

Walking Football

Experiences of Local Age UKs delivering it for the first time

A Qualitative Evaluation

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19th August 2015



Acknowledgement

The author of this report is grateful to all those involved in this project who generously gave their time to participate in the research, including the older people and the local Age UK partners



Introduction

This presentation provides the findings of a qualitative evaluation of a project aimed at supporting seven local Age UK local partners to begin offering the activity of Walking Football in their localities

The qualitative evaluation has been carried out by Vinal K Karania, a Research Manager with responsibility of Evaluation and Impact at Age UK National. Vinal K Karania sits in the Research Team, and further information about him can be found on the [Research Department webpage](#)



Project Aim

Age UK has a vision that **all older people have the opportunity to be active**. To contribute to achieving this aim Age UK National aimed to **support seven local Age UKs to begin offering the activity of Walking Football**.

This project was funded through **fit as a fiddle**, which is Age UK's portfolio of activities funded by the Big Lottery Well-Being Fund 2013 to 2015.



Project Outcomes

The Walking Football project was delivered from March 2015 till the end of June 2015. The project aimed to achieved three specific outcomes:

- Local Age UKs find support provided helpful
- Local Age UKs develop successful delivery models
- Developed models are sustainable



Evaluation Methodology

The evaluation of the Walking Football project involved three strands:

- Analysis of monitoring data
- Interviews with six local Age UKs delivering the project
- Interviews with five older people participating in the activity

Details of people interviewed is presented in the Annex



OUTCOME 1: LOCAL AGE UKs FIND SUPPORT
PROVIDED HELPFUL

HAS THIS OUTCOME BEEN ACHIEVED?



Outcome 1: Support Provided Helpful (1)

Age UK Blackpool hosted a one day workshop where their CEO shared the organisations experience of delivering walking football. At the workshop Roger Jones from the Older Man's Network shared approaches to engaging older men

The workshop was attended by five of the seven local Age UKs – Age UK Birmingham; Age UK Blackburn with Darwen; Age UK Coventry; Age UK Mid-Mersey and Age UK Wakefield



Outcome 1: Support Provided Helpful (2)

Local Age UKs who attended the workshop found it extremely helpful – they took away ideas and enthusiasm from seeing older people participating in walking football

“coming up to Blackpool and seeing their model and the group itself was really helpful...I used a lot of their ideas...without that day a lot of people would struggle”

“you know forewarned forearmed...things to be aware of...really useful”

“the day was absolutely brilliant...to see the thing in action but also pick up experiences of Age UK staff in Blackpool...some of [the] challenges they found...some of [the] concerns and issue they had come across “



**OUTCOME 2: LOCAL AGE UKs DEVELOP
SUCCESSFUL DELIVERY MODELS**

HAS THIS OUTCOME BEEN ACHIEVED?



Outcome 2: Successful Delivery Model (1)

Local Age UKs all delivered a similar model that involved three elements: **warm-up; playing walking football** and the **opportunity to socialise after the game**. The activities were delivered across a range of settings including indoors and outdoors and from school halls to leisure centres

Each local Age UK had slight variations to the model to suit their participants. For example, at Age UK Blackburn with Darwen there were frequent breaks in playing the game to rest and socialise which suited their participants as each had some form of dementia



Outcome 2: Successful Delivery Model (2)

Older people participating found the walking football activity to be professionally run and enjoyed the experience

“bones creak a little bit if you suddenly start doing physical activity without proper warm up...I think warm up has been very beneficial”

“the whole thing very well organised, the coach is brilliant... can't fault anything. Been professionally put together”

“afterwards you have cup of tea coffee and have a chat about things...social thing as well”

“as soon as get new person they come most weeks and so everyone enjoying it. Pleasant people to play with and excellent facilities...just fantastic”.

