**The GM Moving Podcast**

**Episode 2: Keeping older adults moving and connected with their communities**

**Introducer:** [00:00:00] This podcast has been brought to you by GM Moving, part of GreaterSport. We're here to help the people of Greater Manchester get moving and to improve lives through physical activity.

**Eve Holt:** [00:00:33] Hello and welcome back, I'm Eve Holt, Strategic Director at GM Moving. So today we're having a conversation around Active Ageing, so keeping moving as an older person in Greater Manchester, and I'm really pleased to be joined for today's conversation by Beth Mitchell, my colleague at GreaterSport, Nicola Waterworth from Greater Manchester Ageing Hub and the Centre For Ageing and Jane McDermott and Jane is from Manchester University. So looking forward to today's conversation, I hope you enjoy it too, and, over to them.

**Beth Mitchell:** [00:01:06] Hi, my name is Beth Mitchell and I work at GreaterSport and I lead on Active Ageing for Greater Manchester. As part of my role, I deliver and manage the Greater Manchester Active Ageing Programme. And alongside that, I also work to influence our partners in the system to embed and integrate physical activity into the day to day lives of older people.

**Nicola Waterworth:** [00:01:24] I'm Nicola Waterworth, I'm, the Greater Manchester Partnership Manager for the Centre for Ageing Better. So I'm based in the Ageing Hub in the Combined Authority and the role of the Ageing Hub is to support Greater Manchester to deliver on the Age Friendly Strategy for Greater Manchester.

**Eve Holt:** [00:01:44] Fabulous, and Jane?

**Jane McDermott:** [00:01:46] So I'm Jane McDermott. I'm a member of the healthy ageing research group at the University of Manchester and I also work within the policy research unit where we advise the department of health and social care about the lives of older people and what's important to them.

**Eve Holt:** [00:02:02] And from where I've been sitting, you've been working as an absolutely phenomenal, collaborative effort in Greater Manchester. So, you know, and that's from me, starting at GreaterSport just about nine weeks ago, I think now. Definitely it was a place where the Ageing Hub and Active Ageing and our work at GreaterSport seems to be a really good example of people coming together across these sectors to really make a difference in people's lives and make it a great place for people to grow older. So can you share a little bit pre-covid about how you've been working together and what you've been doing?

**Beth Mitchell:** [00:02:36] I sit on the Wider Ageing Hub meeting, which is obviously all of the partners to the Ageing Hub coming together to share updates and what's happening across the sector really. For one, it's definitely strengthened the programme and the messages. And obviously, especially at the minute in terms of the Covid-19 response, it's definitely amplified in the way we've worked collaboratively to get key messages out, really quickly as well and making sure it's a joined up GM approach.

**Nicola Waterworth:** [00:03:05] I think that's the real strength of the model in Greater Manchester is that it is this strategic partnership that brings together all the partners across Greater Manchester that have an impact on older people's lives. But also for us as a national charity, at Centre for Ageing Better we're able to bring our learning and evidence based but also able to learn new things and test new things in Greater Manchester working with partners like Jane at the universities, but also ones like Beth who are delivering on the ground. So we can really kind of look at what works in creating change and try to amplify and scale that.

**Eve Holt:** [00:03:46] Fab. So Jane, can you tell us a little bit about the expertise that you bring, and I guess why this is such an important agend in GM, but also why it's so important that we're doing it in this way?

