The project, which involved eight families totaling 28 participants, unfolded over a 2-day residential experience. The focal point was a series of walks and hikes, including exploration of nearby hills and a scenic route around Honister Lake. The residential setting proved instrumental in breaking routine and encouraging families to partake in activities beyond their usual repertoire.

Feedback from participants was overwhelmingly positive, with many expressing engagement and enthusiasm. The residential experience served as a practical strategy to promote activities that families might not typically engage in. The inclusion of team-building games and group activities for both adults and children fostered a sense of community and mutual support.

An impactful aspect of the project was observed in the familial dynamics, as parents were encouraged to support their children in adopting healthier lifestyles, creating a reciprocal influence. Notably, two families experienced their first ever family getaway, marking a significant milestone. Overall, the Family Residential project emerged as a successful endeavor, showcasing the transformative power of immersive experiences to promote health, community, and family bonding within the South Asian population.

A key success metric was the overwhelmingly positive participant feedback received throughout and after the residential experience. While anecdotal, the sentiments expressed by families underscored the trip's resonance. Adults and kids alike enthusiastically described the walks, games, shared meals, and group activities. Many highlighted forming new friendships and bonds that will extend beyond the trip. Families felt embraced by the culturally attuned trip format and engaged on a deeper level. This wealth of unprompted, affirmative feedback affirms the project design was attuned to the target audience. Seeing firsthand how families delighted in and cherished the experience validates that an immersive intervention can profoundly impact attitudes and engagement.

# Outputs

 Children	 Adult Females	 Adult Males
<b>14</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>8</b>
 Walks/Hikes	 Ages Range	 % of Main Target
<b>3</b>	<b>3 Years – 51 years</b>	<b>100%</b>

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## Impact

The Festival of Walking - Family Residential trip had a profound impact on the participants, transcending the traditional understanding of community engagement and physical activity within the South Asian population. The innovative approach of targeting entire families rather than individuals proved to be a game-changer. Over the course of the residential trip, involving six families comprising 28 participants, the project's influence was multi-faceted.

The project successfully addressed the observed reluctance of South Asian adults, particularly parents, to engage in leisure and fitness walking. By creating a supportive environment within the residential setting, individuals were not only encouraged but also felt compelled to participate in walks and hikes. The experiential nature of the project, which included exploration of nearby hills and a scenic route around Honister Lake, provided a unique and enjoyable platform for families to embrace physical activity.

The impact extended beyond physical health, delving into the dynamics of familial relationships. The residential experience facilitated an environment where parents and children collaborated on healthy activities. It was not just about individual fitness but also about fostering a culture of mutual support within families. This reciprocal influence was a key aspect of the project's success, as parents became advocates for healthier lifestyles, indirectly shaping the habits of their children. For all the children participating, this was their first hiking experience, which has encouraged some parents to consider other hiking trips to locations such as Snowden.

The Family Residential trip was instrumental in breaking routine and encouraging families to venture into activities they might not typically consider. The inclusion of team-building games and group activities during the evenings promoted community spirit and bonding. Participants expressed not only engagement with the physical activities but also a sense of shared experiences, creating lasting memories.

In conclusion, the impact of the Festival of Walking - Family Residential trip went beyond promoting physical activity; it became a catalyst for transformative change within families. By combining physical health promotion with the strengthening of familial bonds, the project exemplified the potential for innovative approaches to address health disparities within the South Asian community. The success of this initiative suggests the importance of immersive experiences in reshaping attitudes and behaviors toward health and well-being.

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## Outcomes

- Increased physical activities among families
- Children were actively engaged in walking, games, and other activities throughout the experience
- All parents have expressed their keen interest in continuing to attend future communal walks locally if organised by us to benefit themselves and the wider community
- Many cited specific personal health goals they hoped to work towards through routine community walk
- Increased confidence in both parents and children to participate in communal walks
- Participants who were initially apprehensive about their fitness levels completed all activities successfully
- Behavioral change in parents. Families have started seeing physical activities as a collective effort
- The trip normalized physical recreation as a shared family experience
- Mutual support among participating families
- Community engagement, creating a shared sense of experience and connection among participants
- The community built will encourage ongoing engagement

## Success Factors

- Co-designing with participants during the planning and delivery of project
- Inclusion of culturally appropriate food and prayer accommodations created a welcoming atmosphere for participants
- Participants empowered with responsibilities of all tasks throughout the project
- Holding pre-trip meetings with families allowed us to understand and address questions, concerns, and needs
- Walks/hikes were led by competent and qualified volunteers
- Evening social activities brought families together in a relaxed setting
- Affordability enabled families with financial barriers to participate
- Post-trip survey reinforced lessons and generated ideas for improvements
- Residential location was very scenic, and enhanced the overall experience
- Weather was good

## Recommendations

- Organise such residential/trips to promote physical and mental health more frequently specifically for those inactive members of the BAME community

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- Use accommodations that are larger to facilitate more families for wider community engagement
  - Include more than one type of activity. For example, walking and cycling.

## Case Study

Mr. M, in his 50s and grappling with diabetes and weight issues following prolonged leg injuries, seized the opportunity to participate in the Family Residential, which centered around promoting walking. Having faced a decade of physical inactivity, he expressed his joy at being part of an initiative that focused on fostering healthier habits. Mr. M openly shared his previous struggles with staying active, emphasising the pivotal role of supportive companionship, which had been lacking in his past attempts.

Our dedicated volunteers ensured Mr. M felt included and supported throughout the walking and hiking sessions, addressing his concerns of isolation. Their attentive care extended beyond the physical activities, providing a continuous source of encouragement. Despite forgetting his diabetes medications, Mr. M discovered that the combination of fresh air and exercise during the residential experience rendered him medication-free for the entire weekend.

This revelation prompted a shift in Mr. M's perspective, recognising the potential benefits of increased physical activity in reducing reliance on medications for his health. His story resonates with many others in the community facing similar challenges, highlighting the urgent need for practical interventions to address health inequalities. The experience serves as a catalyst, motivating us as organisations to intensify efforts in combating health disparities among BAME individuals in our community.

Mrs Begum attended the Lake District for the first time and said: "I never knew such amazing places existed only 2hrs from home, I will now visit once a year as a family to help us improve our mental wellbeing but also enjoy the views and hike in a spectacular area. Thanks to all the 3 organisations for a such an amazing introduction opportunity to this area.

**"I can't walk for too long, but I can hike as long as it takes to climb a mountain!"**

***A quote from Umar Ahmad, an 8-year-old boy who hiked a significant distance up the Honister Pass mountain. He is now keen to hike as a hobby and work towards hiking up Mount Snowden.***