

## GM Moving - Catalyst Monitoring and Evaluation Transcript

**Eve:** Welcome to series two of the GM Moving Podcast, where we share with you stories of how people and partners across Greater Manchester are creating the conditions for active lives for all. I'm Eve Strategic Director at Greater Sport, leading, supporting, and connecting GM Moving, Greater Manchester's Movement for movement.

For our first 12 episodes of series two, we journeyed around Greater Manchester, speaking to local partners to hear more about the work they're doing, taking a whole system, place-based approach to embed physical activity into everything.

Our last four episodes in this series have a slightly different focus as I speak of our catalyst leads of our key catalysts of engagement, people, leadership, marketing, communications, and evaluation and learning. We have learned that if we invest in and pay attention to these things, this will speed up the rate of change across the whole system to enable more active lives. This is where we've called them the GM Moving catalysts.

For today's episode, we are in the Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce on a busy Deansgate in Central Manchester with Tim, Hazel, and Katie to hear about the work they're doing to support Greater Manchester Moving Measurement evaluation and learning. Tim Crab, who is CEO of Substance and Dr. Katie Shearn, she an academic from Sheffield Hallam University together with Cav Associates.

Were commissioned as a consortium back in March, 2019 as the Local Pilot evaluation partner. They worked closely with Hazel Musgrove, our Strategic Lead for evidence and evaluation at Greater Sport, and together they form the Geo Moving evaluation. Helping us understand and explain the extent to which conditions in place enable active lives.

Evaluation is a key part of the Local Pilot process with the emphasis in Sport England placed on learning how to create change that enables active lives, not just measuring the impact. We know there's no silver bullet to increase activity levels and reduce inequalities. Understanding what makes

change happen in a complex system is therefore critical to take us forward together.

The GM Moving Evaluation Evidence work that's taken place over the past five years is helping to make the less visible and tangible changes, more observable. Learning about the enablers of change matters to GM Moving. It also matters to our broader, Greater Manchester mission for public service reform and health transformation.

Together, we've made some good progress in our understanding, but there is still a way to go. The evaluation team are helping us to draw on existing evidence from academic literature to make sense of capture, distill and codify what we're seeing and hearing in our work, and to find alternative ways to measure change.

This process is supported through embedded researchers within each locality who attend relevant meetings, catch up with local leads, and interview and observe other system stakeholders. The team have helped us to develop and use a range of models and frameworks to help guide our work

So that's enough for me. Let's hear from Katie, Tim, and Hazel. I start by asking Tim my favourite question, why moving matters to him?

**Tim:** Yeah, I'm quite passionate about moving and being physically active. Always enjoyed playing sports, but also a love of music and dancing. But then also I increasingly with my work think about movement and physical activity beyond that and always trying to remain active, and whether that's in the garden or doing the dishes and just thinking. Yep, yep. There's a few more movements in there and using the car less, walking to the shop, active travel to work. So those things I've tried to embed in my life, which it's interesting because that has in many ways been informed by the work that I do for the twenty, thirty years. And I'm interested in the social dimensions of sport and physical activity. And, that's really what's informed my research and evaluations that I've been doing over the years and has really brought me to this table. So I live and work in Manchester. I'm passionate about physical activity and had the opportunity to be involved

in an evaluation around how we share that passion really. So, that's why I'm here.

**Eve:** I had no idea you're a big dancer. It's dancing on the table before the end of this morning.

**Tim:** Just in my bedroom. Don't worry.

**Eve:** Okay. And, then to you, Katie.

**Katie:** The one thing that I've always been really passionate about is the fact that I did so much sport at school. But also was quite academic and I really see that the relationship between being physically active, participating in organised and unorganised physical activity or sports contributes to so much more than just doing the sport itself. And I really think that that's what got me through school and helped me to keep on top of all the academic side of things as.

And I've got a young family now and it's something that we really notice during the week end, if we haven't managed to get out. Everyone starts to get a bit crotchety and a bit annoyed with each other and we're like out get out. Cause I live in Sheffield and so it's very easy for us to get into the Peak District. We're so lucky we can just get up and out and just move around and it always makes a big difference.

