



Breathe Better Get-Togethers

Case Study

Executive summary

Since Summer 2023, the partnership between Manchester Active and the NHS Community Respiratory Team has seen the establishment of four, monthly Breathe Better Get-Togethers for residents living with Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Diseases; a condition largely associated with smoking and exposure to poor air quality through living and working conditions.

People on the COPD register are contacted by their GP surgery via text and informed about the group, they then receive a monthly reminder about the Get-Together. A clinician from the Community Respiratory Team is always present to answer any questions the attendees have, and in some cases to make attendees feel safer participating in the sessions.

The proactive contact has seen greater uptake from people who have never attended a course, and many have since been referred to Pulmonary Rehab.

Timing: 2023 to date

What did we do?

Due to COPD rates in Manchester being significantly higher than the national average, a clear mission emerged to provide support for those living with the condition. It presents a myriad of issues for local people and healthcare services, making it a priority for Public Health. There is a clear causative correlation between rates of COPD (and associated health outcomes) and socio-economic deprivation. The areas with the highest rates of COPD in Manchester are also some of the most deprived neighbourhoods in the city.

The Get-Togethers were set up in response to help provide social, physical and educational support.

The video shows an example class and what the sessions involve. [Click here to view.](#)



How did we do it?

We took a multi-pronged approach to the Get-Togethers with a proactive call from the GP to encourage people to sign up.

Drove awareness

We distributed flyers and shared promotional materials with a range of organisations to reach a wider audience. The physical activity referral service directly signposted people to the Get-Togethers which proved to be effective.

A relaxed approach

We reminded attendees at the start of every session that they are free to participate to whatever degree they wish, that they're free to come and go as they please, that every month is different, and that they can make requests regarding physical activity.

Multi-professional approach

Each session aka 'Get-Together' is attended by a clinician, a physical activity instructor, and a guest from the community providers. Sessions cover clinical, wellbeing, and addressing social determinates with a focus on building physical activity levels. Sessions were tailored to participants needs and requests.



What did we find?

Socialising is a big motivator

Social is a big catalyst for this group so this was the cornerstone of the Get-Togethers to allow designated time for people to connect and chat over a cup of tea.

Uptake has been strong

We have seen people attend Get-Togethers who had never been to a Pulmonary Rehab session, who are not physically active, and who have more than one long-term condition. Many of those people have gone on to make physical activity a regular part of their routine, and many have since been referred to Pulmonary Rehab.

Proactive approach is key

We have provided an option for people who may otherwise struggle to access health and wellbeing support or even know where to start in looking for it. Not enough COPD patients feel knowledgeable about or in control of their condition. Being able to access sociable and community-based support is essential, as when people are in a comfortable and relaxed environment, they're more willing to try new things.

"I feel better since coming, most people are friendly, thank you."

"Breathe Better has been very beneficial. It's one of the best things to happen in our neighbourhood."

Testimonials from Breathe Better Get-Togethers



Summary of attendee feedback: June 2023–July 2025

Over 96% of respondents report learning something new about their lung condition.

50% report their breathing is better or much better since attending.

Over 53% are moving more or much more.

76% feel more or a lot more confident.

57% are doing more activities now.

73% feel more or a lot more connected to friends, family, or community.

46% are visiting their GP less often.

15% report fewer A&E visits (over 50% had never visited A&E).

Key challenges & lessons learned

1. Lack of engagement from people from ethnic minority backgrounds

Surgeries lack capacity to send out translated or more accessible formats of communication, making it hard to engage with these communities. Therefore, more diverse approaches are needed to reach them.

2. Travel logistics

Travelling to venues can be difficult for adults with COPD, so consider what else can be done to reduce this barrier to access. Can they access car sharing schemes to help get them there? Consider locating venue on accessible main bus routes.

3. Data challenges

It can be difficult to gather quantitative data to assess the impact, so consider creating a survey to hear from patients.

4. Greater consultation and tailored approach

Important to find out what is important to the existing communities and a tailored approach to ensure the participants involved in the Get-Togethers are providing input and suggestions. Going forward, we will be asking residents about their understanding of COPD and lung health, about what they would like Get-Togethers to look like, and what would encourage them to engage. Then we can work towards ensuring Get-Togethers are culturally suitable and accessible for non English-speaking people.

5. Start small and build.

Be realistic about what can be achieved at the beginning. Building relationships and trust with stakeholders takes time. At the beginning, we started working with a few practices, tested our approach before looking to expand.

If you want to know more about the Breathe Better Get-Togethers please contact

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