

## Right To The Street Podcast

### Active Lives Transcript

#### Introduction

**Eve:** Welcome to the Right to the Streets edition of the GM Moving Podcast. Join the conversation about what makes our streets, parks, and public spaces joyful, welcoming places for people to be and to be active. Join me, Eve Holt, Strategic Leader at Greater Sport on the journey around the streets as we explore people's freedom to move about without fear.

In each episode, we hear about the roles we can all play to make where we live, work, and play places where all women and girls feel they belong and are invited to be active. We gather stories, experiences, and ideas as we speak to strategic leaders, decision makers, and lots of local people who are creating the conditions in place for everyday moving and active lives for all.

In this episode, we're focusing in on some of the specific changes needed to create the conditions, communication and cultural shifts that can better enable active lives. The GM Moving mission is to enable active lives for all by growing a movement for movement. Active lives are therefore two words you'll hear again and again during this series and throughout the whole of the GM Moving Podcast.

But what does it actually mean to live an active life? And what are we learning about what gets in the way? Come along with me to the annual GM Moving Conference and hear lots of people from across Greater Manchester who are helping create the conditions for active lives for all. As I ask them what they think the key ingredients are to making this happen in practice.

**Charlie:** I think often when I grew up certainly exercise was seen as a bit of a punishment, and I think active lives should never be framed as you have to exercise in order to pay for eating the wrong things. I think it should be about you should move more because it's great and it's fun.

**Eve:** In this episode, I also speak to Helen Pidd, the Guardians editor for the North of England. We chat about how communications and messaging locally and in the media impact our perception of safety on our streets, and the challenge of crafting a public narrative that normalises active lives and everyday moving for all. Whilst the public demand pushes the press to tell stories which amplify the extremes.

**Helen Pidd:** It's really tricky because say if the statistics were to show that for every fifty thousand people who cycle down the Fallowfield Loop one gets mugged, right? And it's a really horrible mugging. I don't think the media would do stories saying forty nine thousand nine hundred and ninety nine people got home safely last night. So I think that you have to counter the extremes on one side with the extremes on the other.

## **Interview 1**

**Eve:** But first, discover how local people are getting out and about and being active and the difference. Local groups and the local environment can have

Come with me to Old Trafford to hear how a local club is helping hundreds of people to gain the confidence they need to get outside and to start running MileShy running club in Old Trafford Meet every week for guided jogs and runs around the local area. On this cold, dark evening, I joined the beginner session.

At the start of the year, they started the Couch to 5K challenge. It's a nine week running plan that anyone can do with the aim to build up to a 5K, run over those nine weeks. This week, the group is tackling week five, which culminates in a nonstop twenty minute run. We meet Jane, the founder of the MileShy Club.

Jane's fab, she set the club up in 2017 and now is almost three thousand members across their five sites in Trafford.

I met her outside of the beautifully lit Limelight centre, which is the base for the old Trafford Running Club. Okay, so now we're inside a bit warmer.

Got rid of my bag and my pannier. So tell us a bit about you, Jane, and the MileShy Club.

**Jane:** So I've been here three and a half years with my team of wonderful volunteer run coaches, and we deliver beginner running sessions here from Limelight in Old Trafford. We're really chuffed to be here. We love this area. We love the people who live around here and, we really do make a difference. So this is one of eleven clubs that we have at MileShy Club, it's one of my favourite clubs because I feel like we really make a difference here, particularly with Muslim women and the BAME community.

**Eve:** So why did you start the MileShy Club in the first place?

**Jane:** For a love of running and what running had done for me, my mental health. So running was one of the only things that really helped sort my head out, and it had such a profound impact on my wellbeing that I wanted to bring it to others. And it's often seen as something that wasn't accessible.

Yeah, it had such a profound impact on my life that I wanted to bring it to other people, and it's not necessarily something that people find easy to get into. So I started a beginner running club so that we could be open to anyone. And yeah, that was six years ago in January, and here we are today.

**Eve:** And just give listeners a sense of the scale because the numbers are phenomenal of people that have come running with you since you set this up.

**Jane:** Yeah, thank you. So it's funny actually cause I've been reviewing all of our clubs recently, planning for the future and funding for the future.

So as of two weeks ago, we have three thousand one hundred and four members. Yeah, which is pretty cool across all the running and the walking clubs. , plus 10K runners, but predominantly they are beginner runners. They're people who have never exercised before coming into fitness. So yeah, we as a team, it's not been me. It's been our team. We've got twenty seven qualified run leaders and upwards, and then we've got four freelance PTs and yoga instructors on our books, if you like. So they all get involved

with getting people active. It's not just me anymore. So we're all patting ourselves on the back, a job well done, but there's a load more we can be doing. We're not finished by a long way.

**Eve:** So when did you start running?

**Jane:** A lot later in life. So I was twenty eight and I did it as a way to stop smoking. Now I was a heavy smoker and for a bit of me time, so I started at twenty eight and there was no Couch to 5K programme then, so it was very much running down to the bottom of the street and getting injured lots cause I didn't know how to do it.

In the gym, there's times in the gym when I've had to slide down the banister cause I couldn't move cause my legs were so broken. But eventually, after six months of pure grit, I did get through and I went and ran a Half Marathon.

**Eve:** Oh wow.

**Jane:** Yeah.

**Eve:** Okay.

**Jane:** I just started running and running and when people said to me, what have you done today?

I said, I've run from A to B. And they said, 'you've run there'. As if I was running a long way. Yeah. And I ran back as if it was the most normal thing it broke me to start off with. And, but the benefits, when I got into it, i.e without injuring myself, managed to enjoy it, that's when I realised it was just having a great impact on me and my mental health. And that's what I wanted to bring to other people.

**Eve:** And obviously we're going out for a run with some of your coaches and some of the women in a little while. I'm looking forward to that.

**Jane:** And men

**Eve:** And men. And it's a dark evening, isn't it? And I know not a lot of us find it harder to get out and run on our streets. Particularly when it's dark and in these winter months. So obviously running together as a group is an important part of what you are helping facilitating. Why does that make a difference?

**Jane:** A few reasons. One is it holds everyone accountable to committing to the run. So if you're gonna meet some friends later in the evening, then you want to get out and you want to make sure that you're there on time.