But similar to Tim really thinking about recognising how fortunate and lucky and privileged I am to be able to do things that I like to do, be able to just do it from my house, but how that isn't really always possible for everybody. So probably the social dynamic in terms of how it works for people being active together, but also the social dynamic around the inequalities and the disparities we see in society and how actually it's not accessible for so many people is I think what drives me and why I'm so interested in this work.

**Eve:** Great. And Hazel.

**Hazel:** Yeah, I think everything you've both said really resonates. I think I've always been sporty and love sport and it's always been so much more

than just taking part. But starting a young family, just the difference a walk to the park can take in the middle of the day to the rest of the day is incredible really.

**Eve:** Great. So we're here to talk about your roles within the GM Local Pilot. I guess if I come to you first of all Katie, can you explain a little bit about what you are doing? What's this all about?

**Katie:** So I work as an academic at Sheffield Hallam University. And when I was doing my PhD, I was looking beyond just physical activity and thinking about what helps people to thrive and to flourish. And we were looking at things like sexual health and things like physical activity as well as antisocial behaviour all of those things recognising that generally people in public health or in various different departments think about things in terms of stopping people do the wrong things, rather than how do you encourage people to do things that will help them to thrive and flourish?

And as we are looking at that question in a participatory way, which means that we work with the people who we are interested in supporting. Really early on you recognise it's so many different influences that help people to thrive. And that was well understood by the people who were making decisions and individuals themselves cause it's the reality of their life. So the way that we monitor whether how we work with people is successful or not is really limited to just one or two key measures. And, that doesn't necessarily represent what is important to people, and then some of the methods that were used to judge if something's effective or not really take away all of the different influences and all of the complexity. We call it complexity that influences people's lives. And so I recognised there was a problem there, that we didn't have the methods appropriate to judge some of these broader things that we might try to do.

My university gave me just a small amount of money to develop that methodology. And that introduced me to Professor Rob Copeland who is at Move More Sheffield. And it was a pioneering whole systems approach to physical activity started in 2012. And so together we worked on what are the things that are important to measure and then how can we actually build it or accumulate knowledge about these things given it's so complex with lots of influences coming in and out. So that's really through working

through that I was introduced to Tim and then Tim, do you want to take on how we actually then got involved in the GM Moving project?

**Tim:** Yeah, sure, and to use that word whole systems approach, which is right at the heart of everything that we are doing. And I think that's where we got really interested for my sins. I helped to run an agency in Manchester called Substance, which is really interested in understanding the social impact that sport and physical activity and recreation can have, and we worked around these scenes for many years.

And then we saw the opportunity, which was publicly advertised to lead an evaluation of the GM Local Pilot and GM Moving more generally. And it was just super exciting to see how this is a little bit different. This is more aligned with our sense of what might work. Because traditionally the evaluations that we'd done tended to be very focused on what we might call short term programs, build it and they will come type of approach. We will put on an activity and that will be enough to increase levels of physical activity. But what we learned through evaluating those sorts of approaches was that the people who were already physically active would take advantage of new opportunities. You weren't necessarily sustaining that activity as well that it would come to an end.

But what seemed really interesting about this approach was that the starting point was not about delivery or short-term solutions. It was about understanding the underlying barriers and really almost turning the focus back to the system itself and the people that are leading the system to understand how can we unpick those barriers in a really broad way and a whole systems approach to look at where people live, what the transport systems are, the way the buildings are designed, the way that the work schedules, shift patterns, things that people might never normally associate with being physically active. When we look under the hood in a little bit more detail, we can see that all of these things are intertwined to make it quite difficult for people to maintain active lifestyles. And that drove our passion to want to be involved. But at the same time, we saw that this was a huge challenge and we're just gonna need a big team with different skills.

And previously I was lucky enough to also work at Sheffield Hallam University, so I knew colleagues over there. And that's what led us to pull together a consortium that also involved some other colleagues to really give us a rounded sense of what the challenges are to make sure that we would have enough people on the ground to reach out to all the localities of Greater Manchester, as well as having the theoretical structure that Katie was talking about to help us understand not in the traditional ways of are more people becoming active. But is the system changing to enable more people to remain active?

**Eve:** Can you walk through the process a little bit? So Tim, you talked about the need to obviously have the theoretical framework. Both have people on the ground in these places, so, taking our Local Pilot team and leads, what's actually happening? What are you doing and what are you doing differently?

