

The logo for 'We festival' is centered on a dark blue, cloud-like shape. The word 'we' is in a large, white, cursive font, with the 'e' having five small colored dots (red, yellow, blue, green, purple) trailing from its top. Below 'we', the word 'festival' is written in a white, cursive font. The letter 'i' in 'festival' is replaced by a stylized human figure with a yellow head and four colorful arms (blue, orange, pink, green) reaching out. The background of the entire page is white with large, colorful, abstract shapes in shades of blue, green, orange, pink, and purple, some resembling thick paint strokes or stylized letters.

Give • Take Notice • Keep Learning
• Be Active • Connect

Hosted by: Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust

Funded by: Dudley Group NHS Charity

Venue: Himley Hall

Date: Thursday, 11 June 2026

Audience: Year 5 & 6 pupils (Primary Schools)

Theme: Confidence, resilience, new experiences, and skills development

5 ways to wellbeing:

Give • **Take Notice** • **Keep Learning**
• **Be Active** • **Connect**

Event desired outcomes

- Build confidence and emotional resilience of students
- Provide new experiences & skills
- Encourage physical activity & wellbeing
- Promote self-expression (arts, theatre, nature)
- Deliver a fun, safe, inclusive experience

Introduction to MEFestival

MEFestival is one of Dudley's most loved and impactful wellbeing events for children — a vibrant, immersive festival designed to spark confidence, creativity, resilience, and curiosity in the next generation. Rooted in the Five Ways to Wellbeing, MEFestival brings together schools, partners, clinicians, artists, youth workers, and community organisations to create a day where children discover new strengths, try new experiences, and feel part of something bigger.

Since its launch in 2014, MEFestival has grown into a popular event for the borough. Over six festivals have been held so far, each so popular that a waiting list has operated every year. Schools repeatedly tell us that MEFestival is one of the most energising, memorable experiences their pupils take part in — and that its impact continues long after the day itself.



What are the **five ways** to wellbeing?

Five simple, evidence based actions that help people feel happier, healthier, and more resilient.

- **Connect** - Build relationships with people around you to strengthen belonging and support.
- **Be Active** - Move your body in ways you enjoy to boost mood, energy, and physical health.
- **Take Notice** - Pay attention to the present moment to feel grounded and reduce stress.
- **Keep Learning** - Try new things to build confidence, curiosity, and mental stimulation.
- **Give** - Acts of kindness create purpose, connection, and positive feelings.





A Look Back: The **MEFestival** Story

The First MEFestival – 2014

The very first MEFestival set the tone for everything that followed: high energy, hands-on learning, and a powerful sense of community. Children mixed across schools, partners collaborated in new ways, and the environment created a sense of excitement and possibility.

Six Festivals Later

Across six successful festivals, MEFestival has become a cornerstone of Dudley's wellbeing and prevention work. Demand has grown year on year, with schools eager to return and new schools joining the waiting list.



Ripple Effects: Real Stories from past MEFestival

MEFestival's impact reaches far beyond the festival day. Schools and families have shared powerful stories that show how transformative the experience can be:

- A wider world opened - Some children had never travelled beyond Dudley town centre. A trip to Himley for MEFestival was their first experience of nature, open space, and adventure.
- A board meeting like no other - One school was so inspired that pupils presented their MEFestival experience directly to the NHS Board. The CEO described it as the best board meeting they had ever experienced.
- Learning that lives on - Schools have replicated MEFestival activities back in the classroom, embedding wellbeing, creativity, and resilience into everyday learning.
- Safeguarding insight - A safeguarding concern was identified through a MEFestival activity one year, enabling timely support for a child.
- A festival missed - When MEFestival paused during COVID, schools repeatedly asked when it would return - a testament to its value and impact.



Why We Hold MEFestival

MEFestival is funded by our charity and delivered by our Trust because we know how important it is to work collaboratively with partners in raising the next generation with the tools, confidence, and skills to thrive.