But also there's safety in numbers. So a lot of women who come to us, particularly women, men as well, often say that they don't like to run on their own. So running with other people makes them feel safer, makes them feel more confident about going to certain areas as a group rather than going to places on their own.

And particularly when running in the dark, and our group meet in the evening, people feel a lot more secure in a group setting when it's the hazards and things around them.

**Eve:** That's great. Whilst I've been stood here talking to you, I keep seeing more and more people come in through the doors in their running kit ready to go.

**Jane:** Well, it's interesting because this is one of our quieter clubs. So our smaller clubs are Old Trafford and Partington, and the larger clubs are Sale Urmston and Stretford. But with the smaller clubs comes a smaller community in a more intimate setting. Some people prefer that smaller setup. Some people like to see the same faces every week and not get bombarded by the numbers.

**Eve:** So our mission, our GM Moving mission is active lives for all. And obviously doing things like this where you help facilitate, provide that accountability, have groups come together, make it social, is a key way in which we enable more active lives.

But we also know that the physical environment makes a big difference. So the Right to the Streets project is really thinking about what can we do

around our streets and our public spaces that mean they are safer, they are more welcoming, they are places that we all feel like we belong and that they invite all of us to be active.

So for you, what does that look like when you're running around? What kind of spaces and places do you think reflect what good looks like?

**Jane:** Well, it's interesting because when I started the club here, there was a lady I used to speak to, and we'd run around a playing field here. And there'd, there'd be this little bit of dark alleyway we'd have to run down and there would be a light and it was knocked out. So someone had broken it so it wasn't working. And every week she said, I'm on the case. I'm on the case with the council. I'm gonna get it sorted. Or whoever it was, that was responsible for fixing this light and it got fixed and the following week it was broken again.

So, for me, I think safer streets is very much about light. So having lots of light, but also perhaps more of a police presence would be nice. Certainly, in the early days, we saw police community supporters around here a lot, which was great, but not so much these days.

So more light, wider streets, so there's lots of cars parked up on pavements you can't get past, that's a problem. There's lots of paths here with roots coming up the pavement. We see that. So it would be nice to have better maintained footpaths, better lighting streets, and to make it more joyous as well.

I think it very much comes from within the community as well. I've got a friend here who lives here. She's one of my PTs in my books. She set up some beehives in Hullard Park and she gets together volunteers. I get involved with the gardening and that sort of thing. I think when people take ownership and pride in the place where they live, then that helps promote safer environment, a more welcoming environment. But that takes time, I suppose, it takes time.

**Eve:** It's quite noticeable actually on the approach to Limelight. Cause there's quite a lot of street arts. It's quite nice mosaics for some of the

street signs. There's a real sense of some local traders as well, quite a lot of small local traders that again, felt like a safe place.

So people are gonna welcome you. So all those things make a difference, don't they, as somewhere to go. And it feels like a community, immediately feels like a community.

**Jane:** But the shops around here are fantastic. They're independent traders and you go in the fresh fruit and the veg and everything. I mean, you can pick up anything here. If you are into your Caribbean food, it's fantastic.

**Eve:** As more members of the club arrive at Limelight and get ready to go on their non-stop twenty minute run. We head outside and bump into Sam, who's one of MileShy's coaches. She's managing one of the other groups here tonight who are doing a full 5K run.

So everyone's getting ready to go for your run, and I'm not gonna stand between you and your run, so it's Sam, isn't it?

**Sam:** It's Sam. Yeah, it's Samina, but everybody just calls me Sam. Yeah.

**Eve:** Sam. So, you are one of the coaches?

**Sam:** That's right, yeah.

**Eve:** Fantastic. And how, how did you get involved?

**Sam:** Well, to be honest, I got involved for the social aspect cause I've been running before MileShy was actually set up in 2012 and I thought you know what I need to meet some new friends. I just moved to the area. So I joined the MileShy and I've never looked back since. So I was in for about a year and then Jane said, do you fancy coaching?

I says, yeah, why not? I don't mind encouraging people. So the rest is history and I'm still here.

**Eve:** Fantastic. So what do you get out of it then?

**Sam:** I think enjoyment cause it's nice to push people. They think they can't do it, but once they've achieved the Couch to 5K and they've actually done a 5K run and a Park Run. It's a nice achievement to see that you've actually helped them along their journey.

**Eve:** And we're on....this is a Couch to 5K run tonight, isn't it?

**Sam:** And, the 5K as well.

**Eve:** Okay.

**Sam:** Yeah.

**Eve:** And how far into the Couch to 5K women, how long have they been going so far?

**Sam:** So this is week five tonight, so they can do a twenty minute run, hopefully tonight without stopping. So they are more or less halfway now.

**Eve:** Well, they all look like they came bouncing through the doors before.

**Sam:** Yeah. They all look keen.

**Eve:** Yeah, they do. There's a real sense of energy of being here, which is fantastic. And anything in particular that you see then women get out of this experience. Any particular stories or some of the benefits that you think people experience?

**Sam:** And obviously the most obvious is, is getting fit, losing weight and making friends and just getting out and enjoying it. Sometimes these women don't get out, they've got no friends and they're isolated and just come out and they're more accountable. Cause if you're meeting somebody then you're more likely to come out.

Whereas if you'll say, well I'll go out and then I'll go tomorrow, then I'll go tomorrow, you'll never go, where's here? You've got a set date, set time, you come out and there's always somebody there to support you as well.



**Eve:** Great. Right, well I think we're probably gonna be heading off very soon. So where are we gonna be running this evening?

**Sam:** Right, today I am taking, cause I'm doing the 5K today, so I am taking them down Stretford Road into Manchester City Centre along Lloyd North Street, Moss Lane East, and then just making our way back here and it's just over, I think it's about 5.1K and that is all main roads apart from when you just get on the little bit here, everything else is main road. So should be well lit and straight roads, I'll be able to see where they are, and they can come back towards me if they're going too far.

**Eve:** Just as Jane's delivering the all important warmup. We chat to Razia, another coach here at MileShy and a trustee. She tells me about some of the benefits of running and some of the cultural barriers women may face to leading an active life.