**Jane McDermott:** [00:03:57] I think from us obviously, we're a university, research strong university. And a lot of our work has been sort of at an international level working with the world health organization, but our research was back in 2005 when we did the original trial about why strength and balance was a really critical part of later life. And the reason it's so critical is that it enables us to continue doing things that we really value. And that might be going out to the shops, seeing our friends, going to groups, doing a range of different things that enable us to be independent. So we, 15 years ago we did that trial at Manchester and we've been taking it all over the world and talking about in lots of ways. And then of course, because of the unique system that we've now got across GM, it really presents a great opportunity. And I did a piece of work a couple of years back with the Centre For Ageing Better, where we actually looked at a national picture to try and understand what was happening in communities around strength and balance. Where is the evidence and how can we make sure that people are really engaging in the right way and delivering it in the right way so that we are really actually improving somebodies later life. And so it was interesting, we learned a lot, we took an appreciative inquiry approach, but what we found was that there were lots of gaps and holes, and so was like, how can we fix that? And so Greater Manchester has some of the most fantastic examples of practice and some really passionate people. So we just want to spread the love, spread the evidence through the love, and to make sure that people are doing what we should be doing. So we know what works we know about things like dose, the language of health, which is around prescriptions and dose. But people don't think about physical activity in that way. They don't think that actually it's certain types of exercise that need to be tailored to make sure that you will then be able to fulfill your later life. So making sure we get that key message across that it is the evidence that we need to make sure people can change their lives and changing the whole conversation. I think within the health arena, away from a prescriptive drug arena into prescriptive physical movement language, which I think again has been a real culture change challenge. But for us, we know what the evidence is, we know that it works, we know it has a huge impact on life. And so as well as enabling older adults, getting the right type of community strength and balance programmes that are available, that should be available and that's as a right, you should be able to access those services. We're also really interested in the prevention agenda, and Beth and I have been working really closely for the last sort of six to 12 months looking at, well, how can we engage younger groups and start to think about that midlife when things do start to change for us. Our muscles start to change, balance does start to change, little things start to be affected as we develop or get diagnosed with long-term conditions and start to think about a tailored exercise programme so for me, strength and balance is the key. Strength, mobility, flexibility are the stepping stones into aerobic exercise as well. And so we're starting to think about all the different complexities around it and how do we change behaviour? What conversations need to be happening. You know, what's really, really important to an individual? What did you use to love doing? Well, you can do that again with the right support, so starting with the person.

**Eve Holt:** [00:07:12] So there was a huge amount there. So from really making sure there's a clear evidence base for what you're doing and obviously the strength that you bring there as a University. And that's clearly benefitting, not just people in Greater Manchester, but you know, pioneering and supporting beyond greater Manchester. This real sense of the collaborative work. within this kind of Greater Manchester ecosystem and the opportunity that brings for that sort of systems change that you're talking around there. And the shift in the language, which feels really important and moving from is medicalized perspective to actually the importance of moving as one part of how we live well and live longer and making that available for everybody. And then how we absolutely tailor that and recognize that we tailor it to people in a person centred way and that sort of strength based person centred approach, that you're talking about. The different needs and the diversity of people that, you know, just because you're older doesn't mean that you all have the same needs, does it really, there's a huge diversity amongst that.

So that's a huge amount already to be doing and then comes Covid. So suddenly none of us planned for it, thrown into the middle. And older people have been definitely high on the agenda in terms of Covid. But when you talk about language, I've heard is a lot around vulnerability around elderly, around frailty. Certainly not the language that, I think generally we're trying to advocate when we're thinking about actually, you know, what does this mean to be an older person in GM. So can you say a little bit about how have you responded to covert? What does this look like for you? It's felt like a rapid response has come from your side of your working together. So what has that response looked like and what have been some of the challenges, but also what have been the opportunities that have come from that?

**Nicola Waterworth:** [00:09:00] Can I just pick that up from a kind of general Ageing Hub perspective? I think there were really, it was clear quite early on, but before lockdown, obviously there was a specific impact on the older population, which kind of would require responses. And I think the strength of the Ageing Hub was the network of those people in the kind of age friendly community in the localities that we could draw on. People like Beth and Jane across all the other agencies that we could quite quickly with a few teething problems like everyone else. There was kind of a rapid move to using technology, but once we got over those hurdles, kind of bring together and say, okay, so what's happening? What are we hearing from older people and their experiences and what are the issues here. I think physical activity being so important to later life for so many reasons, which, Jane's already spoken about. It was really clear early on that it would be great to get messages out there through that network that we could get them to people at this time. I think that was the strength in what Jane was saying about, you know, we've got, we knew where the passion was and the love, but we also knew where the evidence was and we could draw on it. And it was, I mean, it was a lovely thing to watch. It was like, "Beth Jane, we kinda need this" and it just kind of, to watch the information be pulled together was great and done really quickly, and my colleagues at the Centre For Ageing Better were at the same time, I think we were, you know, doing the tour of kind of national radio stations and saying, you know, promoting this issue about needing to move and exercise and strength and balance. And then to see the resources pulled together, which we could then, well that's only as good as getting them out there to people. I know that Beth's certainly got some information there about sharing about how they have got to people. And so from our perspective, it just built on all the great work that we've done, building the partnership and having the evidence. Yeah, there were challenges and I think there's probably challenges to come that we can come back to as well.