**Tim:** Yeah, I mean, I think I draw a distinction between two main, well, maybe three main elements. So we talked a little bit about the theoretical framework that in some ways we put up front, say look we think these are the important aspects that might be influencing people's ability to maintain active lives, but they're not there as the answer their there almost as a straw figure to take apart and to start to unpick. And to help people, 'oh blimey, I've never really thought about that in relation to physical activity'. And it was quite interesting early on we had these diagrams, didn't we? That you could sense the fear and tension in the rooms as people were looking at these ranges of the complexity that Katie was talking about.

I do remember being in a room at one point and I was suggesting, Look, you know what's great about this programme is the way people are embracing complexity and there are some murmurs around the room. No person ever has embraced complexity. It's like we had this sense of fear. We had to take that on board as well and understand, look, we're going to alienate people here if we just keep on talking about how complicated everything is.

So there was a process there in terms of trying to put that into more condensed, simpler language to identify a smaller range of areas. But

we've identified five enablers, if you like, of physical activity. But then at the same time, then there's this process on the ground as you talk about, So we've had what we refer to as embedded researchers.

So this will be people who are actively engaged in the Local Pilot, in each of the localities, building relationships with stakeholders and people who are employed on the Pilot to understand the day to day challenges. Also, to layer in, if you like, some of these enablers that we think to pose questions around how does this relate to involving local people and growing assets, for example.

So posing questions are enabling practitioners, people involved in the direct work to question and think about their work within the context of whole systems approaches, and then alongside that as well as the pushing questions, then there's maybe what you might think about as more conventional collection of data and information and evidence. Which rather than being focused on the number of people who are turning up at a particular sporting activity, it might be how many endorsements have there been from strategic leaders? In what ways are you working with the health service or DWP? So we'd look to find if there is any evidence of the growth in people in the sport and physical activity sector actually working and building relationships and connections across those different sectors. So we're gathering all that evidence in, and then we're playing that back into the theory that we built and challenging our own assumptions that we'd made right at the beginning.

**Eve:** So Hazel, I might be putting you on the spot here, but Tim's referred to the enablers and referred to a couple of them, but hasn't set them out. So are you were able to explain what the enablers are and what those key five enablers, yeah, describe them.

**Hazel:** So the first is strategic leadership enabling collective leadership, which refers to some of the things we might expect to see such as strategic leaders endorsing projects and programmes and the work then onto involving local people and growing assets, which again is really about making sure that voice comes through from the community and the people we're trying to get active.



The third ones around effective work across and between sectors, around the different parts and stakeholders we can work with.

And then the fourth one is transforming and developing the governance and process that sits around that. So we hear particularly at the start of the Pilot a lot around the bureaucracy and the red tape that can slow things down or stop the process being quiet and allowing that voice to be really heard and come through the process.

And then the last one, which is really relevant in this conversation is learning and adapting to that learning through evaluation.

**Eve:** These enablers have become critical. It feels as though that using that framework all the time in conversations with partners, and I guess what I've seen and heard is that again they're not just relevant to this space of physical activity. They're relevant to all areas like public service reform, and people can see it, they're spotting that this is a patter.

**Katie:** We know from body evidence and academic literature there are these patterns of things that people say when this starts to happen, when we start to have leadership enabling collective leadership it's basically the big bosses saying actually, we don't have all the answers, but I'm going to divest some of my decision making control and power to other people who are closer to the frontline or even individuals and communities themselves and support them to take decisions and, enable decisions themselves. We get the sense that when these things do start to happen, they might actually feel quite radical in some places, but it does start to have these exponential benefits, and particularly when we see all those five things together. So what we've actually done is our first thing that we had to do was to actually try to articulate them in a way that could be shared and made sense of by other people.

It's a privilege for me to sit in an academic institution and look at all of the literature and think about it deeply, but most people don't have the time to do that, and they don't have the time to think differently. So we had to articulate what they look like. And first of all, we wrote them out and then we realised people just don't read them. And so then we actually put them into diagrams and in actual fact, we just recorded little videos, which



explain not just what this idea about some of these enablers are, but why they're important ultimately to changing population levels of physical activity, which is we've got to keep a line of sight to that.

