

Active Lancashire – Written evidence (NPS0105)

Evidence submitted to the National Plan for Sport and Recreation Committee to consider the effectiveness of current sport and recreation policies and initiatives, and the case for a national plan for sport and recreation, and to make recommendations

Introduction

Thank you for the opportunity to provide evidence on the effectiveness of current sport and recreation policies and initiatives. The information that we provide is based on our work across Lancashire and we are presenting evidence for the following questions:

- How can local delivery, including funding structures, of sport and recreation be improved to ensure that people of all ages and abilities are able to lead an active lifestyle? For example, how successfully do local authorities and other bodies such as Active Partnerships, Leisure Trusts, local sports clubs and charities work together, and how might coordination be improved?
- How can children and young people be encouraged to participate in sport and recreation both at school and outside school, and lead an active lifestyle? If possible share examples of success stories and good practice, and challenges faced.
- How can adults of all ages and backgrounds, particularly those from under-represented groups, including women and girls, ethnic minorities, disabled people, older people, and those from less affluent backgrounds, be encouraged to lead more active lifestyles? If possible, share examples of success stories and good practice, and challenges faced.

Active Lancashire is the strategic lead for Sport and Physical Activity in Lancashire. As one of Sport England's Active Partnerships we are committed to making sport and physical activity accessible to everyone. We have an extensive experience and expertise in promoting and advocating for sport and physical activity at local level as we work with a number of cross-sectoral organisations to encourage active lifestyles and remove barriers to participation.

Questions

- 1. How can local delivery, including funding structures, of sport and recreation be improved to ensure that people of all ages and abilities are able to lead an active lifestyle? For example, how successfully do local authorities and other bodies such as Active Partnerships, Leisure Trusts, local sports clubs and charities work together, and how might coordination be improved?**

1.1 Simpler applications: Complicated and bureaucratic application procedures and lack of experience in writing a grant application restricts access to innovative projects that can make a real difference in local communities. Simplifying grant application processes will allow local organisations and groups to access vital funding to tackle local challenges. In September 2020, Sport England launched the Tackling Inequalities Fund (TIF) as a response to the pandemic which disproportionately affected a number of under-

represented groups across the County (Black Asian Minority Ethnic, disabled individuals, those with long term health conditions and low-income residents), significantly impacting their ability to be physically active. Active Lancashire was one of the Active Partnerships across England appointed to allocate part of the funding to those most in need. By simplifying the application process and appointing a dedicated person to each local authority area, much needed funding reached local communities supporting a wide range of people becoming more active and leading a healthier lifestyle.

1.2 Safe space for collaboration: As an Active Partnership, we strongly believe in supporting local communities identifying and addressing their needs. For example, we are offering advice and training support to grassroots organisations, local community groups and sports clubs to help increase their resilience, capacity and capability. During the Covid-19 pandemic, we have provided an online platform that local organisations and groups can access and share their views, experiences, and challenges providing them with reassurance under these unprecedented times.

1.3 Building strong partnerships: Working together and not just working with each other is important for strengthening projects and creating additional value for local residents. Active Lancashire has an extensive expertise in leading diverse and multi skilled partnerships which aim to empower people to be more physical active and improve their lives. Through our More Positive Together Project (MPT) we work closely with various partners such as housing associations, local authorities and third sector organisations enabling them to provide a focused support package to their local residents. Operating throughout the Lancashire region, we have organised our partners into smaller localised groups covering the Pendle, Central Lancashire, West Lancashire and Coastal areas, we then facilitate a number of regional meetings with project leads from each partner operating in that area. Our unique approach means that our partners work alongside other similar companies in their field, collaborating and developing best practice techniques to support residents and help them improve their lives.

2 How can children and young people be encouraged to participate in sport and recreation both at school and outside school, and lead an active lifestyle? If possible share examples of success stories and good practice, and challenges faced.

2.1 Co-production and creative engagement are utilised in designing physical activity sessions that are particularly sensitive to the needs of young females, LGBT+ , young people with mental health conditions and those from low socio-economic backgrounds. This approach has been successful in engaging young people in school and in the community in developing sports and physical activities to meet their needs and empowered them to shape not only the activity which they engage in, the environment this takes place in, marketing materials and social media use – even down to designing their own club brand for sportswear.

