



# Mae Murray Foundation Inclusive Beach Programme Evaluation Report

Claire Cleland<sup>1</sup>, Niamh O’Kane<sup>1</sup>, Claire Kerr<sup>2</sup>, Karen McConnell<sup>2</sup>, Jean Daly-Lynn<sup>3</sup>, Franz Hoeritzauer<sup>4</sup>, Sophie Jones<sup>1</sup>, Christopher Tate<sup>1</sup>, Sophie Glover<sup>1</sup>, Roisin Corr<sup>1</sup>, Ruth Hunter<sup>1</sup>

1 Centre for Public Health, School of Medicine, Dentistry and Biomedical Sciences, Queen’s University Belfast.

2 School of Nursing & Midwifery, Queen’s University Belfast.

3 School of Health Sciences, Ulster University.

4 School of Education, Ulster University.

ISBN 978-1-913643-32-4

Suggested citation: Cleland CL, O’Kane N, Kerr C, McConnell K, Daly-Lynn J, Hoeritzauer F, Jones SM, Tate C, Glover S, Corr R and Hunter RF (2024) Mae Murray Foundation Inclusive Beach Programme Evaluation Report. Available at: [www.groundswelluk.org/Projects/MaeMurrayFoundationInclusiveBeachProgramme/](http://www.groundswelluk.org/Projects/MaeMurrayFoundationInclusiveBeachProgramme/)

## Contents

1. Mae Murray Foundation
2. Inclusive beaches
  - 2.1 ADAPT my beach framework
  - 2.2 MMF inclusive beach programme
  - 2.3 Inclusive beach equipment hire
3. Processes
  - 3.1 Coverage and structure of the report
  - 3.2 Aim
  - 3.3 Objectives
  - 3.4 Qualitative photovoice
    - 3.4.1 Meet the peer researchers
    - 3.4.2 Data analysis
  - 3.5 Lead/nominated family member/carer survey
    - 3.5.1 Data analysis
  - 3.6 Other beach user survey
    - 3.6.1 Data analysis
  - 3.7 Participant summary
    - 3.7.1 Photovoice participants
    - 3.7.2 Lead/nominated family members/carers
    - 3.7.3 Other beach users
4. Impacts
  - 4.1 Reported by lead/nominated member/carer
    - 4.1.1 Physical health
    - 4.1.2 Mental health and wellbeing
    - 4.1.3 Social impacts
  - 4.2 Reported by photovoice participants
    - 4.2.1 Empowerment through inclusion
    - 4.2.2 Empowerment through accessibility
  - 4.3 Reported by other beach users
5. ADAPT findings
  - 5.1 Access
    - 5.1.1 Lead/nominated family member/carer
    - 5.1.2 Photovoice
  - 5.2 Dignity
    - 5.2.1 Lead/nominated family member/carer
    - 5.2.2 Photovoice
  - 5.3 All-ability
    - 5.3.1 Photovoice
  - 5.4 Participation
    - 5.4.1 Lead/nominated family member/carer
    - 5.4.2 Photovoice
  - 5.5 Transformation
    - 5.5.1 Photovoice
6. Inclusive beach equipment hire
7. Challenges
8. Recommendations
9. Impact of Peer Research Approach
10. Conclusion
11. Meet the research team
12. Acknowledgements
13. References

## **Mae Murray Foundation Inclusive Beach Programme Evaluation**

### **1. Mae Murray Foundation**

Mae Murray Foundation (MMF) was set up to enable people of all ages and abilities to take part in activities, experience the world, and enjoy friendship together, in an inclusive environment. Their vision is “to create an inclusive society” and their mission is “to improve quality of life through participation, of all-abilities, together”. The work of MMF includes delivering a range of innovative all-ability projects for different age groups in addition to designing and implementing permanent solutions in everyday environments to break down unnecessary barriers to participation. An example of this is the work MMF do to create (where possible) Inclusive Beaches and implement an Inclusive Beach Programme.

### **2. Inclusive Beaches**

Blue space interventions for health involve using the therapeutic benefits of natural aquatic environments such as beaches, seas, rivers, and lakes to improve mental and physical well-being (Britton et al., 2020). These interventions include activities such as coastal walks, swimming, surfing, or activities that involve spending time near water, or in water, to reduce stress, enhance mood, and improve health. Blue space interventions have great potential for improving public health. However, when it comes to disabled people (physical, sensory, and learning disabilities), significant gaps exist regarding their opportunities to participate in accessible and inclusive activities in blue spaces (e.g., the beach), further widening health and social inequalities and inequities (White et al., 2020). At a time when the health and social care sector is significantly under resourced and the demand for its services are escalating, it is essential that we focus on keeping the population physically and socially active to ensure that they can remain healthy, by improving physical and mental health outcomes. MMF aims to improve physical and mental wellbeing by supporting disabled people to be physically and socially active in blue spaces, boosting self-confidence, fostering social connects with people (within the family, to friends or to the wider community) and interactions with nature; through the creation of Inclusive Beaches and MMF’s Inclusive Beach Programme. An Inclusive Beach is a beach environment that has been carefully planned so that people of all ages and abilities can take part, have fun, and be included.

#### **2.1 ADAPT my Beach framework**

MMF spearheaded the design and implementation of Inclusive Beaches in Northern Ireland. By doing so, they are now able to share their lived experience and learning of setting up and maintaining inclusive beaches with others locally, nationally and internationally through their ADAPT (Access, Dignity, All-ability, Participation, Transformation) my Beach framework (MMF, 2023). This framework was designed for people, and organisations such as charities, social enterprises, community and voluntary groups, beach operators, local authorities or commercial organisations who are interested in developing an Inclusive Beach in their area.

##### **- Access**

Access or accessibility refers to the removal of barriers (e.g., providing a ramp where stairs exist). Regarding a beach environment, accessibility is considered in terms of

access and connectivity (e.g., the car park to the sand and the sand to the water). Beach users should be able to travel easily, safely and confidently from one point to the next and back again. Access also takes into consideration car parking, access routes from towns and public transport stops, as well as access to booking systems, and the transfer of information.

- Dignity

Dignity is a key component of MMF's Inclusive Beach model and corresponds to the fulfilment of basic human needs such as the provision of dignified toilets, Changing Places Toilets, and dignified amenities (e.g., picnic benches which are wheelchair accessible).

- All-ability

An Inclusive Beach must be open to all abilities and all ages. To facilitate this, MMF offers free Inclusive Beach equipment hire to support people to access and enjoy the beach (see 2.3 Inclusive Beach equipment hire).

- Participation

Encouraging and enabling participation is a key element of MMF's Inclusive Beach model. As gaining access to the beach is the first step in the journey to taking part, MMF organise and co-ordinate a range of events as part of their Inclusive Beach programme to help break down barriers to participation, reduce isolation and improve physical and mental well-being (see 2.2 MMF Inclusive Beach Programme).

- Transformation

The final component of the ADAPT my Beach Framework is transformation which focuses on changing the infrastructure and attitudes that enable everyone to access the beach and participate in activities together. Through the work of MMF to date, their experience tells us that various factors including negative attitudes, a shortage of adequately joined up integrated services, and poor planning further perpetuates barriers to participation. Consequently, transformation requires ongoing engagement and purposeful support; and ensuring that the health benefits of Inclusive Beaches are recognised and promoted locally, and nationally by councils and governments alike.