**Razia:** Okay, my name is Razia and I'm like here leading coaching and coaching for running like Couch to 5K. I've been involved with this organisation as a trustee, but then because I completed my own Couch to 5K. So I thought like, why not give it a go with other people as well.

**Eve:** So when did you first get involved?

**Razia:** Last year as a trustee, because just to represent the community, represent the people, represent our community and women from our community as well.

**Eve:** And what was it that drew you in initially to do the Couch to 5k?

**Razia:** Just fitness. Connecting again with nature and be fit and healthy and, good for myself. It's my time, me time.

**Eve:** And I mean, it must be brilliant. It's fantastic that you're doing this and just hearing the crowd out here this evening, but then you also do sessions tomorrow in the daytime as well you were saying?

**Razia:** I do different sessions. It's again empowering sessions in the community for women understanding the importance of emotional and

mental wellbeing and educating them. Empowering them really. Yeah, and giving them tools to be more confident and more independent in their own self.

**Eve:** And what are some of the key barriers that some of the women face when we think about actually being able to run, jog, walk around some of our local streets?

**Razia:** I think the areas and the time when they can go out at Winter, it gets really dark early so that it's a barrier again, that we can't go after five. And especially Islamic we can't go after a certain time of the day out in running in the park, around the park and all that.

And sometimes we've seen we heard about incidents happening in the park, which is not safe around the women's or around anybody right. So like Hullard Park, we would avoid completely, we would avoid somewhere where there is less people or less public. So, and again, if I would run, I don't want too many public as well, around me when I'm running.

So I need a little, my own safe space as well for women with hijab, right? They would want something more secure and more secluded, right? In like private areas where they can be free and open and not coming in the eye of public. So that would be one of the requirements and that is one of the barriers that we don't feel very safe and it's not appropriate culturally that just to go out and run in the public. So maybe some secured space would be more recommended and required.

**Eve:** And it's that first step that's often the hardest bit, isn't it? Which is why the work that you do is so key and having people that you trust that get it, who understand and you don't made to feel silly for the things that maybe stand in your way and that's normalised. It's so important so thank you.

**Eve:** So it looks like they're getting torches on and all ready, are you all?

So all the runners are here and the coaches are ready and Jane starts to prepare the group for today's run.

**Jane:** Oh my god, can you believe this. At the end of week five, does anyone know what happens at the end of week five? A twenty minute continuous run, yeah, that's when we go from run, walk to running. Okay. It's normal to freak out at this point, and history has told us that for people getting to this stage, they dropout.

**Eve:** After Jane's briefing, I put on my active souls and join Jane for a jog on the street beside Limelight Centre. She points out to me Penn Park, a local place that they avoid running around as a group.

**Jane:** This is Penn Park on the left. It's one the places that we can't go at night. We can when it's dusk, but we do have openly people dealing drugs, which we kind of leave them to it. But there's been, just before Christmas, I was talking to Natasha, somebody was murdered there.

And we've had other incidents in that particular park where women have been assaulted and sexually assaulted, not from our club, just in the public. So as a result, we only go in that park if it's light, it's summertime, and as a group, and we stay together.

**Eve:** Running alongside Jane is one of the local members of the group who tells me about her local neighborhood and some of the issues she and her family have experienced.

**Local Resident:** We've got a really lovely neighbourhood. The trouble doesn't come from our neighbourhood, it comes from outside, especially in the summer, and as Jane said, unfortunately, that gentleman got assaulted before Christmas and later died. Obviously I brought my children up there. We've had antisocial behaviour there for about six years.

Every summer I've had the police, local councilors, Labour candidates, everyone involved, and it took us three years just to get the light bulbs. They were only put in just after the summer. So it's been horrendous. It means my children can't use the green in the park in the summer because of outside anti-social behaviour.

**Eve:** Is there anything other than lighting then that makes a difference, that makes it feel safer?

**Local Resident:** There's a lot of fly tipping up and rubbish that's not safe to run. They don't come and sweep the path properly, so they're overgrown with overhanging branches and there's just so much leaf down debris. It's so slippery.

**Eve:** Now happy to admit, running I'm trying to record is pretty hard. Bit like Challenge Anneka! So after the run, me and the local residents continue our chat standing still.

**Local Resident:** As you found out tonight, we've got some really uneven pavements. We've got lots of tree stumps that have been knocked down, but there's no markings around it.

In some areas, the lighting is really bad, and the good thing about coming in the group is if somebody takes a tumble, we've got a first aid kit, we've got first aiders, and you're not on your own basically.

**Eve:** This place where we are now. So outside Limelight, there's such a sense of community here and it feels like a place that there is community ownership and community pride.

There's a lot of street art we went past OT Creative on the way past and it was buzzing outside. And then when you go back to Penn park, I guess it just looked a bit desolate, didn't it? It didn't look like somewhere that has a clear, I didn't even know it had a name, an identity and an ownership. So anything else about that around someone that lives next door to it, what makes a difference?

**Local Resident:** I lived adjacent to it for twenty years and like I said, I only found out when I came to MileShy that it was actually called Penn Park. We had the tower blocks there for a long time. So it's quite hard to create a community in the tower block sense of things.

The people that have lived on the houses at the bottom of the flats have lived there for a very long time. We have a really stable, great community. My neighbour makes me cakes all the time. I make her soup. On our little estate, we are a community. We just don't tend to get invited.

It's almost like because we're so close to the Manchester City Council boundary, it's almost like we're not part of Old Trafford. We feel like it though, cause the other side of the main road as well. We feel like this very forgotten island of Old Trafford. I think when the new development comes, which Trafford Housing Association are about to build the two hundred and fifty six eco homes. We're hoping that'll bring a bit more families. There's gonna be a community space there apparently, and hopefully that'll just bring the green to life cause for years my neighbours have all seen me as the community spokesperson. I come to the meeting, I meet with the police, the Labor counselors trying to get the rubbish picked up, trying to get a hold of the antisocial behaviour, which doesn't come from Old Trafford.

It comes from really outside when we have had the police involved. We found out that some of these people are coming from as far as Oldham to come down and deal drugs in the area, and they removed our cameras so the antisocial behaviour goes unchecked. Whereas in other areas now where the new development is, it's a lot more secure.