So that's obviously the reason why we are all here. And then we used those as frameworks to hold workshops and discussions where we invited different people from different localities to share their stories about one or more of those activities. And then invite other of the localities and other people involved in GM Moving to reflect on those stories and say, okay, yeah, actually we don't have a strategic leader like that. So who is it in our system that we could actually draw in to help support us and protect our space. Or say, yeah, it actually does work exactly this. So what is that about, and how can we do more of this good stuff and, maybe just stop doing some of these behaviours or ways of work and that aren't really helping us. It's this always this combination between the theoretical side of it, the data that we collect and the making sense of that almost away from the work in GM and then sharing it and trying to make it feel real and alive to the people who are in the work such that our ambition is that then they go away with more ammunition to inform their approach and then the cycle starts again.

**Tim:** That process is critical to us as evaluators. Because it enables us to question some of our assumptions. Just one little tiny example there when we talk about the strategic leadership enabling collective leadership. At the start we just thought it was really important that there were these standard bearers just getting right behind the whole process and big leaders across the system, the Andy Burnhams of this world standing up and he's been an enthusiastic advocate. But the reason he's important is because there's an authenticity to what he's saying in terms of that commitment to these processes. And what we found was that just having a leader standing up and saying, yeah, yeah, I'm all good with GM Moving and the Local Pilot isn't gonna cut it. It's about having that authentic voice and we can't make that happen. If it's not there, it's not there. And so then you've gotta come back and think about, as Katie was saying, what is the process to find the right leaders that might have that influence and are going to buy into the approach. So their small things, but those little details are so important to helping us understand what's gonna move the whole system forward.

**Eve:** So we've touched a little bit about some of the learning and the joys and the challenges, but let's go there. So let's start with the joys first. So anything in particular that you want to shine a light on that's been really fruitful, that's brought joy in the learning so far, or has felt like it's gone well?

**Tim:** The joy is just seeing an approach that is prepared to say, we're not doing it like we've done it before, but that constant willingness to be adaptive and to shift and to think, no that's not the right approach. So at times that in itself can be challenging. Nobody wants to go to work every day on the basis of, oh, everything I've done before has been wrong and rubbish, and to be completely thrown in the bin. But it can also be incredibly energising just to have that freedom to say, no you haven't done anything wrong. What we've done is we've learned something that's enabled us to adapt the way that we are working and to move forward and to try different approaches that might be more successful and those little nuggets of finding actually, yeah, I've got to speak to this person rather than those person just see these little breakthrough moments and you see in rooms and these sense making sessions that we have how people subtly come alive.

**Katie:** Yeah, I mean for me I think it's when it does come full circle and somebody says how our approach to the evaluation has actually helped them to adapt or change where they're working, in the way that they see as productive and helpful to support more people to be physically active. And we've been working with an embedded researcher working with Salford for three years now, and so we've seen the process and the progress of the way they've worked and interacted with different people over that time.

Just recently in one of our sense making sessions with Salford, Mike Tuson, who works for Salford Community Leisure, was saying how the way that they are normally evaluated when they have pots of money to distribute in programmes or projects, is that right at the very beginning, they're asked to specify, well, what outcomes are you looking for? How many people, who are you targeting? Lots of these jargon languages. People that live within Salford, it's sometimes in areas of deprivation. Even that evaluation drives a particular way of working. So they don't think about what they

already know about how to do things. They don't necessarily think about that audience. They just think, how are we going, you know, deliver, operationalise this money, get as many people through the door of my activity as possible.

So in combination with the way that the GM Central team set up the approach by distributing money to the different localities and there being quite an openness about you figure out what's gonna work best for you. The evaluation sat alongside that saying, Well, we are not gonna give you KPIs. By KPIs, I mean key performance indicators, and it's a technical term that was used to monitor effectiveness of programs traditionally. Really it's for you to think about what's important to you. And then as things change and shift in your system, we are working alongside you to illuminate it, make it understood, and make it shareable to other people.