## **2.2 MMF Inclusive Beach Programme**

During the summer season, MMF implements an Inclusive Beach Programme across Northern Ireland at beaches which have been recognised as inclusive. The MMF Inclusive Beach Programme provides a range of activities which have taken into consideration the differing needs and abilities of individuals, particularly those with more complex requirements (e.g., people with physical, learning, sensory or medical needs, deaf/hearing loss, blind/partially sighted) and non-disabled adults and children. By doing so, MMF will ensure that no one is left out. Activities include family fun days, adapted surfing, adapted paddleboarding, beach art workshops and sensory-friendly beach experiences. Through the Inclusive Beach Programme, MMF hope to create visible, all age / all-ability events and activities that promote diversity, build understanding, and change attitudes within local communities. Inclusive events also empower beach visitors to learn new skills, push boundaries and achieve, alongside the rest of the community.

## **2.3 Inclusive Beach equipment hire**

To ensure that everyone can visit a beach, MMF, in partnership with the beach operator provides a free service whereby beach equipment can be hired by anyone with a mobility, sensory or other need. This service is available across several beaches in Northern Ireland which have been given Inclusive Beach status (i.e., Benone, Cranfield, Groomsport, Portrush East Strand and Portstewart Strand). Beach equipment includes (but is not limited to) beach wheelchairs, walkers, floating chairs, crutches, temporary walkways and shower/changing equipment.

### **3. Processes**

#### **3.1 Coverage and structure of the report**

This report outlines the results of an evaluation of MMF's Inclusive Beach Programme by interviewing and surveying a sample of those who attended MMF Inclusive Beach events, hired MMF Inclusive Beach equipment or visited one of the designated MMF Inclusive Beaches during Summer 2024. The report presents the perspectives of three groups: 1) MMF members; 2) lead/nominated family members/carers; and 3) other beach users.

#### **3.2 Aim**

The aim of this study was to evaluate the health, wellbeing and co-benefit impacts of MMF's Inclusive Beach Programme.

#### **3.3 Objectives**

- 1) To evaluate the impact of MMF's Inclusive Beach Programme (June to August 2024) in a variety of locations across Northern Ireland (e.g., Cranfield, Groomsport, and Portrush East Strand) for disabled people, their lead/nominated carer/family member and other beach users.
- 2) To conduct peer led research which is in accordance with the ethos of MMF as a member-led organisation, and it assists in contributing to capacity and skills building among those MMF members trained to conduct the research.
- 3) To use photovoice to obtain participants' opinions and perceptions of the impact of the Inclusive Beach Programme on their physical, mental and emotional health, and well-being.
- 4) To gather insights into the opinions and perceptions of lead/nominated family members/carers and other beach users on the Inclusive Beach Programme and inclusive beaches via completion of surveys.

#### **3.4 Photovoice**

Photovoice is a visual participatory research technique that combines photograph-taking and interviews, and/or writings, about the content of the photographs. Photovoice is designed to empower individuals with the ability to document, communicate and reflect on their experiences, providing valuable insights and perspectives around important issues (Budig et al, 2018). As a technique it is beneficial when working with participants who may find it difficult to express their thoughts and feelings through words alone (written and/or verbal) and allows participation of people with varied levels of ability, education, and research training. Therefore, Photovoice provides a feasible method to maximise potential participation, regardless of disability.

Participants with a disability (physical, sensory or learning) who were registered members of MMF, aged  $\geq 12$  years old (no upper age limit), able to communicate in English (verbally or using Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) or via

a proxy) and were taking part in an Inclusive Beach event during the months of June to August 2024, were recruited to participate in this part of the evaluation.

After agreeing to participate, participants provided informed consent/assent and were matched with a peer-researcher who reiterated the Photovoice instructions, asking them to take three photographs that captured the participants' experiences of the beach and the inclusive beach event. Photovoice participants were asked to discuss their photographs with a peer researcher. The one-to-one discussion of the photographs involved the use of an interview topic guide and consisted of two parts: (i) questions related to SHOWeD mnemonic (i.e., 1. What do you **See** here? 2. What is really **H**appening here? 3. How does this relate to **O**ur lives? 4. **W**hy does this condition **E**xist? 5. What can we **D**o about it?) (Gant et al., 2009, Wang and Redwood-Jones, 2001) to help participants describe their photographs, and (ii) questions aligned to MMF's inclusive beach framework (ADAPT) (i.e., Access, Dignity, All-ability, Participation and Transformation) (MMF, 2023) to establish participants' perspectives on access, equipment and use of the beach.

Interviews lasted on average 10 minutes and ranged from 4 minutes to 25 minutes. Each of the interviews were audio-recorded with the participants' informed consent. Members of the research team from Queen's University Belfast (QUB) and Ulster University (UU) were on hand to assist the peer-researchers and to make additional written field notes and observations during the interviews.

### **3.4.1 Peer researchers**

Part of the evaluation of MMF's Inclusive Beach Programme took a qualitative, participatory, peer-led research approach, aligning with the ethos of MMF as a member-led organisation. Current MMF members were recruited and trained as peer researchers who were: aged  $\geq 12$  years old (no upper age limit); had experienced the Inclusive Beach Programme; had confidence in communication; and were committed (Daly Lynn et al., 2022; Daly-Lynn et al., 2021).

The peer-led research approach aims to promote inclusivity and provide an enhanced sense of trust and rapport between the peer-researchers and participants, leading to meaningful interactions and engagement (Burke et al., 2019). In addition, a peer-research approach enabled relevant insights from participants to be collected, providing the research team with a deeper understanding of the social and contextual nuances. Furthermore, training current MMF members to become peer-researchers ensured their active engagement throughout the research, thus helping them to take ownership of the process which includes design, implementation, analysis, communication, impact, and engagement. Participatory research with children and young disabled people enables the 'insider voice' in community-based research approaches (Erwin et al., 2024; Larkins and Satchwell 2023).

Implementing a peer-led research approach had the capacity to foster a sense of empowerment for young people who are living with a disability (Burke et al., 2019). This project helped to amplify their voice and offer them an opportunity to increase their knowledge and confidence, allowing them to experience real-world application of research methods, thus providing them with an opportunity for building communication skills, confidence, and upskilling.

Seven peer-researchers were recruited and trained by Dr Jean Daly-Lynn (Lecturer in Psychology, Ulster University, with experience in training peer-researchers; Daly Lynn et al., 2022, Daly-Lynn et al., 2021) alongside Michelle Davidson and Chloe Orr (Graduate Occupational Therapists, Ulster University) to enable them to carry out data collection with recruited participants. Jean was considered a peer researcher as a MMF member and user of the MMF beach programme. She completed three interviews with a peer researcher shadowing to build experience.



Peer Researchers from left to right: Katie, Saul and Bethany.

The peer-researcher training was based on a training package developed for previous projects with different populations (Daly Lynn et al., 2022; Daly-Lynn et al., 2021). To meet the needs of the peer-researchers, the first component of training was asynchronous with pre-recorded content and activities, lasting one hour. This training covered the following topics: aims of the study, qualitative research and methods to be used, communication skills and ethics. To support access needs of the peer-researchers, the second component of training took place online, facilitated by Jean Daly-Lynn and lasted approximately one hour. The focus of this section was to further develop capacity and skills relating to the topic guides, logistics, communication and clarify understanding. The final stage of training was on the beach running a pilot of the data collection process. Where a peer researcher was unable to attend the pilot, they shadowed another peer researcher until they felt comfortable to facilitate an interview independently.