People feel safer to come out. So it's sad, but I would say we still have our own little community and I go out and walk my dog on Penn park at five o'clock every morning. I don't feel afraid, cause I've lived here for twenty years and I know the people around me. But yeah, it would be helpful if it was a bit more included into Old Trafford.

**Eve:** That's just a good example of how in place whether it's roads or whether it's those artificial boundaries. I suppose the more political boundaries as opposed to community boundaries can really dissect a place, can't they. And as you say, stop somewhere from feeling included.

So we talk a lot about us belonging within a place, but also place belonging within a place and what identity does it have. So yeah, it's just really interesting to hear the difference that makes.

**Local Resident:** Yeah, I think it's a combination of tower blocks being a little bit isolated. And us being stuck between two main roads really. We are really a residential island that, like I say, tends to get forgotten.

**Eve:** Yeah. Well I'll be, yeah, looking on with greater curiosity when I cycle past next time. And now I know it's Penn park. Yeah, because it's a big green space, isn't it. The potential, if it did have that invitation to, to be in it and to feel safe in it could be a great place to be active, but not.

**Local Resident:** Absolutely fantastic. And unfortunately over the last four years, my children have not been able to use that space because of the influx of people who are doing antisocial behaviour. And I mean, there must be maybe thirty children that live on that estate in the houses, just not including the flats because the flats, you only used to be able to have children up to the fourth floor.

And since they've enclosed the balconies, children live up to the fourteenth floor. So they've always said they will protect that space. But I don't think protection is just enough. It's like, let's use it, let's make something happen on that space. Any community events that have happened in the past tend to happen on the St. Alfonsus Green, not on that side. And I think that's one thing that Trafford could maybe do is create a couple of events on the green to bring people from this area over to see what a great resource it is. There is a great play part. There's a basketball pitch and there's a lot of green space

**Eve:** It's that real invitation. Come and use it and activate it and animate it.

**Local Resident:** I'll give you a cup of tea.

**Eve:** Yeah, yeah. Well I'm there. I'll have your cup of tea. Have a cake from your neighbour and, yeah, maybe we need to go and do that. That sounds fantastic. Thank you. Massive thank you to Jane and the MileShy Club for letting us tag along to their Wednesday night running club. And a huge well done to all of the Couch to 5K runners.

## **Interview 2**

So we've heard how confidence and guidance can support active lives and how the built environment in place can be a barrier. But what about the messages that we hear at a community level and in the media, and how do they impact on whether or not we are active? Helen Pidd, the North of

England, editor for The Guardian, joins me online for a chat about communications.

Helen lives in Stockport and is also the founding member of Walk Ride Greater Manchester, an organisation who campaigned for active travel. I start by asking Helen why walking and cycling matters to her.

**Helen Pidd:** So I really enjoy cycling. I'm a member of a women's only cycling club called Team Glow in Manchester. So I do that socially and on the weekends. And I do like cycling in a utilitarian way just to get from A to B. Cycling to work in round town and things like that. And I've become a bit obsessed with getting my 10,000 footsteps in. So I walk when I can.

**Eve:** And I know as well that you were key in, I guess a particular instance weren't there, that took place on the Fallowfield Loop in Manchester, where you got involved. Cause certainly got your attention and you took some action. Indeeds, not words true Manchester Women's spirit.

**Helen Pidd:** So back in October, 2018, there were a few women from my cycling club Team Glow, who all had the same horrendous thing happen to them when they were cycling on the Fallowfield Loop, which is one of the main off-road cycle routes in South Manchester.

And they were both basically mugged for their bikes or they were attempted muggings. Cause actually these women are pretty fierce and they fought back and they kept hold of their bikes. But it was a really scary thing. All they were trying to do was get home from work. And they got ambushed by groups of youths in really scary incidents.

And they found in each case that the police just didn't seem to want to know. Were very slow in coming to the scene and didn't seem to have any enthusiasm for actually trying to catch those who were responsible. And it just really enraged me. And it was personal as well because I used the Fallowfield Loop quite a lot.

I really don't like cycling on busy roads and it cuts off miles and miles of busy traffic. It's a really lovely route and I realised I was frightened to cycle

on it now, so I just thought, well, maybe what we should do is have a protest, a two-wheeled protest.

**Helen Pidd:** So I talked to some of my friends from Team Glow, including the women who had been mugged for their bikes and asked if they brought for it and we decided to have a protest cycling on the Fallowfield Loop, and we cycled all the way to one of Greater Manchester's Police headquarters in East Manchester and back again.

And I just thought it was quite a good way of getting media attention and shaming the police into action. I think it was my first protest that I ever organised. Usually as a journalist I am reporting on people doing stuff rather than agitating myself.

I got special permission from The Guardian actually because it aligns so much with the Guardian's values in terms of safety for women and also active travel. I was allowed to do it and we had several hundred people come out.

We got on the local news and I really think as a direct result of that Greater Manchester Police woke up. It was pretty embarrassing to them. They got in touch with me and they did start to actually investigate and they did catch some of the lads who were responsible. So it showed to me that direct action can work.

And as a direct result of the Fallowfield Loop protest, I and a group of other like-minded people came together and we founded what became Walk Ride Greater Manchester, this campaign group to make it nicer and safer to walk or ride a bike.

**Eve:** It definitely hit a nerve, didn't it? And I came along to that protest. I joined you in that agitation and I mean I don't know if you know the numbers, but there were certainly a lot of women out on that day who again, wanted to be able to use that space. Anyone who doesn't know it's a fantastic no traffic green route through South Manchester.

I use it regularly and it can genuinely be very joyful, but it's not if you're fearing for your safety. I do remember some of the dilemmas at the time



because of course, as soon as then you get attention to say this is the experience that some women have had. It creates a greater sense of fear, doesn't it?

More of us felt fearful than of using it, which then the risk is that less people use it and actually less people using it and less people that look like us in our diversity really does make it unsafer. And that's one of the dilemmas that keeps coming up in this project as well, is how do you point to very genuine acts of violence against women that happen as well as a day-to-day sexism and misogyny that we experience out on our streets.

And validate that and recognise that and like you did, make sure there's action is taken and how do we at the same time try and remove some of the fear that has been so built into all of us since we are very small that this place isn't for us.

**Helen Pidd:** Yeah, when I organised the Fallowfield Loop protest, I did come in for a bit of flack, quite a lot of flack actually from some quarters.