We do this because:

- **We have the expertise** - our staff and partners bring clinical knowledge, wellbeing skills, creativity, and community connections.
- **We are shaping future citizens** - whether children grow into NHS careers or simply learn how to stay well, MEFestival equips them for adulthood.
- **Prevention is important** - MEFestival aligns with the NHS Long Term Plan, our strategic direction, and the local prevention agenda.
- **We build trust and reputation** - MEFestival shows we are more than “the big white building in Pensnett”; we are an active, caring partner in the community.
- **It grounds our staff** - working at a hyper-local level helps staff hear children’s voices and reconnect with the heart of our purpose.
- There is something for everyone — from CPR to creativity, from resilience to teamwork, every child leaves with something meaningful.



MEFestival Today

MEFestival continues to evolve, but its heart remains the same: a joyful, inclusive, transformative celebration of wellbeing for children across Dudley.

It is a festival that changes lives, strengthens communities, and reflects the very best of what our Trust stands for.



MEFestival 2026 summary

MEFestival 2026 successfully delivered a large scale wellbeing, physical activity and creative learning experience for **421 pupils from 17 schools**. Despite persistent rain and significant space constraints, the event achieved strong engagement, high enjoyment levels, and meaningful connections between schools, local services and activity providers.

Children consistently reported feeling **happy, energised, proud, connected and excited**, with physical activities - especially **Boxercise, Cricket and Challenge Academy** - emerging as the most loved experiences. Stakeholders praised the organisation, communication and atmosphere, while also identifying clear structural improvements needed for future delivery. Social media activity generated **15,173 total views**, with Trust channels driving the majority of reach and LinkedIn delivering the strongest engagement rate at **29.8%**.

Overall, MEFestival 2026 was **successful with some room for improvement**, particularly around flow of the day, space management, accessibility disclosure, stallholder relevance, and weather resilience.



Attendance & Participation

- 421 pupils attended (target: 300)
- 17 schools participated (target: 8–10)
- 100% of pupils attended at least 4 sessions
- 70% completed all 5 sessions (lower due to early departures around 2–2:30pm)
- Attended by Sir David Nicholson, Trust Chair and Deputy Mayor for Dudley

This exceeded attendance targets but created congestion challenges, especially during transitions and indoor movement due to rain.



Activities on the day

BEFAST – Dudley Stroke Association

A health focused workshop teaching children how to recognise stroke symptoms and respond in emergencies. Includes practical demonstrations such as the recovery position and calling emergency services.

Forest School – The Fine Collective

A forest school style session exploring senses, nature awareness, and wellbeing. Children take a nature walk, pick leaves, create happazome crafts, join a sensory meditation, and contribute to a gratitude tree.

Mindfulness – TAOD

A 50 minute wellbeing workshop teaching children about stress, big feelings, and how the nervous system works. Includes breathwork, grounding, EFT tapping, mindfulness, and a guided meditation.

Neon Keyrings & Badges – Bedazzled

A creative art session where children design neon effect badges and keyrings using acrylic pens. They plan a positive affirmation, paint a black base, layer neon colours, and assemble wearable items.

Challenge Academy

High energy teamwork and problem solving challenges using bespoke activity kits. Children rotate through 4–5 ground based tasks building leadership, communication, trust, and confidence.

Activities on the day

Charity Fundraising Challenge – Dudley Group NHS Charity

Pupils choose a hospital appeal, set a fundraising target (£100/£500/£1,000), and design creative fundraising ideas. They later implement their plan back at school and see the impact of their efforts.

Mask Performing Workshops – Vamos Theatre

A physical theatre workshop teaching mask performance techniques such as gesture, pace, stillness, internal monologue, and devising. Builds confidence, teamwork, and creative expression.

5 Ways to Wellbeing Postcard Pledges – Healthwatch Dudley / DYHC

A creative wellbeing activity where young people design five postcards (one per wellbeing strand) and write personal pledges. Includes icebreakers and a sharing circle.