Peer-researchers were trained to conduct Photovoice with participants. Photovoice is a visual participatory research technique that combines photograph-taking and interviews, and/or writings, about the content of the photographs. Photovoice is beneficial when working with participants who may find it difficult to express their thoughts and feelings through words alone (written and/or verbal) and allows participation of people with varied levels of ability, education, and research training. Therefore, Photovoice provides a feasible method to maximise potential participation, regardless of disability.

Peer researchers received a brief pre-activity and a debrief post-activity, 30 minutes were allocated as a minimum for each of these activities. It was helpful to work through the interviews to ensure psychological safety before the peer researcher left and to unpick some of the conversations. In addition, following the four-beach events peer-

researchers were invited to a data analysis workshop to discuss the findings with the research team.



Peer Researchers from left to right: Bethany and Saul.

### **3.4.2 Data analysis**

Data analysis was performed by members of the research team in collaboration with peer researchers. Prior to analysis, interview data were transcribed verbatim and underwent relevant qualitative analysis. Data obtained from questions related to the SHOWeD mnemonic and underwent reflexive thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2019), whilst questions that aligned to the ADAPT framework were analysed using a deductive thematic approach. The first stage of each thematic analysis involved two members of the research team familiarising themselves with the data, followed by coding a sample of the data independently (i.e., three transcripts). The codes and emerging themes were then discussed. Following the establishment of the coding protocol the two researchers further developed themes and a coding framework via discussions. As a method of triangulation, the themes were discussed with the peer-researchers at a data analysis workshop in October 2024. Peer researchers named one of the themes and sub-themes, confirming the additional themes and sub-themes, and validated the data analysis approach.

### **3.5 Lead/nominated family member/carer survey**

When a lead/nominated family member/carer (aged  $\geq 18$  years) attended an Inclusive Beach event during the months of June to August 2024, they were invited to participate in a survey by a member of the research team using a digital tablet device. If the lead/nominated family member/carer wanted more time to think about their participation or they wanted to complete the survey later, they were provided with a link/QR code through which they could access the survey and complete it in their own time. Through this survey we aimed to evaluate: perceptions of Inclusive Beaches including MMF's Inclusive Beach Programme; the benefits of MMF's Inclusive Beach Programme for their family member(/s), themselves, their wider family circle and the community; any difficulties and unanticipated challenges (e.g., travel time to events, sand in car, time away from other children/family members/friends); the barriers and



facilitators to inclusive beaches and participating in MMF's Inclusive Beach Programme; recommendations for future Inclusive Beaches and MMF's Inclusive Beach Programme; and observed positive/negative impacts for their family member (e.g., social, physical, mental and emotional health, and wellbeing).

### **3.5.1 Data analysis**

Quantitative survey data was captured using Qualtrics (hosted by Queen's University Belfast) and analysed using SPSS (version 29). Descriptive statistics have been presented for the survey results. Qualitative survey responses underwent content analysis.

### **3.6 Other beach user survey**

During the Inclusive Beach events which took place during the months of June to August 2024, other beach users (aged  $\geq 18$  years, who were not members of MMF) were approached and recruited onsite to complete a survey. If individuals wanted more time to think about their participation or wanted to complete the survey later, they were provided with a link/QR code through which they could access the survey and complete it in their own time. Through this survey we aimed to evaluate: the participants' awareness of inclusive beaches, the work of MMF, and MMF's Inclusive Beach Programme; their perceptions of Inclusive Beaches and the potential benefits of MMF's Inclusive Beach Programme for MMF members, MMF members families, other beach users, and the wider community; the barriers and facilitators to Inclusive Beaches and MMF's Inclusive Beach Programme; the difficulties and unanticipated challenges of MMF's Inclusive Beach Programme; observed impacts of Inclusive Beaches and MMF's Inclusive Beach Programme; and recommendations for future Inclusive Beaches and MMF's Inclusive Beach Programme.

#### **3.6.1 Data analysis**

Quantitative survey data was captured using Qualtrics (hosted by Queen's University Belfast) and analysed using descriptive statistics. Qualitative survey data underwent content analysis.

### **3.7 Participant summary**

#### **3.7.1 Attendance at the MMF Inclusive Beach Programme summer 2024**

During the months of June to August 2024, a total of 3755 individuals took part in MMF Inclusive Beach events and/or hired MMF Inclusive Beach equipment across five Inclusive Beaches (i.e., Groomsport, Cranfield, Portrush East Strand, Benone and Portstewart Strand) in Northern Ireland. Of those individuals who participated,  $n = 1036$  (28%) were disabled people,  $n = 2159$  (57%) were females and  $n = 1097$  (29%) were aged of  $\geq 50$  years (Table 1).

**Table 1. Breakdown of attendance and equipment hired at Inclusive Beaches during June to August 2024**

Location		Total number attended	People with disabilities	Female	Over 50
Groomsport	Events	618	221	428	204
	Equipment hire	38	13	21	12
	<b>Total</b>	<b>656</b>	<b>234</b>	<b>449</b>	<b>216</b>
Cranfield	Events	894	239	451	363
	Equipment hire	45	15	28	14
	<b>Total</b>	<b>939</b>	<b>254</b>	<b>479</b>	<b>377</b>
Portrush East Strand	Events	261	65	114	29
	Equipment hire	44	15	32	13
	<b>Total</b>	<b>305</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>146</b>	<b>42</b>
Benone	Events	809	222	424	165
	Equipment hire	170	44	167	39
	<b>Total</b>	<b>979</b>	<b>266</b>	<b>591</b>	<b>204</b>
Portstewart Strand	Events	618	132	336	169
	Equipment hire	258	70	158	89
	<b>Total</b>	<b>876</b>	<b>202</b>	<b>494</b>	<b>258</b>
TOTAL 2024	Events	3200	879	1753	930
	Equipment hire	555	157	406	167
	<b>Total</b>	<b>3755</b>	<b>1036</b>	<b>2159</b>	<b>1097</b>

### 3.7.2 Photovoice participants

Fifteen MMF members with a disability (physical, sensory or learning) and aged  $\geq 12$  years were recruited to participate. Six participants took part at Portrush East Strand, four at Groomsport and five at Cranfield.

### 3.7.3 Lead/nominated family members/carers

In total,  $n = 63$  lead/nominated family members/carers completed the survey. Of those who attended the Inclusive Beach event the majority visited Portrush East Strand ( $n = 22, 35\%$ ), heard about the Inclusive Beach event from the MMF newsletter ( $n = 43, 68\%$ ), felt that the booking process was very easy ( $n = 43, 68\%$ ), travelled more than 40 miles to the event ( $n = 23, 37\%$ ), and travelled by a private vehicle ( $n = 57, 91\%$ ) (Table 2).

**Table 2. Summary of lead/nominated family members/carers (n = 63)**

		n (%)
Which Inclusive Beach did you attend?	Benone	6 (10)
	Cranfield	15 (24)
	Groomsport	14 (22)
	Portrush East Strand	22 (35)
	Portstewart Strand	5 (8)
	Missing	1 (2)
How did you hear about the Inclusive Beach event?	Family member	1 (2)
	Friend	5 (8)
	Mae Murray Foundation newsletter	43 (68)
	Other**	3 (5)
	Social media	11 (18)
How was the booking process?	Very easy	43 (68)
	Easy	8 (13)
	Neither easy nor difficult	3 (5)
	Very difficult	1 (2)
	Missing	8 (13)
How far have you travelled to be at the beach today?	Less than 10 miles	20 (32)
	10-20 miles	14 (22)
	30-40 miles	6 (10)
	More than 40 miles	23 (37)
How did you travel here today?	Private vehicle	57 (91)
	Taxi	1 (2)
	Other	5 (8)

\*carers newsletter, poster and regional wheelchair training team. \*\*minibus (n = 1), walked (n = 1), PA took me and daughter wheelchair accessible vehicle (n = 1).