And he was saying, Mike was saying that actually that evaluation approach allowed them to take a step back, look around, think about who have we got in our, we call it the system, but really, we mean partners, stakeholders. Other people that we feel we could do better work with and, and he mentioned the Salford Youth service and they were already, before GM Moving was really established setting up a youth club for young people with The Den. And they already had an approach, which is about how do we hear from young people about what they want. And so this evaluation approach complimented that by not coming in and saying, well, we need to see sixty people through the door. Otherwise it's arbitrary, isn't it, whether that's success or failure. What we want to know is how is that process working to bring different people together, different young people into the door. And then what's happening with those young people. So even if that one example. Now there's young people that have access to that service, but then they've gone on to other employment.

But with this open evaluation approach, we can follow that and we can understand how that's happened. But then lately, the integration of the Salford City leisure team and the Salford Youth Service, they've had so much space and time given to them to be able to really work out how do we work together. That's now coming to fruition where they're working as a, almost like a one team, where in certain circumstances the youth service can bring in physical activity cause they understand its importance.

They've learned how to deliver that with Mike's help and the support of the others. And equally the physical activity officers really understand better how the relationship between physical activity and supporting young people in their broader lives through working with the youth service. So what we're seeing now is almost like an exponential increase in opportunities to raise physical activity, but also to make it meaningful, to make it work with other services. If we'd have come in and said, we want these KPIs, A, that wouldn't have been supported for them to go and do that work, and B, we wouldn't know anything about it because we wouldn't be looking to measure those things.

**Tim:** You know what's really critical, Katie a few times said the words how and why. I think that's one of the key differences in this type of evaluation. But what we have had is this opportunity, if you like to experiment and try out different approaches. That helps us then to understand how we might be able to do this in other places and to sustain it. I think particularly in the public sector, it's fair to say that you've had services and departments that tend to work in what we might call silos or with closed walls around them, focused on their key targets and not thinking about how they can benefit from working across departments and across different sectors. And that's really what we're seeing the key breakthroughs in our evaluation of the Local Pilot.

**Eve:** Great. So often when people think of evaluation, they think of those council measures that you talked about. You're moving away from to think about more qualitative indicators. They think about maybe something that comes at the end of a program or project. They'll tell you at the end if it was good or not, and this is very much as you describe that test and learn approach, where you've got embedded researchers who are constantly, effectively in the field and that's constantly being fed back on this loop so you can learn and adapt as you go, and then you were pointing as well to it's difference. If it's not, then you're telling people within those spaces what they need to do. It's constantly more codification of what people are doing, what you are seeing. are these patterns that help make change happen or help that system to develop the maturity to create those conditions in this sense to enable people to be active.

**Katie:** Ross McGuigan, who working with the Stockport, well, they're not even calling it a Pilot anymore because all of this approach has been adopted and adapted into the Stockport one strategy, which is broader than physical activity. But physical activity is a really strong pillar there. Anyway, so the point I was saying about Ross is that his work was really different for him and he was going out of the leisure centre and working with a community group in Brinnington has always said that the evaluation approach with Kath of our team who's worked alongside him, has really actually supported and bolstered their approach and allowed them to share the story of what they've done in Brinnington in a different way back to the local council. Which has then had this transformative effect within that development of that strategy that really honors and respects the community input into that strategy ongoing. And I think it's those moments where, where people don't necessarily always understand every element of what we are saying, but can understand the ethos, which is there to help illuminate, shed light on, explain. And really help them to take the best of what they're doing, move forward and then let go of some of the things that just aren't working because they don't really stack up.

So it is those things I think that make you feel, okay, this was difficult, but it was worth worthwhile because instead of it being an evaluation report that people grudgingly do and then put on a shelf, it's a bit more alive and it's a bit more useful in and off that time to help people to continue doing the work that they want to do.

**Tim:** But what we've noticed is through a conversation with commissioners and Sport England and DCMS the government department responsible for the pilot maybe had some skepticism. There was certainly more of a focus and a requirement to want to do the traditional measurement of what's the effect this is having on the numbers of people who are being physically active now. Whereas we are always at pains to say, we're not gonna know that for years. It's about system change to allow that to happen. And I think slowly through the evaluation there's been that recognition and appreciation of what we're trying to do, which itself has been reflected in a shift in the way that Sport England has wanted not only the Local Pilots to be evaluated, but also how the Local Pilots are supported. In the midst of all this Katie led a consortium, which won the contract to be the National Evaluation and Learning partner, where lots of the approaches that we've

piloted here in GM have now become more the orthodoxy, if you like, and the ways in which this type of work is being evaluated, across the country.