**Eve Holt:** [00:11:00] Did you want to say a bit more Beth around, so having built that strong network...?

**Beth Mitchell:** [00:11:04] Yeah. I think obviously we've developed the Active Ageing programme over the last two years, and therefore we've got Active Ageing leads who are already present within each of the localities, which has enabled pulling information together and getting out to our established networks has been really key. Obviously there was a massive adaptation from going into delivering sessions, whether it be leisure centres, walking for health groups to then every older person being confined to their own home and obviously lots of issues that rose immediately around digital exclusion. Those that don't have a wifi connection, don't even know what the internet is and then how do you then start to get those messages out to people in a targeted way. So there was a lot around that and I think through the support of Jane and understanding that actually now more than ever, although myself and Jane have worked for the past number of months on trying to get that evidence base out there and make sure people are understanding the forgotten guidelines of strength and balance. Now it became even more critical that one we were providing that evidence base, but also safe and effective messages that you know, the market became populated with all different videos, fitness providers. But actually it was making sure that we were getting the right messages out for all the people. So we created, as an organization, GreaterSport, created the ways to keep moving webpage, which older adults had a specific section on. Making sure that predominantly it was strength and balanced and all evidence based recommendations that people who were digitally included could take part in and obviously strengths and limitations in terms of exercise. And then we worked with the, That Counts!, GM Moving team to produce a specific older adults leaflet, real key messages to maintain daily living in the home. Which was really, really well received. I know a lot of localities have pushed that out through community hubs, in food packages, directed those that are already connected to physical activity services within the borough. And I know, from Jane's messages, that it's been well received nationally as well. And a lot of other Active Partnerships across the country have wanted to utilize that as a resource. So it is, it's really positive feedback to know that, our message is being pushed nationally, but also we're getting the right messages out there to support people.

**Eve Holt:** [00:13:18] So there's lots there about how you've adapted. And both the online, but also the importance there of having a physical leaflet as well. Because lots of people are talking about how they, how do they get these messages and the right messages to people that need them. So having that network and thinking about those different ways to do that. And how, I don't know which one of you wants to share, but in terms of then the voice of older people at this point, both in getting that feedback to, you know, is it working? What's their experience? How are you managing to get the voice of older people in this, I guess, process and their feedback on what we're currently doing?

**Jane McDermott:** [00:13:56] So, I mean, I could answer that. So as an extension from the brilliant leaflet that Beth and your team at That Counts! put together, which is really fantastic. The first fast pace piece that we could get out there. We've now developed off the back of that a more in depth booklet, which actually has a bit more information and a few more types of exercises that are both seated and standing, including warm ups and cool downs to give a more holistic offer for a range of older people and for those that may be, are, have long-term conditions and have been advised to stay at home currently. And so for us, the whole part of that process and getting this together has been working very closely with the Greater Manchester older people's network. So we've managed to access all the action group members really fortunately by phone, but also some by digital, but in different ways to make sure that they are constantly feeding in. So that was including, what were we going to, the new booklet called Keeping Well At Home covers a range of different things. So it isn't just limited to movement, but it's also thinking about what we're eating and diet and trying to sort of live as healthily. But also thinking about having a good mind and what it takes to sort of remain positive and be grateful for the things in our lives. Looking out the window and watching the blossom, them kind of things. Just to kind of enable somebody who might suddenly be feeling quite alone. Somebody that was going out a lot within a walking group, was going to strength and balance class, was going to Bingo, whatever they were doing in their personal life suddenly can't do that. So it's really important to us to help people find ways to remain socially connected as well. So it's a broad booklet, but for us, having the constant input and feedback from the Greater Manchester older people's network has been invaluable. But also, all the specialism that they have at the Ageing Hub, which has been phenomenal. Beth,I mean we sent out this morning the first draft, I think I've had about 700 responses about it. Who doesn't like... How I'm going to level that, I don't know, but I will find a way, cause there is always a way. I do love a bit of complexity, I live my life in it. But you know, at the end of the day, it's about trying to get consensus so that we find, we all serve the same purpose and our purpose is to actually to give people the best opportunity to stay well at home while they're there at the moment.