“group bonded well together...go to pub afterwards which is good for socialising”



Outcome 2: Successful Delivery Model (3)

- 107 older people attended at least one session
- Almost all (95%) of participants were men
- Over half (55%) of participants were aged 50 to 64 years, with two-fifth (41%) aged 65 to 75 years
- Participants included those with and without disability (including dementia)
- There were variations across the seven local Age UKs and further details are provided in the annex



Outcome 2: Successful Delivery Model (4)

- Almost half (46%) of participants themselves chose to take part in Walking Football, with almost a quarter (24%) referred by other Age UK services and a tenth (11%) by family and friends
- The cost per session varied across the seven local Age UKs, from £160 to £285, suggesting there may be an opportunity to further reduce cost for some local Age UKs. However, this figure does not take into account the money raised from charging for participating



WHAT WERE THE CRITICAL FACTORS FOR
SUCCESSFUL DELIVERY?



Critical Factors for Successful Delivery

- **Considerable resource required before the activity begins to raise awareness and attract participants to the first session**

“perception of walking football...have come across a number of times people who have thought it is a spoof”

“quite a few people do not realise walking football is something that actually happens”

“from day 1 had really good numbers and that helped a lot because it was pushed a lot before the first day...if we had started with one or two people it would have been a struggle”

“because of the first day with so many people it made it enjoyable”



Critical Factors for Successful Delivery

- **Complementing existing walking football activities and building partnerships with existing delivery organisations**

“no point in doing at the same time in roughly the same area...be fighting for participants”

“guy set up his own walking football group...opportunity for us to do some work with him to see if we can support his group, going forward as well, with a view to the fact you have an evening option for people which will help us as far as promoting it to a lot more people and getting people involved if we are able to say day time and evening session going on...ability to get them playing against each other”



Critical Factors for Successful Delivery

- **Placing the enjoyment of participants at the heart of delivery and empowering them to participate**

“not being so risk averse about people participating in it because you know I think we can be too concern that people will hurt themselves and you know people will have the odd fall...but they pick themselves up dust themselves off and get on with it and they are accepting the risk they want to do and get enjoyment out of it...letting people get on with it and have the fun ”they want to have...not to put barriers”



Critical Factors for Successful Delivery

- **Need for high quality of trainer and good facilities**

“having a good committed coach is key...someone who is going to do the group and take control of it”

“you need the right person to run the group...the right facilities”

“facilities and coach are key”

“someone who knows about football and knows what they are doing...preferably a man I think who can engage other men of similar age”



Critical Factors for Successful Delivery

- **Keeping costs low and charging for activity**

“college next door...hire out sports hall...give it to us at discounted price”

“ask £3 covers cost of hall hire...money they contribute goes into a pot so can support the group...if few weeks only a few still keep it and up and running”

“very reasonable amount...think very fair amount...£3 for an hour enjoyment...you consider other things like going to the cinema where you don't get the health benefits but get rip-off for watching a movie”

“[charge] acceptable...cause it is...we have to pay for all sorts of sports...£3 for walking football which is great value for money, great value for money”



OUTCOME 3: DEVELOPED MODEL ARE
SUSTAINABLE

HAS THIS OUTCOME BEEN ACHIEVED?



Outcome 3: Sustainability

Six local Age UKs interviewed all plan to continue to deliver walking football activity and aim to grow it, an aim that is supported by the participants

“we will encourage more people to participate and the next step then would be...to participate in tournaments with other networks”

“not far away from [self-sustaining]”

“I got mates there and hoping to build it up even more”



WHAT WERE THE EXPERIENCES OF OLDER
PEOPLE PARTICIPATING IN WALKING
FOOTBALL?