### 3.7.4 Other beach users

Fifty-five other beach users (i.e. not members of MMF) participated in the evaluation. Of those beach users, 24% (n = 13) were visiting Cranfield beach, 58% (n = 32) were visiting Portrush East Strand and 18% (n = 10) were visiting Groomsport beach. Most participants were visitors to the beach who reside in Northern Ireland (n = 26, 47%), with the remaining reported as being local residents (n = 17, 31%), tourists who are not residents of Northern Ireland (n = 3, 5%), and other (n = 8, 15%). Frequency of beach visits was relatively consistent across the sample (Table 3).

**Table 3. Summary of other beach users**

		Cranfield (n = 13)	Groomsport (n = 10)	Portrush East Strand (n = 32)	Total (n = 55)
Type of beach user	Local resident (living within XX miles of this beach)	0	7 (70)	10 (31)	17 (31)
	Visitor to the beach resident in Northern Ireland (travelled more than XX to visit this beach)	8 (62)	3 (30)	15 (47)	26 (47)
	Tourist (not resident in Northern Ireland)	1 (8)	0 (0)	2 (6)	3 (5)
	Other	4 (31)	0 (0)	4 (13)	8 (15)
	Missing	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (3)	1 (2)
Frequency of beach visits	Daily	2 (15)	2 (20)	5 (16)	9 (16)
	Weekly	2 (15)	4 (40)	5 (16)	11 (20)
	Monthly	1 (7)	4 (40)	6 (19)	11 (20)
	Annually	3 (23)	0 (0)	11 (34)	14 (25)
	First time	5 (38)	0 (0)	5 (16)	10 (18)

Of those participants who completed the 'other beach users survey', 71% (n = 39) were not aware of MMF. However, 91% (n = 50) of participants reported that they felt

very positively about MMF running events on the beach that they were visiting as part of their Inclusive Beach Programme (Table 4).

**Table 4. Perceptions of Mae Murray Foundation**

<b>“Prior to today were you aware of Mae Murray Foundation?”</b>				
	<b>Cranfield (n = 13)</b>	<b>Groomsport (n = 10)</b>	<b>Portrush East Strand (n = 32)</b>	<b>Total (n = 55)</b>
	<b>n (%)</b>			
<b>Yes</b>	3 (23)	8 (80)	5 (16)	16 (29)
<b>No</b>	10 (77)	2 (20)	27 (84)	39 (71)
<b>“How do you feel about Mae Murray Foundation running events on this beach as part of their Inclusive Beach Programme?”</b>				
<b>Very positively</b>	13 (100)	10 (100)	5 (16)	50 (91)
<b>Positively</b>	0 (0)	0 (0)	27 (84)	4 (7)
<b>Neither positively nor negatively</b>	0 (0)	0 (0)	5 (16)	1 (2)
<b>Negatively</b>	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
<b>Very negatively</b>	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)

Of those participants sampled, 71% (n = 39) were not aware of the term “inclusive beach”. However, 89% (n = 49) reported that they felt it is “very important” to have ‘inclusive beaches’ where all ages and abilities can take part (Table 5).

**Table 5. Perceptions of inclusive beaches**

<b>“Prior to today were you aware of the term “inclusive beach”?”</b>				
	<b>Cranfield (n = 13)</b>	<b>Groomsport (n = 10)</b>	<b>Portrush East Strand (n = 32)</b>	<b>Total (n = 55)</b>
	<b>n (%)</b>			
<b>Yes</b>	4 (31)	7 (70)	5 (16)	16 (29)
<b>No</b>	9 (69)	3 (30)	27 (84)	39 (71)
<b>“How important is it to have ‘inclusive beaches’ where all ages and abilities can take part?”</b>				
<b>Very important</b>	12 (92)	10 (100)	5 (16)	49 (89)
<b>Important</b>	1 (8)	0 (0)	27 (84)	5 (9)
<b>Moderately important</b>	0 (0)	0 (0)	5 (16)	1 (2)
<b>Slightly important</b>	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
<b>Not important</b>	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)

## 4. Impacts

### 4.1 Reported by lead/nominated family member/carers

#### 4.1.1 Physical health

When participants who completed the lead/nominated family member/carers survey were asked to report the physical health impacts that they perceived MMF’s Inclusive Beach Programme had on their family member/friend and their group/party, eleven themes emerged. These themes centred around:

#### **1) Fresh air.**

*“Able to get to outdoor accessible event (usually in house a lot)”*

*“It was just nice to be at the beach like all other able-bodied people do”*

*“Excellent opportunity for child to access activity in sea and to dig in sand with sibling”*

**2) Improve sleep following a day at the beach whilst also increasing levels of tiredness.**

*“Sleeps really well after sea air and therefore in better form after a good night’s sleep”*

*“My daughter tires when walking any distance”*

*“Tired after exercise”*

**3) Exercise; and 4) energised;**

*“Exercise for someone who finds access to exercise difficult”*

*“Positive and good exercise”*

*“Got my son out of the wheelchair for exercise”*

*“He’d never be able to experience surfing otherwise without the equipment”*

*“A good feeling for the rest of the day”.*

**5) “Less screen time for children” and 6) Improvements in physical health, fitness and strength.**

*“The only impact was tired legs from walking on the sand which my physio was happy I tried”*

**7) Pain levels** were also discussed both positively (*“less pain”*) and negatively (*“they have severe hyper mobility so will be sore later”*). **8) “Sensory benefits”** also being highlighted as a positive physical health benefit.

**9) Perceived positive health benefits** to transpire through the opportunity to use MMF adapted Inclusive Beach equipment.

*“He’d never be able to experience surfing otherwise without the equipment”*

*“It makes it so much easier to have fun with our daughter using the beach wheelchair it is a godsend, and my daughter will actually spend time on the beach instead of refusing to go”*

*“... was still able to push herself in her wheelchair due to the matting”*

**10)** Finally, one lead/nominated family member/carer shared their concerns for sand getting into their family member’s medical device which could potentially lead to a **life-threatening situation.**

#### **4.1.2 Mental health and wellbeing**

When asked about their perceptions of the impacts of MMF's Inclusive Beach Programme relating to mental health and wellbeing of their family member/friend and group/party, lead/nominated family members/carers provided feedback which formed nine themes.