There were some people who had been really instrumental in the creation of the Fallowfield Loop. It used to be an old railway line, and they felt personally quite affronted that rather than focusing on the wonderful wildlife and the clean air that I was focusing on these negative incidents, and I saw their point, but what's the alternative should we just bury the fact that these terrible things are happening and just turn a blind eye to the fact that the police didn't seem to want to know about them. So ultimately, while I can understand those concerns. I just don't think it would be a solution to pretend that there aren't problems.

That certainly is not gonna affect change in any case, and as a journalist, we often get accused of focusing on the negatives and not reporting enough positive news. I suppose that's because what makes a news story is something which is at the extremes. Usually it's something which is unusual, which catches your attention.

And, which is a bit out of the ordinary. And all too often those are bad things and people say they want to read positive news stories, but I know for a fact they don't because I can see the statistics on the Guardian

website and stupid stuff gets read, celebrity stuff gets read, but actually people love reading about terrible crimes.

When Sarah Everard was murdered, the interest through that went through the roof. Nicola Bully we're talking at a time when there's been this woman in Lancashire who went missing while walking her dog. She was sadly found her remains in the river. There was huge interest in that story. So people are interested in the extreme, the sad, the tragic, and I make no apology really as a journalist for covering that thing.

But yeah, it can have the effect of maybe over amplifying and giving an impression that things are worse than they actually are. Whereas statistically speaking, if you cycle down the Fallowfield Loop, chances are you'll be absolutely fine. I don't cycle it now in the dark, and this is four and a half years on.

**Eve:** I had a recent experience. I went to one with the lady pedal cycling story events and of course cause it was a massive, as there were women at the event who were then cycling back to the Chorlton Whalley Range area. We realised that we could all cycle along the loop together, even though it was dark, had gone there along the loop on my own, the daylight coming back, I assumed I'd have to face the busy traffic in the dark and that's just the way it'd be cause I wouldn't do the loop.

And suddenly that journey was transformed to thirty minutes with a group of women with us chatting. It genuinely was so joyful and such a sense of liberation, to be honest. I was quite surprised that even someone that thinks about these things at how shocked I was at how nice it was to just be able to do that and to use that space.

**Helen Pidd:** I think as women, I've just accepted in a way that for several months of the year, I like running as well. Well do I like running? I don't know. I go running. I prefer to run before my breakfast in the morning just works better for me and I just accept that in November, December, January it gets dark too late so I can't go before work, so I don't run in the winter. But that's not cool is it? Like we should be able to get out there and if all we're trying to do is keep fit or get some fresh air, clear our heads that we feel that we can't do that in the dark. It's a pretty sad thing and I see my

husband going out in the dark sometimes and I envy him that even though statistically I know I'll probably be fine, it's been so conditioned in me to be afraid. It's quite a hard thing to overcome.

**Eve:** Definitely one of the things that I've tried to do purposely this year is to start going and winning in the dark. Cause I realise I struggled to get my runs in, like you say, in winter, in daylight and it's been a bit of an act partly cause of this project really. A personal sense of activism of actually I'm just gonna go out and I am gonna run at night.

And it has enabled me to run far more than I genuinely do or can. But it does come, it feels like an act of resistance, it feels like I'm fighting myself, I'm fighting my partner who's going, oh, please be careful when you leave. And I'm still picking my route very carefully. And it's been interesting in sharing on social media doing that.

I've had a number of people contact me saying that they've found that quite inspiring as well and have felt inspired to similarly go, okay, maybe I will go and run at dark or go out and not feel fearful. But that then comes with a sense of responsibility as well because then I think, well what if something happens to me.

I immediately think that's my fault cause I've decided to do that. What if something happened to somebody else? So already I'm victim blaming myself and assuming the worst, which that is just me a little following. So I can imagine as well in the media when you've got a massive following, how do you, that balance of one, you say people want the negative news, but also the risk that if you put out a positive story and encourage people to do something, is there a sense of responsibility as well for what might follow?

**Helen Pidd:** There is a responsibility that comes with it. Last summer, I'd written an article in The Guardian about cycling and how I felt like people get really radgy. There had been a real peak in anti cyclists media retention and I was photographed for this article cycling down Deansgate in Manchester where they'd just created a new segregated bike lane and I didn't have a helmet on.

And for some people that's just like, that's so irresponsible. You, of all people. Why are you not wearing a helmet? So, yeah, I guess I do carry a bit of responsibility for that, but I find it very irritating, with the helmet debate, let's not get bogged down with that. But the fact that people are more inclined to blame me rather than a potential driver plowing into me or a bus or a lorry turning left. So I accept the responsibility, even though I don't really, I don't see myself as a role model.

**Eve:** I get that all the time why you're not wearing a helmet. But again, I feel a sense of the responsibility. That's only the way it's been framed, hasn't it? Again, if you're able to point to the evidence more, we put a big barrier in the way of people living an active life by telling them they need to wear, do risk assessments before they take a group of people for a walk.

We created all these massive barriers to people doing what should be everyday things about just getting about under your own steam in a safe way. And yeah, isn't there a responsibility to support people to be active and not contribute to that one in six deaths that follow from inactivity and, all the rest of it.

So we've talked a lot about framing. And around public narrative and how do we then shift. So for example, we talked a little bit about, I guess that car-centric language that's become so embedded in everything, including our media, where everything naturally adopts this position that we are dependent on cars and we're taking away people's freedom and their liberty if we do something that restricts it.

Trying to challenge that is huge and trying to shift that. And as a journalist, when you know that the clicks come if you play to that and you play into what is already the current culture, how do you gradually change the diet of the beast?

**Helen Pidd:** It's about providing a balance, I suppose, and providing counter examples across all sections of the media, whether that's comments, travel pieces, fitness pieces, so that it's not just particularly not just dominated by men cause often these things are. And I really noticed with the Fallowfield Loop protest, as we've already discussed, more than

50% of the people who turned up were women. And I really think that's probably because I'm a woman and I was fronting it.

The same is true of Walk Ride Greater Manchester, previously active travel campaigning in Greater Manchester was very blokey and it was very Lycra, boys club thing. But three of the directors of Walk Ride GM are women. And I think that that is reflected in who feels comfortable to come up and talk and raise issues. So I think that representation is really important.