Experiences of Older People Participating

Older people with disabilities (including dementia) able to and wanting to engage in sporting activity

“one gentlemen involved in football since four...to being unable to participate because of his disabilities...[walking football] enabled [him] to get back into a sport that [he] really loves”

“its enabled them to participate in sport that they felt would never get back into...life saver for some”

“from the first week couple of chaps [with dementia] not wanting to engaging at all second and third week starting to engage and looked like enjoying it”

“mostly around social interaction...one chap [with dementia] in particular his carer said stands still all the time won't walk about but after coming to two sessions at walking football starting to move about”

Experiences of Older People Participating

Older people experience improvement in physical, mental and social aspects of their lives and feel empowered

“feel lot better for doing some exercise rather than doing nothing...really gets blood pumping”

“its like...almost good as a normal game when I was younger...have a great game and its fun as well”

“big benefit to me...has made me fitter and [helped] with movement”

“health benefit as you are getting older...it sharpens the mind and the competitive side of it...being able to participate in a sporting event at that age with that level of competitiveness is fantastic ”



SUMMARY OF THE EVALUATION FINDINGS



Summary

- Age UK's found the experiences of Age UK Blackpool and the Older Man's Network helpful in developing and delivering Walking Football in their localities. Five of the local Age UKs successfully delivered Walking Football activities, with all seven aiming to continue activity beyond funding period
- Walking Football has enabled a range of different older people, including those with physical disabilities and those living with dementia, to engage in and participate in sporting activities with some participants flagging benefits from improvements in physical and mental health and well-being

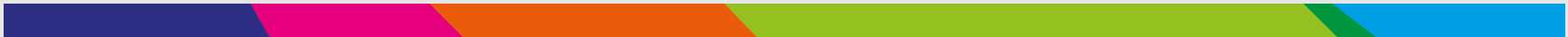


Summary

- Successful delivery is dependent on:
 - raising awareness and attracting older people to attend the first session
 - complementing existing provision and partnering with other organisations
 - placing enjoyment of participants at heart of delivery
 - striving to become self-sustaining by keeping costs low and charging
 - having high quality coaches and good facilities
- A relatively small amount of funding can help local Age UKs develop and deliver a self-sustaining activity – key is to focus on this aspiration and not number of people reached and engaged



Annex



Annex – Age UKs Participating in Project

- Age UK Bath & North East Somerset
- Age UK Birmingham – two separate projects; one in Harborne and one in Perry Bar
- Age UK Blackburn with Darwen
- Age UK Coventry
- Age UK Herefordshire & Worcestershire
- Age UK Mid-Mersey
- Age UK Wakefield



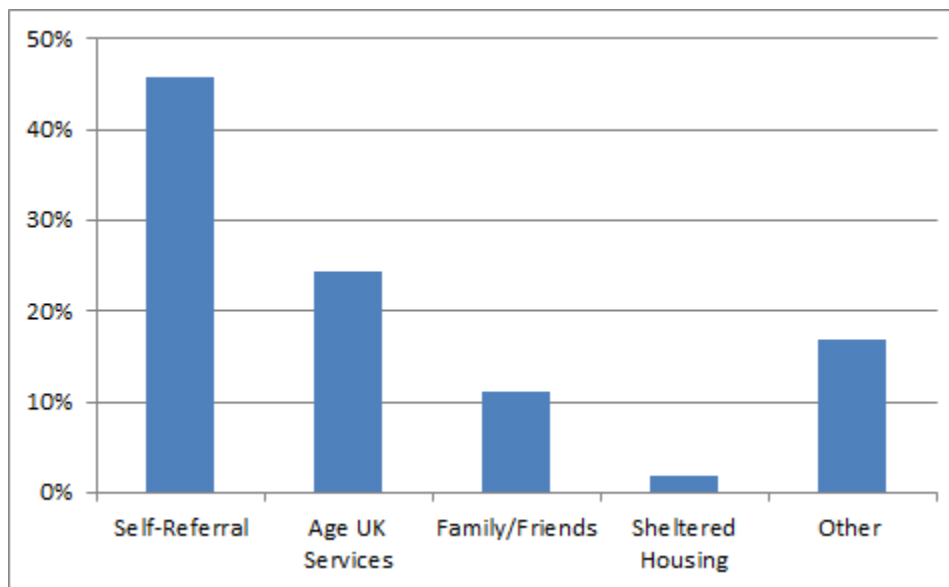
Annex – Monitoring Information & Interviews