**1) Feelings of joy and happiness.**

*"Happier, content"*

*"Happier and more settled"*

*"My sons overall experience was positive. He doesn't get much chance to experience adrenaline and have fun, so it was great to be able to see him have fun"*

**2) Feeling relaxed, calm and settled.**

*"He feels relaxed when he's here as he knows anyone who is connected to mae murray will get him and adapt things as necessary in order for him to have a great time"*

*"More relaxed, calm, overall improved mood"*

*"Happy relaxed"*

**3) Improvements in mood and behaviour** through participation in MMF's Inclusive Beach events and a **4) way to challenge sensory preferences.**

*"Improved mood, sensory heaven"*

*"Great feeling/mood"*

*"It really lifted our mood"*

*"... has been so excited about coming to this session today, it definitely improves his mood"*

*"Challenges his sensory preferences (clothing) / meets sensory needs (water)"*

**5) Increase confidence, pride and a sense of achievement;** whilst giving members the opportunity to be **6) seen as a valued person.**

*"Gained confidence and pride when child was able to surf"*

*"Improved confidence"*

*"A sense of achievement"*

*"Our son is seen as a valued person"*

*“They see the person inside”*

**7) Opportunity to engage and interact with others** and to have **8) quality time with their family.**

*“He interacts with others in the MMF team and his response and engagement is appreciated and reciprocated”*

*“I didn’t feel we were on the outside”*

*“Whole family able to exercise and enjoy the beach together doing the same activities in an accessible way”*

*“Huge benefits. We are stuck at home too much so it’s great to have a reason to get out as a family and it lifts everyone’s mood”*

*“It makes me so happy to be on the beach near the sea it lifts my spirit, and I can enjoy the fun with my daughter and spend quality time with her being more relaxed and calm”*

**9) Feeling included and involved** were also highlighted in relation to the inclusive beach programme and **10) providing a positive outlook** for the opportunity to take part in activities *“that others might take for granted”*.

*“Being a part of a group with similar needs and the charity awareness is fantastic”*

*“It was great to be able to include a beach activity with my disabled child and feel part of a “normal” family activity”*

*“Feeling included”*

#### **4.1.3 Social impacts**

When asked about the social impacts on their family member/friend and group/party five overarching themes were evident: with 1) spending time with friends and 2) quality family time being the focus of discussion.

##### **1) Spending time with friends**

*“Able to spend time with friends and meet new people in a friendly non-judgemental environment”*

*“Met up with my friend and her daughter. An opportunity for my disabled daughter to be amongst friends”*

*“My son met friends and different people which is what he needs”*

*“Socialising with friends and having fun in a healthy environment”*

*“Yes, social connection very important with friends from mmf”*

##### **2) Quality family time**

*“It was nice to do what other families do”*

*“Daughter got to do the same activities as her brothers and sister”*

*“Spend time as a family outdoors trying new things”*

*“Lovely to see families engaging in beach activities as a whole family unit. Particularly to witness a family’s first time all at the beach together”*

**3) Opportunity to meet new people and people with similar abilities; and 4) opportunity for parents to socialise and gain support from other parents who are in similar circumstances.**

*“We were happy to meet new people, enjoyed spending time outdoors”*

*“Great time meeting new people”*

*“Meeting other families”*

*“Spending time socialising. Parents able to chat to others in similar circumstances”*

*“Meeting others with similar disabilities”*

*“We were able to spend time as a family and meet other families who face similar challenges. Everyone was able to enjoy the beach and it was wonderful”*

*“Got chatting to another mum with son with special needs”*

5) social impact for their family member/friend and group/party of **feeling included and valued.**

*“Disabled son felt part of the community playing on the beach”*

*“Because we could join in we felt part of something rather than just looking. He felt valued”*

*“Got opportunity to receive the high level of support he needs to have these experiences”*

## **4.2 Reported by Photovoice participants**

Two main themes were identified from the interviews: ‘empowered through inclusion’ and ‘empowered through access’.

### **4.2.1 Empowered through inclusion**

This theme captured the sensations, emotions and sense of inclusion that participants felt at the various beach events. Experiences were dominated by positivity, joy and happiness at being on the beach and participating in the way that each person wanted to. For example, some participants enjoyed the thrill of surfing and the impact of the



waves on their body, whereas others were happy to be on the beach and enjoy a summer day out with their friends and family:

*“Very, very happy, I am enjoying this, doing surfing, yeah” - participant 1*

*“I don’t like to go in it, it’s because I just like looking at it” - participant 7*

Participants felt part of the community of beach users. They described being able to get onto the beach, being ‘part of things’ and being supported by MMF. This sense of inclusion and connectedness was often contextualised by experiences of not typically being able to participate in the beach environment.

*“I’ve just done what everybody else is doing and I was in the middle of it rather than being the person that’s sat at the side and watched” - participant 4*

#### **4.2.2 Empowered through Access**

This theme related to the physical environment and accessibility, dignity in changing and toileting facilities, and the availability and use of adapted and assistive equipment to enable participation on the beach. Participants highlighted the challenges they often encountered in accessing beaches:

*“I haven’t been in the water in about 20 years because I can’t get into the water in my hometown because they have steps and that’s excluding me” - participant 9*

The benefits of beach wheelchairs and matting across the sand were described:

*“It’s the first time I’ve got close to the beach in a chair that’s actually suitable for the sand so it’s fun” - participant 14*

However, the costs of private purchase of accessible equipment were identified as a barrier, in addition to being able to source such equipment in the first place.

*“It’s just, accessible things are pricey and it’s hard to find” - participant 14*

Finally, participants highlighted the importance of having safe, clean, private toileting and changing spaces to enable their participation at the beach. Availability of such facilities enabled family participation and provided a sense of freedom, knowing that they could remain at the beach all day and participate in and out of the water:

*“I feel that you need something like that [changing places toilet] to be able to get in the water and stuff with your family to have privacy and freedom and stuff” - participant 9*

#### **4.3 Reported by other beach users**

When other beach users were asked to report why they like to spend time at the beach the majority reported that it was **good for their mental health** (n = 52), **physical health** (n = 45), **spending time with friends or family** (n = 45), **connecting with nature** (n = 40) and **walking their pet** (n = 23) (Table 6).

**Table 6. Health benefits of spending time at the beach (tick all that apply)**

	Cranfield	Groomspoint	Portrush East Strand	Total
	n			
Good for my mental health (e.g., stress reducing)	12	10	30	52
Good for my physical health (e.g., exercising)	7	9	29	45
Spend time with friends or family	11	9	25	45
Connect with nature	7	10	23	40
Walk my pet	5	6	12	23
Other	1	0	3	4

In addition, when participants were asked if they feel any personal benefits from being at an Inclusive Beach 85% (n = 47) reported “yes” regarding feeling benefits. Benefits included:

*“All family members included”*

*“Kids can experience non-judgemental fun”*

*“Can meet friends whose children have additional needs”*

*“Able to enjoy the beach with a friend who is a wheelchair user”*

*“Makes me aware of so much good in the world”*

*“I benefit as I can then use the beach with any friends / family who have access needs”*

When thinking about the potential benefits for the wider community and a local inclusive beach being present, 98% (n = 54) of participants reported “yes” to **feeling that the community benefits**. Participants reported that an Inclusive Beach benefits the community by:

*“Having a “good sense of community”*

*“Everyone can enjoy and use”*

*“Brings people to the area”*

*“Allows access for all to spaces and opportunities”*

*“Equality for all residents”*

Regarding the potential benefits for local businesses of the beach being an Inclusive Beach, 98% (n = 54) of participants reported “yes” to feeling that it is a **benefit to local businesses**. Participants highlighted that a local Inclusive Beach could:

*“Increase business”*

*“Brings trade”*

*“Brings more people in so local trade benefits as well”*

*”Brings more people to the area. Feeds into the economy”*

When participants were asked if they felt any other groups would be impacted from the local beach being an Inclusive Beach, the majority reported positive impacts for various groups which included: other charitable organisations, extended families, the Royal National Lifeboat Institution, the police, the local elderly community, and local authorities.