**Eve:** And do you find yourself consciously, you can't be what you can't see when you are reporting and doing articles. Do you intentionally make sure that we see more women and hear more women's stories in those articles?

**Helen Pidd:** Yeah, definitely. And I mean, there's been a push at The Guardian in recent years to make sure that they're all women's voices and women's pictures. Like the editor of The Guardian is a woman. We have the first woman in two hundred and one years. And what she does is there is a wall at the office in London where they paste up every page of the Guardian each night when it's going to press. And she used to walk past it and be like, where are the women? Where are the women? Where are the women? And the picture editors, they just got used to being like, we need to have better representation and women need to not just be the ones in the mothering roles or women as victims, but also women as the architect of their own fate and destiny and doing cool things.

I really do think it matters and if I'm doing a story and I need to quote three experts, like shame on me if they're all blokes. But the thing is that women, this is a generalisation, are more likely to say no when approached for comments. I do this myself sometimes when I'm asked to do stuff, I'm like, I'm not really an expert in this.

I'm not sure and then blokes, there's some statistic that women think, oh, if I don't know 90% about this topic, I'll say no. Whereas blokes be like, if they know 10%, ah, they'll wing it. So I think there is a bit of no - ness women to actually speak up and have their voices heard and to trust in their own expertise and their own judgment. Because I think that, well, again, it's a generalisation that women can be a bit too reticent to put their head above the parapet and be heard.

**Eve:** I mean, some of the research done around that, particularly around women in politics, showed as well that there is another reason for that.

So it's not just necessarily about women's resistance and confidence that that is because they're more likely also to be criticised if they are seen to get it wrong. And particularly again, and we've seen, haven't we, about women in politics and in the media. If you're a woman of colour, you are even more likely to get negative criticism if you get a stat wrong that maybe a white bloke could do the same thing and it just gets passed off.

But suddenly it goes to the core of your credibility in a very sharp way and it can be very harsh critique. So speaking to lots of women, their caution actually is validated by what they see and hear as evidence of Anna, about what happens then when you do get it wrong or you're not spot on or people don't see you as the expert.

**Helen Pidd:** You get it right. When I look in my inbox, the people who complain about my articles, it is 90% men, sometimes they're trying to correct things that I know are right.

That confidence to just bowl in, assuming that you know more. And I'm happy to always correct things. I want my stories to be right. So I'd humbly say thank you and then we change things. But, yeah, you get a lot of abuse and if you've got over a certain number of followers on Twitter. I spend a lot of time muting people, blocking people, and the abuse can be quite personal about your personal appearance and intelligence or lack thereof. And it can get very, sometimes it's really hurtful and it's also really tedious.

**Eve:** Yeah. So we've talked, you mentioned a need for balance. So how I guess if we are reporting and with you are seeing the data and you therefore know what it is that people are hungry for and that's actually negative stories and it's not this positive everyday news and being able to add some balance. And we've heard a lot in this project around, I guess to that point really the gap between people's perception as you describe it of not being safe and the data reporting actually most of the time you probably are quite safe. We can provide more balance and try and counter and provide both, but we know that the headlines like to be the bit that sticks the most. So actually often the detail that follows might balance it in

theory, but people probably won't even get to read that bit or it won't be the bit that sticks.

Is there anything else that we can do if we want to paint this picture of welcoming, joyful, active streets and places and we want that to be front and centre. Is there anything else that we can do to help make that the norm and what people click on and see and amplify?

**Helen Pidd:** It's really tricky because like say if the statistics were to show that for every fifty thousand people who cycle down the Fallowfield Loop one gets mugged. Right. And it's a really horrible mugging. I don't think the media would do a story saying four hundred and nine, nine hundred and ninety nine people got home safely last night. So I think that you have to counter the extremes on one side with the extremes on the other.

Because although I said before, people don't like good news, it's not true. They do, but they like extreme good news. So if you can find really inspiring people who are amazing speakers who maybe have got something that's unusual about them, whether that might be I dunno, a disability or a talent or something different about their background and put them forward as the spokespeople.

Yeah. Organising eye catching things, eye catching events that might pique the interest of journalists. It's not easy. I'm not sure I have any solutions for you, but it's all about telling stories and telling stories that are interesting and compelling. And it is possible to do that in a positive way.

It's just a bit harder and I appreciate that what you are trying to do is just normalise and make this very every day, and that you don't have to be some superhero to go for a jog at 7:00 AM in winter, but it's quite hard to get that message out. I did an interview recently with a guy who wants to be the first person with no legs to climb Everest. And he was really interesting and so inspiring, his legs had been blown. He was a Gurkha in the British Army. His legs had been blown off. But I wouldn't do a story about just any old person climbing Everest. So it's always the extremes. But I think if you can find people who are really interesting in their own rights, who can step forward and be the spokespeople, and you might have some success.

### **Interview 3**

**Eve:** And finally, to round this episode up, I'm at the GM Moving Conference at the Etihad Stadium to ask our partners and colleagues who are working across the GM Moving Agenda in all parts of Greater Manchester about their experiences, ideas, and solutions to help everyone move more every day. These are the people who day in, day out, are helping to create the conditions for active lives for all.

This includes grassroots football clubs, outdoor venture groups, movement and campaigns. It's lunchtime at the conference and I find Angela and Laurel from MCR Active and I ask them, what are the key ingredients to enable active lives for all.

**Angela & Laurel:** I guess ease is the first one. Sometimes it feels like trying to fit physical activity into my day is a challenge, so I've just tried to find ways where I can do that quite simply and it becomes part of my routine now.

So being able to walk the kids to and from school or just in terms of like my childcare arrangements, I walk to pick them up from Childminder or after school club so I can quite easily build up at least thirty minutes, sometimes up to an hour of walking around my neighbourhood cause I'm going from A to B.

Likewise, if I've got a choice of using the car or using public transport, I know by using public transport, I'll be including some walking in that journey. So that might be my preferable choice because it means I'm gonna get my exercise in for the day. But yeah it is a real challenge and it's a real balance of just trying to build it in, fitting it in, not feeling guilty about it as well.

