

A Cross-System Approach to Increasing Everyday Physical Activity

Street Tag Report 2021-2025



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Introduction

From 2021 to 2025 Active Cumbria embarked on an ambitious and innovative relationship with an organisation called Street Tag. The driving force for the creation of this relationship was the motive to provide communities with the opportunity to positively change behaviour towards everyday physical activity. A cross-system approach was adopted, as we recognise that sustainable behaviour change requires collaboration with a variety of partners across multiple systems. By aligning priorities and the motivations of partners, the approach aimed to create the conditions for physical activity to be embedded in everyday life.

In this report, we will break down what Street Tag is, our collaborative practices, how we met the needs of communities, and the changed conditions for people to engage in everyday physical activity.

Street Tag have been a fantastic partner to work with, and we would encourage any active partnership or local authority to begin a relationship with them.



Headline Statistics



Teams
330



Players
7,026



Steps
2,800,000,000



Miles travelled
3,000,000



Tags collected
4,000,000



CO₂ emissions saved
929,000kg

These numbers provide scale, but the impact goes beyond statistics. Throughout the report, you'll find examples of how the programme shifted behaviours, strengthened communities, and supported people to move more in their daily lives.

What is Street Tag?

Street Tag is a free app that turns walking, wheeling, running, or cycling into a fun, gamified experience. Players collect virtual tags in their communities and earn points for distance travelled. Teams compete in seasons that run over several weeks, with success driven by consistency and motivation rather than speed or distance.

Our programme initially focused on school communities from 2021-2023, before expanding to workplaces and community groups for 2023-2025.

Our Collaborative Practices

From the outset, we were intentional about selecting the right partners. Because Street Tag was an ambitious and innovative programme, we began with 20 primary schools where we already had strong relationships. These schools formed our Pilot Season, allowing us to test the programme in a rural context and generate the insight needed before scaling county wide. More than 900 people took part, building a strong shared purpose around increasing physical activity and learning what was effective.

Throughout the Pilot Season, we created virtual spaces for Street Tag Team Captains to share honest experiences, challenges, and feedback. These open, trusting environments allowed us to iterate the programme in real time. By establishing continuous feedback loops, we shifted power dynamics and ensured partners directly shaped improvements. Schools not only took part but actively championed the programme to others.

As we moved toward county wide rollout, we expanded partnerships to include School Games Organisers (SGOs) and Community Development Teams across the six district councils. Their shared focus on health and wellbeing reinforced our collective aims. Demonstrating how Street Tag supported the 60 Active Minutes agenda enabled SGOs to advocate for the programme, attracting more schools and strengthening shared purpose. Working with Community Development Teams aligned Street Tag with local priorities and created opportunities for collaborative design, reducing traditional power imbalances. Locality Boards subsequently invested in bespoke leaderboards for their areas, reinforcing mutual accountability.

In the final two years, the programme expanded to workplaces and community organisations. This, combined with Local Government Reorganisation, required revisiting our approach. Without a pilot phase, the new averaged score model produced unintended effects, one being teams' removing less-active players, which undermined inclusivity. Partner feedback

highlighted the value of our earlier relationship driven, insight led approach and suggested a co-design process would have strengthened this expansion.

Our relationship with one unitary authority Public Health team has been particularly strong due to shared priorities and clear alignment with their local plans. Progress with the second authority has been slower, reflecting weaker existing relationships and fewer opportunities to build shared purpose.

If... we intentionally build partnerships with schools, community teams, and public health colleagues and create open, trusting spaces for ongoing feedback and shared decision making,

Then... our programme becomes more responsive, inclusive, and effective, with partners actively shaping improvements and advocating for the work themselves,

Because... collaboration rooted in shared purpose, insight generation, and co-design shifts power dynamics, strengthens accountability, and ensures the programme reflects the real needs and priorities of the communities it serves.

Meeting the Needs of Communities

We focused on communities in Cumbria facing the greatest barriers to physical activity, rural populations, areas of high deprivation, disabled young people, and families with limited access to mobile data or technology. These groups experience persistent inequalities, so it was essential that the programme responded directly to their needs.

Early engagement with rural communities highlighted poor mobile data coverage as a major concern. By working with residents, schools, and local partners to understand this, we were able to explain Street Tag's existing Offline Option, which allows continued use without mobile data. This removed a significant barrier for rural and lower income families and helped build trust by showing their concerns were being taken seriously.

Lived experience played a central role in shaping the programme. Conversations with schools revealed that safety was a major worry. Involving them in discussions allowed us to explain Street Tag's safeguards clearly, reassuring parents and enabling children with smartphones to take part independently and safely.