	Monitoring Information Available	Age UK Delivery Lead Interviewed	Older People Participating Interviewed
Bath & North East Somerset	Yes - as at end of June 2015	Yes	Yes - 1
Birmingham (Harborne)	Yes - as at end of June 2015	Yes	Yes - 2
Birmingham (Perry Bar)	Yes - as at end of May 2015	Yes	No
Blackburn with Darwen	Yes - as at end of June 2015	Yes	No
Coventry	Yes - as at end of June 2015	Yes	Yes - 2
Herefordshire & Worcestershire	Yes - as at end of June 2015	No	No
Mid-Mersey	Yes - as at end of June 2015	Yes	Yes - 1
Wakefield	Yes - as at end of June 2015	Yes	No



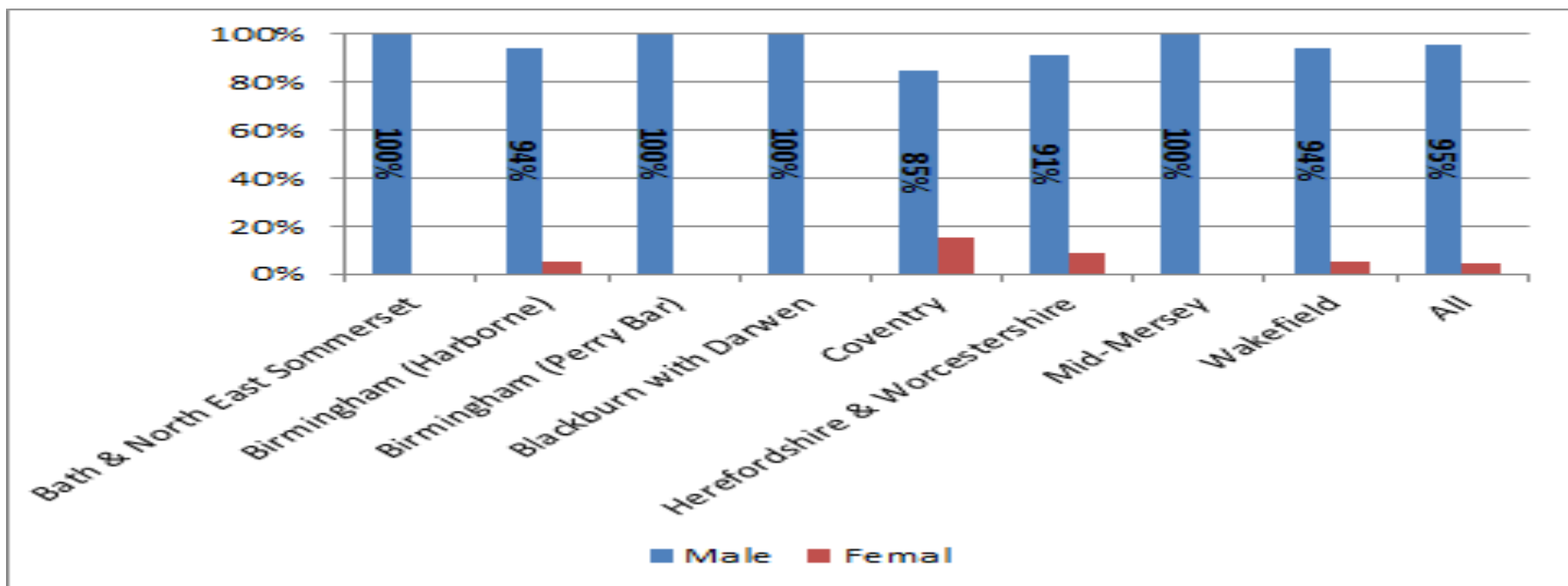
Annex – Participation Numbers By Age UK

	Age UK								All	Sample Size
	Bath & North East Somerset	Birmingham (Harborne)	Birmingham (Perry Bar)	Blackburn with Darwen	Coventry	Herefordshire & Worcestershire	Mid-Mersey	Wakefield		
Self-Referral	20%	26%	100%	13%	100%	100%	67%	0%	46%	49
Age UK Services	7%	0%	0%	13%	0%	0%	29%	100%	24%	26
Family/Friends	20%	42%	0%	0%	0%	0%	5%	0%	11%	12
Sheltered Housing	0%	0%	0%	25%	0%	0%	0%	0%	2%	2
Other	53%	32%	0%	50%	0%	0%	0%	0%	17%	18
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	107