**Eve:** So picking up that thread. Cause we often talk about things being locally led, GM supported, enabled nationally. So being able to have that alignment from local and hyperlocal up to the national DCMS strategy is a key point, isn't it? So is there anything else you want to point to I suppose, in terms of what you're seeing change that's helping us work in GM, and is there any particular asks, any things that you are looking for that need to change further if we are gonna take this work to fulfill its full potential?

**Katie:** What I've been really interested in is the amount of interest that we've seen at so Sport England-level in terms of their interest in what is a place based approach and a whole systems approach and opportunity to be able to explain what that is, not just in a theoretical sense, but by being able to draw on examples. Like you say, largely from Greater Manchester, what you see is the recognition in their faces that, okay, that is different to what we've talked about before in terms of programs and projects, and that then opens up the opportunity to talk about how you need to adjust the measurements and ways of thinking about what success means.

Now, I would say, I still think there is quite a long way to go in the sense that people understand this is a complex problem. But they still want a simple solution and they still want a simple way of saying whether it's worked or not. It's really a really hard pill for some people to swallow who are effectively accountable for the, the divestment of a lot of public money to be able to say, well, we are never gonna be really certain about what this the impact is because of all these different contextual factors and, I still think there is a bit of resistance there. I think people think we are looking at all these different methodologies. They're giving us space and time to develop increasing numbers of different ways of doing that, but I think they're still in the back of people's minds. At some point there will be a different but equally simple and neat solution.

We need to be able to become more comfortable with the uncertainty that there is. But not to be taught desperate about it and think, well, we'll never know anything. I think we can learn about these patterns. We can learn about some of the things that seem to produce really interesting, exciting,



new things, but we can't predict what those things are going to be, but we can have more certainty that we can work in ways that are conducive to supporting population levels and change in physical activity levels, and importantly reducing inequalities in physical inactivity.

So what's my ask? It is actually for people to lean into the uncertainty as much as they can. And that does also mean some of these people with power need to hold the accountability, even though they can't control what's happening on the ground, and trust the process and lean into it. But that is a difficult conversation to have.

**Eve:** It's a big ask.

**Katie:** Yeah.

**Eve:** So, Hazel...

**Hazel:** The joys absolutely. Being that change in mindset, seeing people ask different questions, challenge what they're being asked for, being comfortable sharing things that they feel haven't worked in inverted commas but, trying to understand why that might be and how they could adapt that for future. I think the challenge is then how you go from all that really rich in depth information and share that either at a whole Greater Manchester level with partners from active travel to health to DWP or at a national level across, yeah, all the different places where this work's happening without losing what makes it really useful and interesting and usable.

**Katie:** So I think that would be a challenge, particularly as more and more people work in this way, how you bring it all together at that level.

**Hazel:** One of the challenges we've found is that where people have been brave enough to talk about things that haven't worked. Or where they've talked about things that they've done, but they've done on behalf of another agency, let say they have found a problem of being able to report that in a way that is truthful and honest about those kinds of relational elements, but that doesn't damage the relations that are still ongoing in this systems approach. And I dunno if we've really cracked that yet. Cause I



think those are the things we can talk about in terms of the theoretical side of it without naming people and pointing fingers and things like that. But it's quite hard to actually bring people to report on in a traditional sense, those things, because then those documents might be picked up and taken out of context. But just as you were saying, I think one of the good ways that we have tried to tackle that is not in a standard report . But it's in a meeting, sharing it in a workshop, sharing it in conversations. And that goes back to what Tim was saying earlier about the importance of our team and ourselves being embedded. Because then you do understand that context. And when you are sharing that learning back, you can do it in a way which is sensitive to some of those slightly political challenges. I mean, that trust

**Eve:** I mean, that trust is really key, isn't it? So again, having that consistency in terms of relationship with yourselves, that mean that one, you are aware of those sensitivities, and being aware when you are in a room where actually there is a high level of trust for people to openly share what's not working. And how quickly you can step into another room where that doesn't exist. I think there's so much pressure across the system that there is often still blame placed unfairly on people when you start to try and highlight what isn't working, and that comes back to those questions about that maturity of the whole system. You can create it in bubbles, but creating that everywhere all the time is a massive journey and challenge I guess for us still. So are there any other stories or indicators of the shifts that you are seeing and hearing and feeling taking place?