Create and Calm – Dudley School Nurses

A calming craft and wellbeing session teaching square breathing and hand breathing. Children create bookmarks, “places of calm,” and chatterboxes.

Mini Music Makers & Boxercise – Dudley Youth Workers

Two rotating activities:

Music: Children build rhythms using percussion and digital pads.

Boxercise: Learn basic boxing stance, movement, and shadow boxing (non contact).

Activities on the day

Cricket Skills - Worcestershire Cricket Foundation

Fun cricket based activities including catching challenges and adapted cricket games to build confidence, teamwork, and physical activity.

Bhangra Beats - Ethnic Minority Council

A high energy cultural dance and movement workshop blending Bollywood, hip house, and global genres. Focuses on rhythm, storytelling, confidence, and cultural expression.

KIC Digital Graffiti Wall & Radio Zone - KIC Radio

A media themed zone featuring a digital graffiti wall (one slide per wellbeing strand), seated podcast sessions, roaming vox pop interviews, and festival style music.



Stallholders in the Stallholder market



Mary Stevens Hospice

Activity: Children make an emotion themed bracelet or bag tag using beads representing how they feel now, later, and throughout the day.

Focus: Emotional awareness, mindfulness.

Home Instead Dudley

Activity: Multiple short wellbeing games: kindness cards, memory match, reaction game, emoji emotions, movement challenges, quick quizzes, future-self messages, and safety spotting.

Focus: Kindness, empathy, ageing awareness, wellbeing.

Beacon Centre for the blind

Activity: Blindfolded sensory challenges (pouring water, finding objects, identifying items by touch), accessible tech demos (VoiceOver), and optional VR vision impairment experience.

Focus: Understanding sight loss, sensory awareness, accessibility.

Research & Development

Sandwell & West Birmingham NHS Trust

Activity: Healthcare themed games, dressing up in scrubs, puzzles, quizzes, and Strawberry DNA extraction experiment.

Focus: Science learning, research awareness.

Stallholders in the Stallholder market

Reflexions MHST

Activity: "What's in the Box?" sensory guessing game using textures and temperatures; breathing technique cards (5 4 3 2 1).

Focus: Mindfulness, grounding, sensory awareness.

CoLab Dudley

Activity: Creative future thinking activity: children imagine a future world, then write, draw, or collage a postcard from the future.

Focus: Imagination, hope, creativity.

Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust Children's Diabetes Team

Activity: Being supportive to other children with diabetes/diabetes buddies

Focus: Diabetes in children awareness.

DBLeisure

Activity: Promotion of leisure centre activities plus mini table tennis or football on elastic string depending on space. CPR training on dummy.

Focus: Physical activity, sport engagement.

WhiteWatch Dudley Fire Station

Activity: Fire truck show and tell plus a water rescue circuit (throw line, knot tying, rescuing a dummy). Bandage training and first aid demos.

Focus: Safety, teamwork, emergency skills.



Stallholders in the Stallholder market

Respiratory Team – Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust

Activity: Asthma themed spinning wheel with games (true/false, triggers, inhaler technique).