**Eve Holt:** [00:16:06] And have you seen that picture shift over the last few weeks and are there ways in which you are having to continue to adapt, as sort of the weeks go by?

**Nicola Waterworth:** [00:16:15] I mean, I'm not so sure about, in terms of moving and physical activity, Jane would be better placed to, I guess, talk about this, but is there a risk. You know, if people have become more sedentary, is it going to get harder? But certainly in terms of the range of issues that might be shifting for older people, as we've all been at home for longer. So the increase in feeling of isolation, some very practical things for older people, like access to cash and, lots of, there are lots of, yeah, kind of newer challenges I think. So. I think that's what's really important about the mechanisms that we've got. But trying to feed in the intelligence around the kind of the population, and what they might be experiencing so that we can think about what new or the responses might be needed. Beth shared some information with me earlier about, was it Tameside and some people being very much in contact with older people. So there are all those groups who were using the resources that have been put out there. So those routes to getting feedback are so important.

**Beth Mitchell:** [00:17:20] Yeah, and I think the way we're going to continue to adapt is how we look to; one, monitor the impact and who's using and who's taking part and what kind of people are our messages reaching, I think. So for example, I've reached out to our localities, the ageing leads, and asked them who are they in contact with. Can they give an approximation of how many people they're reaching? And the feedback has been brilliant that those that are already attending classes, whether it be with a leisure centre, have all been contacted, supported them with Super Six leaflets, so people are, are being reached in numerous ways and rather than just physical activity messages, I think definitely for the more vulnerable people in communities. And then obviously, Tracey Annette from the Ageing Hub is working on sort of a telephone survey with those that might not be digitally. And one of those questions is going to be around, sort of, were you active prior to Covid, and if you were, what did you do? How have you adapted, and sort of some, have you seen whether it's, you know, whether we can gather information that "oh I've received this leaflet in a care package" or trying to understand who's getting what message and what people are taking part in so we can gather some feedback that way.

**Jane McDermott:** [00:18:32] Yeah, I mean, at the University we're in a policy research unit level, that we are extensively doing lots of different types of research, feeding it into DH also continuing to have the voice of people in that, in all the work that we're doing to help the right type of decision making. But also we've just produced a leaflet specifically aimed at people with cognitive diversity, those living with dementia, supporting people with dementia, which is going to come out quite soon. So it's just kind of thinking about the broader complexities that we're living in to make sure that everyone feels okay, feels supported. And in many ways, you know, the fact that we're having these projects and we're doing these things, enables us to keep in touch with people because we're constantly wanting to get their opinion, their feedback. So people do still feel engaged in new ways rather than just in the old ways where we might have everybody in a room together. And so I think it's kind of helping us rediscover parts of communication that we might have lost, which I think is always a good thing.

**Eve Holt:** [00:19:26] I certainly share, I'm an optimist like you Jane, so I keep seeing all these elements as well as this, I guess, outpouring of love and neighborliness and people connecting in new ways and actually some people connecting more and going back to things like telephone trees and things that maybe we haven't thought about, which provide a great way of keeping people together and also a certain level of empathy. I mean, it certainly has provided a space in which has enabled some people to, you know, as their live's changed to maybe identify a little bit more with what it can feel like to feel isolated, to be at home. What other people, the realities of other people's lives day to day pre-covid suddenly has become, you know, a step closer really to them. And also, I think, for, I've spoken to people who feel that their own ageing has for the first time, become present to them. It was something that was for other people, and suddenly this has brought it, you know, as something that they're thinking about maybe for the first time, as well as for their own relatives. So, it feel's like there's a lot of learning, which can hopefully we can take forward into what next. So is there anything, we've kind of focused on the, I guess the response and the need for current response and that, you know, continuing to adapt to meet different people's needs. Is there anything in particular you'd want to say in terms of what you're thinking about what, what happens next? What happens as we, you know, hopefully get over the peak and start to think about, what, at the end of the crisis and what this means for our older population and what we can take forward really into the future.