**Katie:** It's actually around the GM Central team in the sense that when we first started the work then it was really Tim and I and our consortium advocating for this approach and people accepting they needed to do things differently, but not necessarily really understanding how and why and what that was going to look like. And I think he's put it to Hazel and Emily, who was here before Hazel, and people like Richard who have just said, actually evaluation is everybody's business. And all of us that are part of this work need to develop a degree of skill and capacity and understanding around evaluation and we are just moving into a phase now where really Tim and I are making ourselves redundant as much as possible and trying to share some of the skills, some of the core tenets of the evaluation to people like Hazel and Richard and people who are gonna

be in GM moving going forward. So that it's shared out, it's distributed. There's more people that understand how to do it. There's more people who are there observing, capturing data in ways that are consistent with this approach. And for me, that's like a huge change from what we saw at the beginning to people not just shuttering and recoiling back at the thought of evaluation, but actually going now, hang on a minute, I'm gonna have a go at this.

**Tim:** I'd just add onto that so that we're not just painting a rose tinted story of everything. And I think we have to be honest enough to say that that isn't uniform, the extent to which that happens, that this is a challenging process. That even within the GM central team, there'll be some people more on board with approaches than others. Equally across localities, we see a lot of churn in terms of people in key roles, and so you get, people are just absolutely got stuff and fantastic people, but we move on and new career opportunities and then, you're back to not square one necessarily, but, you've got more people to bring on board with, with processes and look other things happen. Covid happening and the just absolute earthquake in the middle of all of this, this evaluation where frankly prioritising new approaches to evaluation was not top of people's agendas. So I think it's just worth us recognising that there's a non-linear or non straightforward, always improving processing here. But we get peaks and troughs, challenges along the way and, and that's part of the complexity of system change is accepting that it's not always gonna be a straight smooth road.

**Eve:** I can, it sounds like we've got a vehicle there reversing outside. I dunno, that's a metaphor for the potential risks!

I guess just if there's anyone listening that's going, okay, this all sounds really interesting. So what? Is there any sign that makes any difference in terms of ultimately supporting more people to be active and reducing the number of people who are inactive?

**Katie:** The interesting thing about Greater Manchester is that obviously you have Greater Manchester Moving and then you have the localities that you know, represent the boroughs of Greater Manchester as well as Glossop. What we've been able to see is those different journeys across these

different localities, and I would say that what we've learned is that there are some foundations. That if those foundations are in place, then there is every chance that those localities are building the conditions, which will ultimately lead to changes in physical activity. And obviously within the evaluation we do see examples of uplifts in physical activity with some groups. But what we are, we are trying to understand is how might that scale to population level And as Tim said earlier, is a change that will take years to come to fruition.

It won't happen in the first three years of this work and so we can't say that there's been population level changes in physical activity, which can be attributed to the work of the Local Pilots. But what we can say is that there are some really strong foundations in certain places, and that's where you've got strategic alignment of physical activity being important across multiple policy areas. That's where you've got strong connections and entrusted community leadership. So it's not just about, we don't just consult with people, but we actually think about how do we give communities and individuals some ownership over what's happening in their lives around them, around physical activity. And it's a huge shift to even want to do that, let alone to actually achieve it. And we're seeing that to start to emerge in certain places. in terms of how different bodies and agencies work together. Putting aside some of their organisational objectives to think actually if we pool our resources or put things together, we can actually move further faster.

So I would say that there are some really strong indicators of change, but they're not necessarily indicators of changes in population level in physical activity yet. I think that we have to accept that, that's not necessarily something we would've expected to see. In this timeframe, what the Pilot's done, what GM Moving's done is catalyze some of those local conditions in place, which need to be owned in those places. But that's not a uniform across the different localities. For lots of reasons. Some of them contextual, some of them just not quite getting the right combinations of people not being able to,... maybe not the skills to be able to work with communities in the same way, but because of the way we've done the evaluation there's always this opportunity to lean into how did you do that over there? And maybe we can try that here. And I think the other legacy that's probably left behind is some good interconnections and

relationships between the Local Pilots where they started off in often quiet competitions. Positions and now they're familiar with each other. They'll ring each other, they'll speak to each other. Traditionally we would've expected people to come to the solution that somebody in head office had decided was the thing that they should be doing. And the big shift across so many of the localities is actually saying, No, the national governing bodies of different sports, so like Lawn and Tennis Association or UK cycling or they have to come to the communities and then come to the individuals and figure out what do they need to do differently to support people to be active in ways that they value in the places that they are in.