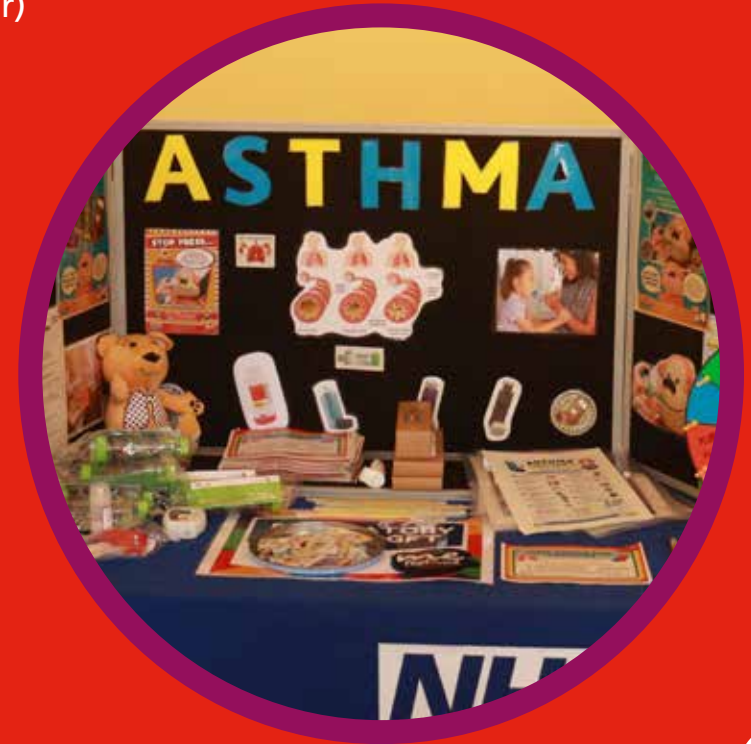
Focus: Asthma awareness and education.

Active Black Country

Activity: Water Safety Challenge with three activities:

- Spot the Dangers (hazard spotting poster)
- Water Safety Code Quiz Wheel
- Float or Sink challenge

Focus: Water safety, hazard awareness, lifesaving knowledge.



What Worked Well

Strong engagement and enjoyment

Children repeatedly described the day as fun, exciting, enjoyable, fabulous, brilliant, amazing and memorable . Physical activities were the standout successes:

- Boxercise – highest volume of positive comments
- Cricket – second most mentioned activity
- Challenge Academy – consistently described as energetic, inclusive and exciting

“The children... were unanimous in their voice of how much they loved the day.” — Red Hall Primary School

High quality workshops

Mindfulness, Forest School, Mask Theatre, Create & Calm and BEFAST were praised for being engaging, creative and impactful. Providers noted strong participation and meaningful learning moments.

Positive wellbeing impact

Children reported:

- Feeling proud of achievements
- Learning new skills
- Feeling energised
- Connecting with new people
- Trying activities they want to continue at home or school

Examples include:

- “Boxing made me feel energised.”
- “I will try street cricket.”
- “Happy breathing made me feel good.”

What Worked Well

Partnership and community connections

Stallholders and activity leads valued:

- Networking with other organisations
- Raising awareness of their services
- Engaging with pupils in meaningful ways

Strong organisation and communication

Providers praised:

- Clear packs
- Smooth coordination
- Helpful staff
- Good signage

Stakeholder Feedback Themes Schools

Children loved:

- Boxing
- Cricket
- Music making
- Forest School
- Mask performance
- Market stalls (especially CPR, diabetes checks, keyrings)

Teachers praised:

- Variety of activities
- Children's behaviour
- Opportunities to learn new skills



feedback from stakeholders

"What a memorable day of fun, learning and new experiences!" - Colley Lane Primary Academy."

"Just wanted to take a moment to thank you all for the fantastic effort to put together the event today. The adverse weather conditions I know presented you with a challenge. The children of Red Hall were unanimous in their voice of how much they loved the day."

"They enjoyed learning from different agencies and talking with them. They liked the opportunity to take part and join in. They liked learning new skills. Thank you so much for giving them this opportunity. Please pass on our thanks to all up front and behind the scenes. Book us up for next year!!" Helen Tomlinson, Head teacher, Red Hall Primary School."

"What a great day Year 6 had yesterday at MEFestival at Himley Hall! Although the weather wasn't on our side, that didn't stop us from having fun indoors! The children loved taking part in the Bhangra Beats workshop, showing off their dance moves to a brilliant mix of Bhangra music and Michael Jackson classics! They also joined a Be Fast workshop, where they learned important life-saving skills and how to spot the signs of a stroke. A valuable lesson that could help save lives one day!"