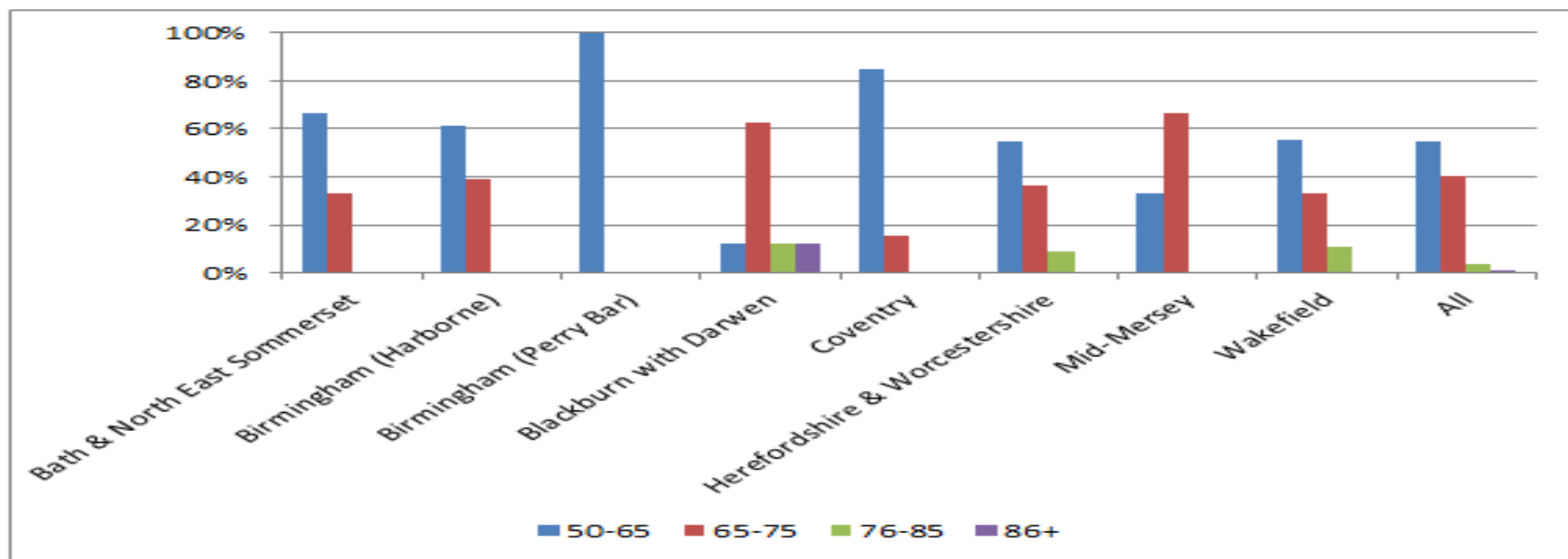
Annex – Participants Profile (Gender)

	Age UK								All	Sample Size
	Bath & North East Somerset	Birmingham (Harborne)	Birmingham (Perry Bar)	Blackburn with Darwen	Coventry	Herefordshire & Worcestershire	Mid-Mersey	Wakefield		
Male	100%	94%	100%	100%	85%	91%	100%	94%	95%	102
Female	0%	6%	0%	0%	15%	9%	0%	6%	5%	5