**Eve:** I think that's a good place to start to round up. Cause that seems key to all of it. So where next? What does the future look like and what's the invitation, I guess, to others who are now interested in getting involved?

**Tim:** If we're genuinely going to be adopting that principle of learning and adapting, then that can only happen when people are invested themselves in that desire to learn and to take that learning, in order to adapt their work. But I think that as a fundamental. Katie's slightly joking before about that process of making ourselves redundant as evaluators. But, that does need to happen because what we have here is a Local Pilot where the resources that fund that will run out and the resources that fund the evaluation will run out. But what we really hope is that those principles that we've been working with can be embedded. Across workforces and across the boroughs of Manchester and, taken forward beyond when the Pilot isn't there. And hopefully that different perception of what evaluation is. That evaluation isn't something that's being done on me and my work, but it's something that enables that work to flourish and to adapt and improve.

**Eve:** Great.

**Katie:** It's quite an exciting time certainly in England at the moment, if not actually internationally, but there's real interest in whole systems approaches and place-based approaches and through the national consortium work that Tim mentioned earlier that we are doing we are starting to build even more opportunities for people to share and exchange their work and to work together to try to tackle some of these

more challenging problems together. So I think that whilst we might be moving away from GM Moving in terms of the in and out of the day to day, actually the opportunity for people involved in the GM Moving work to be really part and parcel of a national movement of learning about what works, how can we work together, how can we tackle some of these challenges together? That's only gonna grow in the next few years. And so again, it's going back to what you were saying earlier, Eve, about GM Moving, you know, wanting to be really locally led and enabling locally, but also sharing that learning nationally. There's just loads of opportunities to do that cause of our relationships. I feel like we are in a really good place to be able to shine a light on what's happening in GM Moving in lots more spaces.

**Hazel:** I think yeah, it can be quite daunting to know where to start or what to do. And I think something Katie said earlier on was if you're not sure what question to ask, just ask why five times, and you'll get to a much deeper level of understanding the way you started. And I think it is just having a go. There's no right or wrong way of evaluating and learning. It's what works for you and the particular bit of work you're doing. But the more you practice it and have a go at it, the more you develop those skills and find it rewarding and we can share plenty of the learnings from the Local Pilot through our GM Moving website and resource hub.

**Katie:** Yeah. But I think the invitation is also that where we feel at the moment the transfer of learning from one thing to another has happened best is in conversation and. It's challenging for us cause we want to leave written outputs, but I think we have to recognise that because of the contextual specific, it's really specific, each person's context is really different. That actually being able to match up the things that are gonna be of interest and of use to people. It often comes through conversations more than just here's a written output. So there's a combination, I think, to look into the resources, to look into the findings, but also to find opportunities to talk about it with other people. And that is a really good mix, I think that will help people to learn, join the conversation.

**Eve:** Let's stop there. So thank you very much to all of you. I look forward to seeing what's next and yeah, watching this learning system really

continue to grow and mature and evolve over time. So thank you. Thank you to everyone listening, and see you soon.

**Eve:** Thanks for listening to this GM Moving podcast episode. It's impossible to do justice to the breadth and depth of the evaluation work in one podcast conversation. If you want to know more, you can find the process evaluations and our GM Moving website and via our GM Moving resource hub.

As ever, we'd love to hear from you and to learn more about what other people and partners are doing around the world to evaluate whole system working and to capture the key enablers of change for more active lives or for other complex problems. If you'd be interested in joining a community of practice to share your work in this area, please get in touch via email.

You can also contact us on our socials. We're on Facebook and Twitter. Just search 'Greater Sports'. And don't forget the hashtag #GMmovingInAction. Please do share this episode with people and organisations who find it useful and join the Movement for Movement.

A big thank you to everyone who's investing in this work and playing their part test to learn and to make this happen.

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