2.2 A large number of the opportunities provided by schools is focused on competition and not wider engagement meaning large numbers of young

people feel the opportunity is not right for them. In the past year, through one of our projects, we engaged with secondary schools across Lancashire supporting them to engage more with pupils that don't engage in clubs, or after school activities and listen to their voices. We are currently working with a number of schools across the county supporting young people shape the offer that suit their needs. We believe that allowing young people to make decisions and help co-design the offer is really beneficial for future engagement.

2.3 Active Lancashire has been organising the Lancashire School Games since its inception in 2006, bringing together School Games Organisers (SGO's), media companies and sponsors to collectively help put on an event for the young people living in Lancashire. In recent years we have widened the programme and provide more opportunities to include those who are from low socio-economic backgrounds, and through using active lives CYP data, target those who are inactive. We have focused less on the competition and more on the outcomes of making the School Games, fun, developmental and tailored towards the needs of young people. However, we still provide pathway events for those that are active enjoy competition and seek opportunities outside of school.

2.4 As the result of the pandemic, the physical activity levels of children and young people decreased by 2.3% compared to the same period a year ago¹. In response to the lockdown that restricted access to sport and physical activity sessions we have taken the Lancashire school Games online, and have been sharing online resources specifically designed for different year groups aiming to help people move more, develop skills whilst not in school accessing PE, and have fun. We have seen great engagement with both young people and families engaging in the resources provided. Specifically, we had over 100,000 children and young people use the resources provided online. In addition, we have launched a Befriending Project which provides an opportunity for young people to co-design ways of connecting with friends and getting active during lockdown.

3 How can adults of all ages and backgrounds, particularly those from under-represented groups, including women and girls, ethnic minorities, disabled people, older people, and those from less affluent backgrounds, be encouraged to lead more active lifestyles? If possible, share examples of success stories and good practice, and challenges faced.

3.1 Creating a 'people like me' workforce encourages people from all ages and backgrounds to lead more active lifestyles. Our Challenge Through Sport Initiative (CSI) project is an exemplar of how support workers and volunteers with lived experience encourage others to become more active. CSI is a behaviour change and recovery programme that uses sport and physical activity to improve long term health and employment opportunities. Through CSI's networks the project has been able to link in with some of the most

inactive groups such as women and girls, lower socio-economic groups and those from less affluent backgrounds.

3.2 The success of the CSI project led to the development of the United Together project that aims to support people in probation services. Through a collaboration of Lancashire United (Community Football Trusts) and Active Lancashire, participants get help to overcome barriers such as housing and debt as well as 1 to 1 mentoring with an individual program. This can include physical activity sessions, training courses, employment advice and work experience opportunities, designed to boost confidence, improve wellbeing and help get their lives back on track. A pre-release programme has also been developed to provide that initial contact with those in prison and to offer them the opportunity to undertake accredited training and personal development which will build confidence and trust with agencies who are then able to support them following release. The offer also includes training for the workforce within our Football Community Trusts who deliver some sessions in the pre-release program and offer support in the community. A key driver for the successful delivery to-date was the consultation which our CSI team undertook with prisoners and with the staff. This provided a much clearer picture of how those in prison felt and what they ideally would like to see on release from prison.

3.3 In addition, building strong relationships and partnerships allows organisations to provide bespoke support to under-represented groups. For example, both Active Lancashire and Blackpool Coastal Housing sit on the steering group for the Get Out Get Active project run by Active Blackpool. This relationship has allowed Get Out Get Active to target those from less affluent backgrounds, some of which are residents in sheltered housing. Specific programmes have been set up for those individuals such as multi-sports activities and walking, which has been particularly successful during the COVID pandemic and has allowed for individuals to safely exercise at a social distance.

3.4 Currently, we are working with the NHS to look at two Optimal Ageing Programme pilots in West Lancashire and Blackpool around personalised care and incorporating the concepts of Live Longer Better to residents within these two local authorities. This is due to be rolled out over the coming weeks and our partnerships and networks across these key areas will be vital in getting the message across that physical activity is key to improving the resilience of the ageing population.

References

1. Sport England (2021). Active Lives Children and Young People Survey. Available at https://sportengland-production-files.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/2021-01/Active%20Lives%20Children%20Survey%20Academic%20Year%2019-20%20report.pdf?4Ti_0V0m9sYy5HwQjSiJN7Xj.VInpjV6