"Delighted to join young people from 17 schools across the Dudley Borough at #MeFestival held at Himley Hall today."

"A wonderful example of how the The Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust and Dudley Group NHS Charity are supporting the wellbeing and resilience of young people locally as they prepare to transition to secondary school. Thanks to West Midlands Fire Service for teaching me CPR too!"

Deputy Mayor of Dudley

Beacon Centre for the Blind

Activity Providers

Common positives:

- Great organisation
- Engaged pupils
- Valuable networking
- Meaningful wellbeing conversations

Stallholders

Common positives:

Good engagement
Networking opportunities
Enjoyable interactions



“What a brilliant day at MEFestival at Himley Hall! We were delighted to support the event by helping children learn more about sight loss and accessibility through fun, interactive activities.

Children had the chance to try simulation glasses showing different eye conditions, take part in a colour contrast challenge, explore description through touch with a “guess what’s in the bag” activity, and enjoy a “what’s missing?” listening game.

It was wonderful to see the children so engaged and curious, while building awareness, empathy and confidence — exactly what MEFestival is all about.

A big thank you to everyone involved in making the day so welcoming and inspiring.”

Beacon Centre for the Blind

BCHFT Reflexions

"What a fantastic day at the MEFestival at Himley Hall! We loved meeting so many children, young people and staff from schools across Dudley and being part of such a positive event focused on wellbeing and mental health.

Our "What's in the Box?" game was a huge hit, with lots of children getting involved, having fun and testing their senses! We also handed out fidget tools and shared grounding techniques to help support emotional wellbeing and provide useful coping strategies that can be used every day.

A big thank you to everyone who stopped by to say hello and take part. It was amazing to see so many smiles and conversations throughout the day! And a special thank you to The Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust for putting on such a fantastic event and bringing everyone together for such an important cause."

BCHFT Reflexions.



Final Reflection

MEFestival 2026 proved that even in challenging circumstances—rain, tight spaces, and a packed timetable—young people can still shine, connect, and thrive when given the right opportunities. The day was filled with energy, curiosity and joy, with pupils embracing new experiences, discovering new skills, and building confidence in ways that will stay with them long after the event.

The feedback from children, teachers, partners and activity leads shows a clear truth: MEFestival matters. It creates moments of pride, sparks new interests, and opens doors to wellbeing, creativity and physical activity. It brings together schools, services and communities in a way that feels meaningful, supportive and full of possibility.

The event also demonstrated the strength of collaboration across DGFT Charity, partners, schools and volunteers. Even with the weather working against us, the commitment, passion and teamwork of everyone involved ensured that pupils had a memorable, impactful and enjoyable day.

Most importantly, MEFestival 2026 highlighted the potential for even greater things ahead. With the learning captured this year—improved flow, better space management, stronger communication, and more child focused experiences—the next MEFestival can be even more inclusive, calmer, more engaging and more transformative.

The heart of MEFestival remains strong: Young people feeling proud of themselves. Young people trying new things. Young people connecting with others. Young people discovering what wellbeing means to them.

Final Reflection

Sir David Nicholson, Chair of the Board of Directors, said:

"The ME Festival demonstrated the very best of partnership working across Dudley. Seeing more than 400 pupils from 16 schools come together to learn, create, be active and focus on their wellbeing was truly inspiring. By bringing together education, healthcare, charities and community organisations, we created opportunities for young people to build confidence, develop resilience and recognise the support available to them within their communities. The enthusiasm shown by the pupils throughout the day was remarkable and gives us great confidence in the future of our borough."

Diane Wake, Group Chief Executive Officer, said:

"We were delighted to bring the ME Festival back for 2026 and thrilled that our Trust charity funded the day. The event showcased what can be achieved when organisations come together with a shared purpose. It gave children the opportunity to build resilience, explore new skills and celebrate their strengths in a supportive and inspiring environment. We are incredibly grateful to all our partners, volunteers and schools who helped make the festival such a success."