## **5. ADAPT findings**

### **5.1 Access**

#### **5.1.1 Lead/nominated family member/carer**

When participants were asked about event accessibility the majority of those who attended a MMF Inclusive Beach event reported that available parking met their needs, and they found it very easy to move around the different facilities on the beach (table 7).

**Table 7. Inclusive Beach event accessibility**

		<b>Lead/nominated family member carer (n = 63)</b>
<b>Did the available parking meet your needs?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	60 (95)
	<b>No</b>	3 (5)
<b>How have you/your group found it to move around the different facilities on this beach?</b>	<b>Very easy</b>	35 (56)
	<b>Easy</b>	18 (29)
	<b>Neither difficult nor easy</b>	5 (8)
	<b>Difficult</b>	4 (6)
	<b>Very difficult</b>	1 (2)

#### **5.1.2 Photovoice**

When the Photovoice participants were asked to discuss their experience of access and accessibility in relation to the Inclusive Beach events, positive discussions centred around the ability to hire equipment (e.g., beach wheelchairs) from MMF, the availability of car parking at the Inclusive Beach locations and the use of beach matting. Each of the topics discussed (equipment, car parking and matting) were thought to make it possible for disabled people to access the beach and to be present on the beach when an Inclusive Beach event was taking place.

*”The accessibility here’s really good because even today, from the car you can get right down here, so like parking’s good” – participant 4*

*“Today Mae Murray even have the mats out that you can go down onto the beach, in your day chair you could be down there sitting which is brilliant. Right on the beach” – participant 4*

*“Normally I can’t get from the side down the actual sand to get in the sea so knowing I can hire that from Mae Murray and get the loan of it is really important to get me to the actual sea and in the sea” – participant 4*

Participants also highlighted the mental and emotional benefits of having access to the beach.

*“It makes me feel not that good that I can’t go on the sand...I think the beach wheelchairs are very cool” – participant 3*

*“I love every single bit of the equipment because again it gives me freedom” – participant 9*

*“It’s the first time I’ve got close to the beach in a chair that’s actually suitable for the sand so it’s fun. Because it’s something I haven’t got to do in a very long time and the fact that I can now is amazing” – participant 14*

Mixed responses were also provided by participants and highlighted that although the equipment is “very good” it can be “quite tight” for some participants (participant 15); and the matting can be quite bumpy in parts causing wheelchairs to “always get caught” (participant 12). In this regard, participants suggested that paths and footpaths could be widened (participant 12) to further increase accessibility for those who use a wheelchair; and participant 8 noted that “what could be accessible for me may be restricting for someone else” highlighting the need for a greater understanding into “what wheelchair accessible means for every individual”.

Finally, one participant raised the general environment in relation to accessibility and noted that the presence of seaweed and stones on the beach could result in potential sensory and safety issues for beach users, operating as a barrier to access (participant 5).

*“Stones sorry, em I think they’re hard to walk on because you will slip and fall on them” – participant 5*

## 5.2 Dignity

### 5.2.1 Lead/nominated family member/carerer

The majority of lead/nominated family members/carers reported being very satisfied (n = 32, 51%) or satisfied (n = 13, 21%) with the changing facilities, and very satisfied (n = 30, 48%) or satisfied (n = 25, 40%) with the beach amenities (Table 8).

**Table 8. Inclusive Beach event dignity**

		Lead/nominated family member carer (n = 63)
<b>How satisfied were you/your group with the changing places facilities?</b>	<b>Very satisfied</b>	32 (51)
	<b>Satisfied</b>	13 (21)
	<b>Dissatisfied</b>	1 (2)
	<b>Did not use/not applicable</b>	17 (27)
<b>How satisfied were you/your group with beach amenities?</b>	<b>Very satisfied</b>	30 (48)
	<b>Satisfied</b>	25 (40)
	<b>Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied</b>	3 (5)
	<b>Dissatisfied</b>	1 (2)
	<b>Did not use/not applicable</b>	4 (6)

In addition, when lead/nominated family members/carers were asked to provide further comments relating to dignity (facilities and amenities for all) their comments were overall very positive.

*“Changing places toilets are game changer. Beach wheelchair has helped so much with minimising sensory issues. - it has cut them out completely”*

*“Our son is 27 and needs complete care. The changing places and shower made our beach experience easier by far. We often struggle”*

With suggestions being provided to enhance already existing toilet/changing facilities. For example, a seat in the toilet/changing facility, a better level of cleanliness, height adjustable bench and more stable steps.

### **5.2.2 Photovoice**

When discussing the topic of dignity, feedback largely related to the availability of accessible toilets with the majority of those providing a response considering toilet facilities to be of a good quality.

*“The toilets, sure you don’t have to worry about getting changed or anything coz you know that everything’s here, so it’s amazing, really good” – participant 4*

However, participants did also highlight the need for more toilet and changing facilities and for someone to always be present who has a key to the toilets.

*“More rooms for changing in...especially getting suits off and suits on, and more room” - participant 2*

*“I think that there should be someone all the time with the keys to the toilets” – participant 12*

## **5.3 All-ability**

### **5.3.1 Participants**

Regarding all-ability, participants provided positive feedback relating to MMF’s Inclusive Beach Programme being accessible to all individuals regardless of ability and age.

*“I wouldn’t change anything about today. It was all really, that’s what I say, before you even get here, you feel like they, and you get here, and you feel they already know you. They’re waiting for you, it’s the organisation of it, you don’t worry about coming to the beach when you know that Mae Murray’s here” – participant 4*

*“I don’t feel like I’ve been the person sitting waiting for my family. I was at the beach with them and did the sea with them, so see that sitting at the side, I used to dread it, and now, like today me and [daughter] were buzzing about coming to the beach and that’s only coz of Mae Murray, and because I don’t worry about getting in a wetsuit and going to the toilet, getting access to the beach, like and [my daughter’s] even part of it. Mae Murray, I can’t say enough good stuff about them. It makes me smile” – participant 4*

*“It’s magical because for me I feel like a normal person” – participant 9*

*“I used to spend a lot of time on the beach so it’s nice to be able to go back” – participant 14*

## **5.4 Participation**

### **5.4.1 Lead/nominated family member/carer**

Of the lead/nominated family members/carers who completed the survey, 98% (n = 62) reported that themselves/their group were able to take part in the beach activities, had fun at the beach and felt included as part of the community at the beach event. 96% (n = 60) of participants also reported that they were very satisfied or satisfied with their visit to the beach, with 95% (n = 60) stating that they plan to attend future events and would recommend future events to others (Table 9).

**Table 9. Lead/nominated family member/carer participation**

		n (%)
Were you/your group able to take part in the beach activities?	Yes	62 (98)
	Missing	1 (2)
Did you/your group have fun at the beach today?	Yes	62 (98)
	Missing	1 (2)
Did you/your group feel included as part of the community as the beach event?	Yes	62 (98)
	Missing	1 (2)
Rate overall satisfaction with your visit to the beach today?	Very satisfied	52 (83)
	Satisfied	8 (13)
	Missing	3 (5)
Based on your experience today, do you plan to attend an inclusive beach event in the future?	Yes	60 (95)
	Missing	3 (5)
Would you recommend future beach events to others?	Yes	60 (95)
	Missing	3 (5)

#### 5.4.2 Photovoice

Eleven of the 15 participants discussed the topic of participation. Positive discussions centred around the emotions that participants felt when they were able to visit the beach and when they were able to participate in the activities that were taking place as part of MMF's Inclusive Beach Programme. Emotions that participants reported were feelings of happiness, feeling included, feeling like they were part of a community, and having fun and a sense of enjoyment for the day.