We also worked with disabled people and their representative organisations to understand what inclusive participation should look like. Because Street Tag already supports multiple

modes of travel, walking, running, cycling, and wheeling, it aligned well with local needs and removed assumptions about ability. This inclusive approach was evident by the success of a youth group for disabled young people who became one of the highest performing teams.

Throughout the programme, our approach was rooted in conversation, listening, and adapting. Rather than delivering a fixed product, we worked with local people to shape a model that felt right for them. Many barriers had already been anticipated through Street Tag's national engagement, but regular communication in Cumbria ensured we could address emerging local issues as the programme expanded.

By connecting with priority audiences, responding to lived experience, and working collaboratively with trusted organisations, we ensured that people who often miss out on physical activity opportunities could participate in ways that felt accessible, safe, and motivating.

If... we intentionally prioritise communities facing the greatest barriers to physical activity and design the programme alongside them, listening to lived experience, responding to practical challenges such as poor data coverage, safety concerns, and accessibility needs, and working through trusted local organisations,

Then... the programme becomes more inclusive, effective, and meaningful, enabling rural residents, low socio-economic families, disabled young people, and people without access to technology to participate in ways that feel safe, accessible, and motivating,

Because... removing barriers, valuing local insight, and co-designing solutions with the people most affected ensures that the programme reflects real world needs, builds trust, tackles inequalities, and supports participation from those who are most often excluded from physical activity opportunities.

Changing the Conditions for Physical Activity to take Place

From the outset, Street Tag aimed to make everyday activity easier for communities. The programme offered an accessible, flexible tool people could use at any time, allowing movement to fit naturally into daily routines. Participation data showed activity happening across all hours and days, demonstrating that people were integrating movement in ways that worked for them. This flexibility helped create positive, meaningful activity experiences and supported people to be active on their own terms.

A key insight from Street Tag's biannual Formal Reports was who benefitted most. While we expected children and young people to be the most active, the highest activity levels came

from women aged 35-55, a demographic often less active nationally, especially in low income groups. Street Tag enabled them to participate in enjoyable, achievable, community focused ways, highlighting how the programme helped create new norms around being active.

The programme also reached communities experiencing the greatest inequalities. 45% of participants lived in IMD 1-4 areas, and the most frequently scanned tags were in IMD 1-3 locations. This shows that Street Tag supported behaviour change in areas where activity levels are usually lower. By making movement fun, competitive, and social, it helped cultivate more active local cultures.

Our approach was guided by evidence and lived experience. When we learned that activity dropped significantly during school holidays, we adapted the programme by aligning seasons with school terms, ensuring engagement remained high when families were most active. App features also encouraged ownership of activity. Power Hour, where points tripled during a chosen 60 minute window, helped people design their own routines, extend routes, and gradually build long term habits.

Participants also reported wider community benefits: improved physical and mental wellbeing, more family time, a greater sense of belonging, and discovering new local spaces. While competition mattered, Street Tag showed a broader culture of wellbeing mattered more.

Although Street Tag is a digital intervention, the use of virtual tags encouraged people to engage more with their physical environments, walking routes, parks, paths, and neighbourhood spaces. As the programme concluded, migrating all active teams to the global leaderboard ensured communities could continue being active beyond our direct involvement.

If... we design physical activity programmes that are flexible, shaped by lived experience, responsive to evidence, and give communities control over when, where, and how they are active,

Then... people, especially those who are typically less active or face significant inequalities, are more likely to build positive habits, experience meaningful wellbeing benefits, and integrate movement into their daily lives in sustainable ways,

Because... autonomy, enjoyment, and community connection create stronger motivations than competition alone; adapting the programme to real world routines removes practical barriers; and embedding activity into everyday environments helps people form lasting behaviours that continue even after direct programme support ends.

Conclusion

The Street Tag programme has shown what is possible when communities, partners, and system leaders work together to create opportunities for everyday physical activity. By valuing lived experience, prioritising those who face the greatest barriers, and designing solutions together, we helped shape environments and behaviours that support long-term activity.

We hope the learnings shared in this report will support other Active Partnerships and local authorities to adopt whole-system, insight-led approaches that put people and communities at the heart of change.

Watch now!



Watch the news report featured on ITV Border of how Street Tag impacted and benefitted pupils and their families at a school in Kendal.





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Active Cumbria
Cumberland Council
Cumbria House
107-117 Botchergate
Carlisle CA1 1RD
01228 226885

feedback@activecumbria.org
www.activecumbria.org

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