**Beth Mitchell:** [00:21:02] I think, for the future of Active Ageing, obviously we, until we sort of come past this current crisis, we're not really going to have an idea of the full impact of how it's changed behaviors. So previously for the past two years, we've been working through the Active Ageing Programme to try and change behaviors, and increase physical activity. To understand the impact that this is having I kind of look at it as a positive and say, well, actually, although the behavior of attending a weekly walking group or attending a walking netball session, older people may have been taking the guidance, those that are able to go out for their daily walk as they've done before, and therefore that could be a behavior change, which carries on post-covid, and people become more active that way. But again, we're not going to understand whether that is the case or whether people have, really want to get out and get back active, due to the contact with people. When we get there. I don't know what the full impact will be, but hopefully, just trying to keep as positive as possible that we, and obviously the adaptations people like exercising in their own home and having that information of what's important could continue and actually, if it is a routine for an older person now to get up and do The Super Six, hopefully fingers crossed, that'll continue post-covid. So it could have a really positive impact and it could actually be, although it's a very negative situation, generally, it could have a really positive outcome for older people.

**Eve Holt:** [00:22:21] Some great potential new habits there in terms of both what it means to work out at home, which for more people has become suddenly a norm and being more creative, inventive about what that looks like. As well as really for those that can get out of the house, it feels like such a gift now, doesn't it when you do, so, you know that daily walk, like you talked about Jane, kind of just noticing things, the small things, the sound of birds, the blossoms. We've been lucky to be graced with this gorgeous weather, but those little things that can somehow you know really lift our mental and physical health in the day, which currently feel like a gift when it's only allowed once a day, and how we can continue for people to treat it in that way and that become a real habit going forward. Is there anything else that...

**Nicola Waterworth:** [00:23:05] I guess the one thing that I was going to just comment on, what was it strikes, what struck me is about, you know, we need to also understand what we learn about who was able to take on those messages and who wasn't and how that links with, you know, kind of ageing as an experience across the board. So it was, as a Centre For Ageing Better, one of our other priorities around safe and accessible housing is more difficult to exercise really if you're not living in appropriate, safe, accessible housing. I think I'm also might just think that, yeah, those spaces outside are great now because they are considerably more car-free. The pavements, the roads, they're much more accessible in many ways aren't they. For me, when I'm cycling along the country roads I'm forever coming across couples out walking together, like you say, hand in hand. So the built environment that we live in, how is it serving our lives? So it's kind of thinking about what we need to take from the situation that joins up across the kind of whole piece about how we all age, throughout life and what we need from the spaces and the places that we live in, and the means also, you know, to do those things as well.

**Eve Holt:** [00:24:25] Capturing those stories feels so important, doesn't it? So we don't forget all of that, don't forget how different it can feel at the minute and what we want to take is anything you'd want to add, Jane?

**Jane McDermott:** [00:24:35] No, not really. I just think there's some great learning. You know, hopeful that if, if this was last six to eight, 12 weeks, typically that's when behavior change starts to actually happen and be registered, the common new habit. So I'm all with Beth on The Super Six or any other type of standing exercises, them as the stepping stones, integrating your aerobic activity. Reinforce what you're saying about just, you know, that gift of getting an hour a day outside and how precious that is, but also thinking about, you know, the more complex issues around different people's lives and living in tower blocks and what that might be to not being able to get out the door and how we really need to address some of those. I think already for us, we're looking at future research needs. What will de-conditioning look like? So maybe people that haven't been able to move so much. How do we really enable that and what would be a good evidence based approach? How we can equip our workforces as they return to really help people to start with a whole new way. And let everybody use all the facilities that are available to them in a way that is accessible so that we have tailored programmes. So it's a big task to happen, but I'm excited about it because I think there's lots of potential there in terms of really getting people, doing home exercise has been one of the biggest challenges and here were are, it's on a plate.