*"It's just the experience of going out and having fun and being included and being in a happy place that Mae Murray is the happiest place on earth for me because of all the activities they have on, and you make new friends and your included and it's more I would call it class them as being like family as I am a member" – participant 9*

*"It's really nice and it, um, it's nice to actually see them in real life on my own rather than having to rely on other people describing the things to me or having to pretend I'm there" – participant 14*

#### 5.5 Transformation

##### 5.5.1 Photovoice participants

One participant discussed transformation within their interview and provided a suggestion relating to how changes could be made to transform or improve existing infrastructure and services.

*"I also think that it would be really good if there was the option for more councils to have things available rather than having to go to specific foundations or whatever who only have specific days" - participant 14.*

#### 6. Inclusive Beach equipment hire

During the summer season of 2024 MMF reported that n = 555 members hired Inclusive Beach equipment across five Inclusive Beaches in Northern Ireland (Table 10).

**Table 10. Breakdown of equipment hired at Inclusive Beaches during June to August 2024**

Location	Total number	People with disabilities	Female	Over 50
Groomsport	38	13	21	12
Cranfield	45	15	28	14
Portrush East Strand	44	15	32	13
Benone	170	44	167	39
Portstewart Strand	258	70	158	89
<b>TOTAL 2024</b>	<b>555</b>	<b>157</b>	<b>406</b>	<b>167</b>

Each participant who completed the lead/nominated family member/carer survey was asked to identify which pieces of equipment were used/hired by them and/or their group at the Inclusive Beach event, 65% (n = 41) of participants reported that they used one or more pieces of equipment (Table 11). The most popular pieces of equipment used/hired were the temporary beach matting, the beach wheelchair and the sit-down surfboard. Of those participants who reported to have used beach equipment the majority (98%, n = 40) reported that the equipment met their needs and/or the needs of their group. The one participant who reported “no” to the equipment meeting their needs stated that *“it was still so difficult to steer the wheelchair in the sand even though it supposed to be for that purpose, sand wheelchair was getting stuck in the sand making it very difficult for us to move from A to B”*.

In addition, when asked about their level of satisfaction relating to the inclusive beach equipment provided, of the n = 41 participants: n = 36 reported “very satisfied” (88%); n = 3 reported “satisfied” (7%); n = 1 (2%) reported “neither satisfied nor dissatisfied”; and n = 1 answer was missing.

**Table 11. Type of Inclusive Beach equipment used/hired (tick all that apply).**

Equipment	n
None	22
Sit down surfboard	18
Shower/commode chair	3
Beach wheelchair	20
Shower trolley/changer	14
Matting	21
Changing/showering facilities	2
Floating wheelchair	7
Sit down paddleboard	2
Hoist	2
Beach walker	3
Surfboard	3

Furthermore, of those participants who stated they had used/hired MMF Inclusive Beach equipment the majority visited Portrush East Strand (n = 18, 44%). With the remaining participants visiting Cranfield (n = 9, 22%), Benone (n = 5, 12%), Groomsport (n = 5, 12%) and Portstewart Strand (n = 3, 7%) (Table 12). All participants

reported that they/their group were able to take part in the beach activities, had fun at the beach and felt included as part of the community at the beach event. The majority of participants (90%, n = 37) also reported that they were very satisfied with their visit to the beach, and 98% (n = 40) stated that they plan to attend future events and would recommend future events to others (Table 12).

**Table 12. Participation for those lead/nominated family members/carers who stated that they used/hired Inclusive Beach equipment**

		Benone (n = 5)	Cranfield (n = 9)	Groomsport (n = 5)	Portrush East Strand (n = 18)	Portstewart Strand (n = 3)	Location missing (n = 1)	Total (n = 41)
<b>Were you/your group able to take part in the beach activities?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	5 (100)	9 (100)	5 (100)	18 (100)	3 (100)	1 (100)	41 (100)
<b>Did you/your group have fun at the beach today?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	5 (100)	9 (100)	5 (100)	18 (100)	3 (100)	1 (100)	41 (100)
<b>Did you/your group feel included as part of the community as the beach event?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	5 (100)	9 (100)	5 (100)	18 (100)	3 (100)	1 (100)	41 (100)
<b>Rate overall satisfaction with your visit to the beach today?</b>	<b>Very satisfied</b>	4 (80)	8 (89)	4 (80)	18 (100)	3 (100)	0 (0)	37 (90)
	<b>Satisfied</b>	0 (0)	1 (11)	1 (20)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (100)	3 (7)
	<b>Missing</b>	1 (20)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (2)
<b>Do you plan to attend an inclusive beach event in the future?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	4 (80)	9 (100)	5 (100)	18 (100)	3 (100)	1 (100)	40 (98)
	<b>Missing</b>	1 (20)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (2)
<b>Would you recommend future beach events to others?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	4 (80)	9 (100)	5 (100)	18 (100)	3 (100)	1 (100)	40 (98)
	<b>Missing</b>	1 (20)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (2)

## 7. Challenges

When participants were asked if they faced any unanticipated challenges when engaging with the Inclusive Beach events, 10% (n = 6) of participants who completed the lead/nominated family member/carer survey reported “yes”. Unanticipated challenges included:

- travel time, distance to events,
- activities being unsuitable for a child,
- errors with the booking system,



- lack of matting and the quality of matting causing wheelchairs to sink into the sand.

In addition, when asked about potential barriers to engaging with future Inclusive Beach events, 16% (n = 10) of participants who completed the lead/nominated family member/carer survey reported “yes”.

Barriers included:

- travel time,
- distance to accessible beaches from their home,
- lack of accessible beach equipment (e.g., matting) and facilities,
- difficulty in getting time off work to attend events,
- bad weather, the booking process.

## **8. Recommendations**

When asked for suggested improvements to the Inclusive Beach events, most participants did not have any suggestions. However, 24% (n = 15) of participants who completed the lead/nominated family member/carer offered suggestions relating to:

- Improved car parking with shorter distances to the beach.
- More shelter.
- Refreshments provided.
- Increasing the number and length of sessions.
- Better sand wheelchairs.
- More beach chairs.
- Better matting in terms of size (e.g., doubled in size) and the material it is made from.
- Changing facilities.
- Brakes on wheelchairs to enable speed and position to be controlled.

Participants were given the opportunity to provide further feedback on the Inclusive Beach events. Further feedback included:

- Working with other agencies to further assist people with additional needs (e.g., cancer charities and citizens advice bureau).
- Better forms of advertising for events.
- Working with councils to improve accessibility at beaches (e.g., Groomsport not accessible the full way around the beach).
- More ramps to access beaches; change in language to all inclusive.
- Expansion to green spaces as they may be closer and more accessible in terms of distance to people’s homes.
- More benches and seating.

When participants were asked if **water quality** is something that impacts on whether they decide to spend time at the beach, most participants provided a response to highlight that water quality is something that impacts their decision, with responses highlighting that poor water quality and sewage were a concern and that they would look to MMF for guidance. Consequently, this is something that MMF should consider for future Inclusive Beach events.