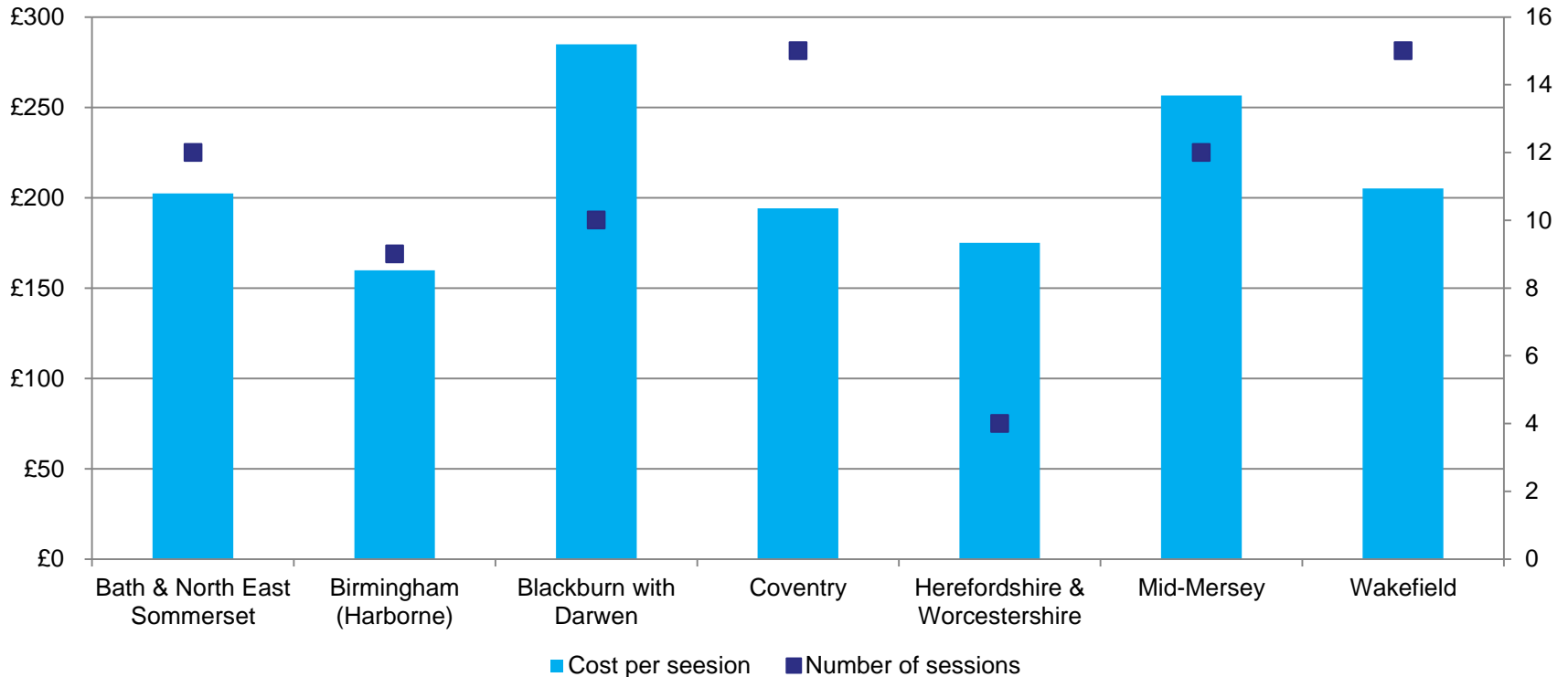


Annex – Participants Profile (Age)

	Age UK								All	Sample Size
	Bath & North East Somerset	Birmingham (Harborne)	Birmingham (Perry Bar)	Blackburn with Darwen	Coventry	Herefordshire & Worcestershire	Mid-Mersey	Wakefield		
50-65	67%	61%	100%	13%	85%	55%	33%	56%	55%	58
65-75	33%	39%	0%	63%	15%	36%	67%	33%	41%	43
76-85	0%	0%	0%	13%	0%	9%	0%	11%	4%	4
86+	0%	0%	0%	13%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	1



Annex – Cost per Session and Sessions



- Cost per session on left-hand axis and number of sessions on right hand axis
- Age UK Birmingham sessions in Perry Bar excluded because only one held
- Non-session delivery costs (such as marketing) should mean an increase in the number of sessions leads to a reduction in the cost per session

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