**Eve Holt:** [00:25:53] Fantastic, well, it will be good to come back, come back together in say a few months time and see where we're at really and see what's continued to evolve and what's, what's sticking. And, any of those stories, which feel so important to keep kind of gathering, really to see, you know, what, what people are enjoying at the minute and what they're getting out of it and how we can help that going forward. So, more of a personal question now, which is, so for you, how do you like to move? And has that changed during covid lock down? Who wants to take that on first?

**Beth Mitchell:** [00:26:28] Well, I did walk the dog prior, but not as often as I am now and we'd argue between us

**Eve Holt:** [00:26:34] And then Nicola?

**Nicola Waterworth:** [00:26:36] So I'm normally quite a runner, but I seem to have developed a lockdown injury in my foot, so that's a bit of a shame. So, I also go to the gym and my gym has leant us equipment so that was really good thing to do early on. So I'm just having to try and motivate myself to fling that stuff around rather than be told, which is what I like about going in the gym. And I've taken to riding my bike for the first time in months apart from going to the train station and back. So a nice little hour's or so ride from home on the bicycle has been really nice cause it's so beautiful out there. So that's really good habit that I'm welcoming back into my life.

**Eve Holt:** [00:27:19] Fantastic.

**Jane McDermott:** [00:27:21] So for me, I'm a cyclist, I cycle to work and back, but I think it's been lovely rather than just using it in an active travel sense, using it to actually enjoy the, the surrounding. So similar to what you've said, Nicola, getting out, and an absolute bonus has been that it's PE with Mum. So my kids go out and I'm like, we'll do a bike ride. So I was like, yeah, we'll do that. So PE with Mum three times a week is going very well. So that has been an unexpected, absolute joy cause one of my sons really loves cycling and actually has now found the thing that he loves so that's, it's taken us a long time. So that's been a real bonus. And I'm doing, I've started a clinical pilates course. I've got a long-term condition. I was diagnosed two years ago, so I have very severe osteoarthrosis, so I need two new hips, so I can't run, I used to be a runner I used to love running. So now I'm kind of trying to do other types of exercises. So practicing what I preach and doing strength and balance doing the right type of muscle flexibility programmes, and I have to say they do work, it does work. Yeah. So I'm just doing a lot of that, which has been great. And I've been using digital resources, which has been good.

**Eve Holt:** [00:28:26] I might need to ask you for some tips, Jane, on this, PE with Mum. I'm struggling to get mythfree to do anything at the minute. They don't want to go out. They liked cycling and running before this, but now it seems to be an excuse to stay inside, and barely move. But anyway, I'll keep working on that one, I might be in touch for some tips.

Thank you all so much for your time today and just for everything you're doing and what, yeah, really inspiring. So I hope other people listening have taken some tips and been inspired. If anybody watching or listening does want to get in contact and find out more, what's the best way for them to do that?

**Nicola Waterworth:** [00:29:10] We have an Ageing Hub Twitter feed, which is @GMAgeingHub. That's probably, the most public facing and Beth, I don't know if you have, is there a specific Active Ageing...?

**Beth Mitchell:** [00:29:22] GreaterSport, Twitter, or social media and same for Greater Manchester Moving and our comms team will guide any messages to me with regards to Active Ageing.

**Jane McDermott:** [00:29:32] Yeah we've got a range of Twitter accounts. I'm on Twitter as well, and I'm happy for people to direct message me or contact me, or even by email, I don't mind. I'm always happy for anyone to ask any questions or for help.

**Eve Holt:** [00:29:43] Fantastic. Well, thank you very much.

**Outro:** [00:29:46] If you've enjoyed this podcast, why not share it or tell a friend about it. And if you've got feedback or ideas for future episodes, please get in touch with our team at GreaterSport using the links that you'll find on our podcast page.