I think sometimes I give myself a bit of a hard time. I work in physical activity. You almost feel like you've got to do it because you are trying to lead by example, but, we struggle to try and fit it in as well. I think just trying to include moving more accepting that that's really good for you.



Doesn't have to be getting, getting equipment or getting particular clothing. It's just getting out and moving more.

When we're talking about kinda like streets and being outdoors and active streets it can sometimes be very challenging in terms of the reducing car usage, getting more people like walking and cycling and you always come up against the people that are like really anti that way.

But if you challenge them on things like, well do you want your children to breathe like cleaner air, that thing, and like appealing to what their values are. I think that's something that we would probably all agree on, but is that political will, I guess to be bold, but then something we've all got to incorporate into how we live our lives and how we interact with others in our working lives as well.

**Eve:** So for them it's all about designing, moving more into everyday lives, so it just becomes a normal part of people's everyday routines.

**Ryan:** My name's Ryan Bostock and I work for Real P.E.

**Kathy:** So I'm Kathy Brown and I am from Real P.E as well.

**Ryan:** So Real P.E is a unique child-centred approach for curriculum P.E.

**Eve:** I asked Kathy and Ryan what they think creates the conditions for active lives for all. They tell me that for young people, especially parents, carers, and schools have a very important role to play.

**Kathy:** So I think it is people having the enthusiasm and the motivation and the confidence to be active. It's about knowing what the opportunities are available to them. And often a negative early experience or negative experience can detract people and children, adults from taking part in an active lifestyle.

So I think it is around early intervention for children, ensuring that they can grow up developing the physical skills, the behaviours that enables them to feel that they can be active, that they want to be active, but also it is around the parents of the children. A lot of parents aren't confident

being active, and if we are looking at that cultural change, we have to bring parents and children together. And then by focusing on children and families at an early age, we can create habits and behaviours that will enable them to have a lifelong relationship, a positive relationship with physical activity. So it's a long game as well, really.

**Ryan:** I think you've got one, you've got to get the buy in from the school in terms of them meeting the curriculum needs and the physical activity guidelines.

But then as soon as they leave those school doors, they can't quite monitor what goes on at home. So in terms of them being able to find something that manages that active time at home and then providing that opportunity for them to when they come back into school, they can pick up on that key learning.

**Eve:** Just across the road. I bump into some of my GreaterSport colleagues who head up our work with young people.

**Christine, Lauren, Jess:** My name is Christine and I work for GreaterSport.

Hi, I'm Lauren. I'm from Greater Sport.

Hi, I am Jess. I'm from Greater Sport.

**Eve:** I ask them what role young people can play in helping themselves and their peers to be more active.

**Christine, Lauren, Jess:** I think they just need to be given a voice on it because we can't be young people once you grow up, you don't know what their opinions, their thoughts on this, what we might deem as a usable space might not be something that they want to use or they feel safe to access what we deem as cool and in, let's put a skate park up cause actually they're skateboarding, we don't know. So it's listening to them, it's taking their voice in. And young people will come up with things that naturally adults or people in the system would straight away say no. Why can't we draw something on the pavements to encourage activity to be fun as people are walking to school.

Why can't you put more equipment on the street as people are walking to be used. And actually young people have those ideas that we can, and sometimes we need to just stop saying no straight away, listen to them and see where we could meet in the middle a little bit to make it a little bit more accessible.

I think just talking to the children and young people work we are doing in Greater Manchester, there's an element of making sure they're followed up with. So making sure we do get the youth voice at the centre and giving their opinions to what they want and how they want to lead their lives. But actually they're told about it in terms of the follow up loop and the feedback loop. So actually what was done with their information. What did, what was the contribution that they made and how did that impact on decisions.

I think from a children and young people point of view, it makes it really relevant hearing their voices, but also that we've got a responsibility in our areas of work to enable those young voices to be heard, and working with those networks and really enabling those conversations to happen. So I see that we've really got responsibility within Greater Sport, and that's part of our work streams is the children and young people team to enable that to happen.

**Dean:** I'm Dean Gilmore. I'm the Partnership Development Manager for School Sport partnerships in Salford.

**Sharon:** I'm Sharon Wilds. I'm a school games organiser in Wigan.

**Eve:** Dean and Sharon are also fans of listening and explain to me why they think the art of listening is key to identifying the barriers that prevent people from moving more.

**Dean:** Listen to them and everything's different things for different people, but find out what the needs are, and it might be a very simple barrier that they can't get to the place they want to do something because the journey there doesn't feel safe to them.

**Sharon:** Yeah, I would agree. They've gotta feel confident to go out there and I think some of that can be built up in themselves as well. So I think being listened to and being heard and feeling confident that you've been heard would make a big difference.

**Eve:** And next I speak to Charlie from MCR Active. She's all about making active lives fun.

**Charlie:** I think a key ingredient for enabling active lives is about it being fun. I think often when I grew up, certainly exercise is seen as a bit of a punishment. And I think active lives should never be framed as you have to exercise in order to pay for eating the wrong things. I think it should be about you should move more because it's great and it's fun.

**Eve:** So you've heard how important it is to make moving fun, to involve people to listen and to help design it into everyday life. But what about money? It's something that Kat from Curators of Change feels as important to discuss when it comes to creating the conditions for active lives for all.

**Kat:** Actually taking it right back to the point of the fact that there is nothing about activity that is free even from buying a pair of trainers that's decent enough to walk in or run in to having to wash and have the right clothing and stuff. So I think there are some absolute fundamentals that we have to be getting right in our society, and how we support people and not just assuming that everybody has what a lot of us take for granted in terms of materials and things to do stuff.

And then I think as well a lot of the work that I do is with people and communities where actually that there's that pressure to get active or to eat healthier or to do all those things, but actually there's not much consideration given to what else is going on in their life. And the fact that it's really hard to get over the psychological barrier or how do you get somebody to look after your kids or what, where do you even start with it.

So I think it's taking it right back to grassroots for me, and that is grounded in the relationships and the conversations that we have with people and how we can really get into ourselves as people working in this space, into

the heart of the spaces where people are, and really just listen to what would help them.

**Eve:** It's not only Kat who's got money on her mind, John, from Alternative Adventure Outdoor Activity Service explains that life and all its complexities can be the biggest barrier for people moving more.