## **9. Impact of Peer Researcher Approach**

Seven MMF members were trained as peer researchers and have built capacity within the organisation for future research. Three progressed and completed data collection on the beach with MMF members. Peer researchers completed between two and

seven interviews, depending on their availability and recruitment of participants at the specific beach day. Before completing an independent interview, all peer researchers conducted pilot interviews or shadowed an interview until they felt comfortable to undertake an interview independently. When asked about their experience of being involved in this project peer researchers reported:

*‘My experience was fun and interesting it was good to learn about what MMF did right and can improve on’.*

*“Yes, when interviewing certain participants, it was difficult to get them talkative”.*

*“It opened my eyes to how things can be improved, and I learned a lot about interviewing people”.*

*“Yes, I would do it again”.*

*“I would recommend this to other MMF members if they like talking to people, like I do!”*

*“I would like to tell you that I am very appreciative of this opportunity, thank you”.*

*“My experience as a peer researcher was nothing short of amazing, I loved every second of it”.*

*“I didn’t experience one challenge all the staff/students from QUB/UU were amazing”.*

*“A few benefits of being a peer researcher were it helped my confidence which enabled me to be a bit more out there as such with other peers and members of the MMF/QUB/UU”.*

*“YES 100% I would do it again, had the best time ever whilst maintaining appropriate boundaries”.*

*“Yes, I would definitely recommend it to other MMF members it would be a great experience for them especially those who are shy and quiet as it’s a way of gaining confidence whilst chatting to their peers”.*

*“Thank you for giving me the opportunity to take part it was such an amazing time. I’d like to thank all the students and staff for taking the time to sit with us, help us and relay any information to us that would be a benefit to us and what we were doing. Thank you all!”*

## **10. Conclusion**

This evaluation study provides evidence that MMF’s Inclusive Beach Programme has numerous benefits for its members, their family members/carers, the wider community and other beach users. A common theme highlighted through this evaluation related to the physical health, mental health, mental wellbeing and social benefits of MMF’s Inclusive Beach Programme. These benefits transpired through both the Inclusive Beach opportunities facilitated by MMF and access to the Inclusive Beach equipment

that they provide. Such opportunities enable members and their families to feel connected to nature by being physically present on the sand and/or in the sea; whilst also encouraging participation and socialisation with family, friends and other members of MMF. An inclusive environment such as the one MMF created was found to evoke emotions such as happiness, relaxation, joy, and confidence and ensured that everyone felt involved and included regardless of their ability or age. MMF's Inclusive Beach Programme also gave individuals the opportunity to be outdoors, to breathe in fresh air and to participate in a range of physical activities all of which may be uncommon for some individuals who live with a disability.

Regarding other beach users, even though the majority were not aware of MMF, they felt very positive towards the work of the Foundation when informed about the Inclusive Beach Programme. Participants highlighted the importance of having 'Inclusive Beaches' where all ages and abilities can take participate, socialise and feel included, whilst experiencing non-judgemental fun. Other beach users also noted the potential benefits of MMF's Inclusive Beach Programme for the wider community and local businesses, highlighting the programme could encourage a sense of community, bring people to the area, increase accessibility, lessen inequalities for residents and feed the economy through increased trade.

### **11. Meet the research team**

Researchers from the Centre for Public Health, Queen's University Belfast (Prof Ruth Hunter, Dr Claire Cleland, Dr Niamh O'Kane, Dr Sophie Jones, Dr Christopher Tate, Miss Sophie Glover and Miss Roisin Corr), the School of Nursing and Midwifery, Queen's University Belfast (Dr Karen McConnell and Dr Claire Kerr), School of Health Sciences, Ulster University (Dr Jean Daly-Lynn), School of Education, Ulster University (Mr Franz Hoeritzauer), and two Occupational Therapists from Ulster University (Michelle Davidson and Chloe Orr). In addition, peer researchers recruited from Mae Murray Foundation (Saul Wilton, Katie Douglas, and Bethany Meneary).



Back row, left to right: Roisin Corr (QUB), Pauline Hunter-Graham (MMF), Pete Byrne (Newry Mourne & Down District Council), Chris Tate (QUB), Claire Cleland (QUB), Ruth Hunter (QUB), and Niamh O’Kane (QUB). Front row left to right: Michelle Stowell (MMF), Jean Daly-Lynn (UU), Hayley Crawford (MMF), and Sophie Jones (QUB).

## **12. Acknowledgements**

We would firstly like to take this opportunity to thank each of the participants who took part in the research study. Secondly, we would like to thank Mae Murray Foundation peer-researchers who volunteered to be trained in Photovoice research methods and conducted the Photovoice element of the research. Thirdly, we would like to thank Mae Murray Foundation team including staff and volunteers who provided guidance, organisation and support during the research period. Finally, we would like to thank the research team for their dedication and commitment throughout the research project. This study received funding from the GroundsWell consortium funded by the UK Prevention Research Partnership (MR/V049704/1), Queen’s University Belfast (<https://www.qub.ac.uk/sites/groundswell/>).

## **13. References**

Braun V, Clarke V. Reflecting on reflexive thematic analysis. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*. 2019;11(4):589–597.

Britton E, Kindermann G, Domegan C, Carlin C. Blue care: a systematic review of blue space interventions for health and well-being. *Health Promot*. 2020;35:50-69.

Budig K, Diez J, Conde P, Sastre M, Hernán M, Franco M. Photovoice and empowerment: evaluating the transformative potential of a participatory action research project. *BMC public health*. 2018;18:432.

Burke E, le May A, Kébé F, Flink I, van Reeuwijk M. Experiences of being, and working with, young people with disabilities as peer researchers in Senegal: The impact on data quality, analysis, and well-being. *Qualitative Social Work*. 2019;18(4):583-600.

Erwin J, Burns L, Devalia U, Witton R, Shawe J, Wheat H, Axford N, Doughty J, Kaddour S, Nelder A, Brocklehurst P. Co-production of health and social science research with vulnerable children and young people: A rapid review. *Health Expectations*. 2024;27(2):13991.

Daly Lynn J, Washbrook M, Ryan A, McCormack B, Martin S. Partnering with older people as peer researchers. *Health Expectations*. 2021;24(5):1879-1889.

Daly Lynn J, Ramsey L, Marley J, Rohde J, McGuigan TM, Reaney A, O’Neill B, Jones A, Kerr D, Hughes C, McFadden S. Participatory peer research exploring the experience of learning during Covid-19 for allied health and healthcare science students. *PloS One*. 2022;17(10).

Dassah E, Aldersey HM, Norman KE. [Photovoice and Persons With Physical Disabilities: A Scoping Review of the Literature](#). *Qualitative Health Research*. 2017;27(9):1412-1422.

Gant LM, Shimshock K, Allen-Meares P, Smith L, Miller P, Hollingsworth LA, Shanks T. Effects of photovoice: Civic engagement among older youth in urban communities. *Journal of Community Practice*. 2009;17(4):358-376.

Larkins C, Satchwell C. Learning how to know together: Using barthes and aristotle to turn from 'Training' to 'Collaborative learning' in participatory research with children and young people. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*. 2023;22.

Mae Murray Foundation. ADAPT my beach. 2023. Available from: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1VknIM5h-fiTpuH8EjLInDgQLkMp1GFcC/view>

Wang CC, Redwood-Jones YA. "Photovoice ethics: Perspectives from Flint photovoice." *Health education & behavior*. 2001;28(5):560-572.

White MP, Elliott LR, Gascon M, Roberts B, Fleming LE. Blue space, health and well-being: A narrative overview and synthesis of potential benefits. *Environmental research*. 2020;191:110169.