**John:** It's a bit of a virtuous circle as long, isn't it? If you are fit and healthy, it's easier to keep fit and healthy. Being comfortably off helps as well. Unfortunately, in that respect, being able to be active comes after a lot of other things are in place. Yeah, it's almost the icing on the cake.

**Kerry:** I'm Kerry from A Brilliant Thing

**Eve:** Kerry too wants us to think about our lives and most importantly, to check our privilege.

**Kerry:** , I think we've got to recognise privilege before we do anything else. So what does active mean to you and me, and what are our barriers that we might face. And actually sometimes we can be working towards not being active in some of the things that we do, and actually those are the things that are keeping us safe or keeping us happy. So I don't think it's just about telling people what to do.

**Olivia:** I'm Olivia and I'm from City in the Community.

**George:** I'm George. I'm from Bury Council.

**Eve:** Olivia explains why accessibility is a real issue, especially again, around money. Whilst George says that communication between different services and agencies is a really key ingredient.

**Olivia:** It's money. The programmes we put on are free because we work in areas of higher deprivation. But I don't think there's enough people out there. There's enough companies out there doing that. Like you have to pay for everything. And if it's not accessible, then people aren't gonna get active. They're not gonna go and do these things. And I think, yeah, accessibility's one of the main things.

**George:** So yeah, accessibility. I'm nicking the point, but I think that's one of the main ones for myself. But then it's just word of mouth and actually communications and events like us and networking and speaking to people, letting people know what's about, and each other's boroughs helping each other out.

Lessons learnt and stuff like that. We have monthly meetings where I'll meet other colleagues within like Greater Manchester from like Wigan and Stockport and talk about what they're doing for active travel and then we'll go back and have different meetings about what we are doing. So we've just launched a bike library, so Di from Wigan wanted to know more about that and how it works for when he launches his. So it's just sharing lessons I suppose, and networking and helping each other out.

**Tom & Oli:** My name's Oli and I'm from Greystone Action Sports in Salford.

My name's Tom and I'm also from Greystone Action Sports in Salford.

**Eve:** Tom and Oli bring it back to fun and of course a range of opportunities and activities.

**Tom & Oli:** Variety of activities for everyone. People aren't going to like the same thing, so offering as many different avenues as possible. Keep, I know this sounds so boringly simple, but keep it fun. I think that's what draws and keeps people in the most.

I think yeah, like you say, it's just opportunities for everyone to get engaged and everyone's got something that they enjoy doing, and it's just about connecting communities, connecting people to those activities, making them accessible and finding out ways, resources and networks in which everyone can find habits that they can do and fit into their lives. Everyone's got different lives. We're all different. We all like different things. We all get a buzz off different things and it's just finding that and making a path to get there and do it and make it habit.

**Eve:** Finally, I grab Andy from the Bike Kitchen who explains enablers are the biggest ingredient to create the conditions for active lives for all.

**Andy:** So we save bikes from landfill. So we get donated bikes, which we fix, and then either we sell to cover the cost or what it's cost to place them. Or in some cases we've got bikes that we fix, but aren't really of a quality sellable value so we donate them. So the enabler there is, well, actually, how do I physically move?

So I want to ride a bike. I've not got one. Can't afford one, can't afford the upkeep of it. So the enabler there is, well, there's the bicycle, there's the scooter, there's the trike, there's the, the method of movement. And then that's part of it. And the next bit then is that infrastructure makes people feel safe to do it in the first place.

So if they've not got a safe in their mind, a safe way that might be, it's a linked up cycle path to the park, to somewhere else. So you've got an off road route, to tackle that, that perception of danger. Well, if you've gone, you've got that. People don't want a bike. There's no point having a bike, I've got a bike and I never ride it cause the road's too dangerous. They run hand in hand. So enablers for us are the tools and the actual physical equipment to do so. Our extra little bit is once you're doing that, it's keeping that bike on the road. So obviously bikes are expensive to repair, so having some basic knowledge can save you some money before you start.

So we operate a number of basic maintenance courses and that are available from other places that allow the person who's got that bike to get that bike on the road before it gets more difficult. Again, that's an enabler. So I know I can fix my bike, I know I can fix it to a certain level, something really goes wrong with it and it needs to go to the shop. But you're cutting those costs down. You're cutting that barrier down to well actually I can't go and do it.

## **Outro**

**Eve:** A big thanks to everyone who we spoke to at the GM Moving Conference. What a buzzing day. If you'd like to come to the next conference, keep a lookout on our socials and on the GM Moving website.

We've already started planning our next one for February, 2024. Thanks for listening to this Active Lives episode of the Right to the Street edition of the GM Moving Podcast. This episode has covered a lot of the different barriers that can really get in the way of people living an active life, be that cost, culture, communications, caring responsibilities, or the day-to-day challenges like transport time and conflicting pressures.

We've heard how important it is, therefore, to make activities fun, social, affordable, accessible, and to design in a way that can fit with the realities of people's day-to-day life. This means listening to people, really listening, tailoring to what matters to them and to our different individual motivations.

It is clear getting active on our streets, in our parks, and across our communities is not just down to the individual. We all have a role we can play to enable more people to move more of the time. You can hear more about the work going on at local level across Greater Manchester to enable active lives in series two of the GM Moving Podcast, you can also read more about what we are learning about the different influencers on whether or not people are active and the inequalities that exist on our GM moving website, we'd love to hear more from you. What messages and stories do you see and hear around active lives which connect with you and inspire you to move more and which act as a barrier.

What language resonates and what jars? If you've got a story you can share about who and what helps you to be active, whatever it is, let us know and we'll share your thoughts on future episodes of this podcast. We've got a few ways you can get in touch. You can tell us on social media, we are on Facebook and Twitter. Simply search GM Moving or Greater Sport. Or you can leave us a voicemail. You can find the link in the episode show notes, and on our GM moving website, just search Right the Streets podcast.

A big thanks to everyone who has contributed to this episode will be releasing more episodes throughout the next few months.



So keep an eye on our social media pages for when the next one will be released or simply hit follow or subscribe on whatever podcast player you're listening to right now. This means the latest episode will go straight into your library as soon as it's released. This Right to the Streets series of the GM Moving podcast is one element of the Right to the Streets project.

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