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**Report of Jane Robinson, Corporate Director, Adult and Health  
Services, Durham County Council  
Amanda Healy, Director of Public Health, Durham County Council**

**Electoral division(s) affected:**

Countywide

**Purpose of the Report**

- 1 The purpose of this report is to present the Health and Wellbeing Board with:
  - (a) The opportunity to review and comment upon the latest draft of the high-level County Durham Physical Activity Strategy document;
  - (b) Outline proposals for co-production of the Physical Activity Strategy action plan;
  - (c) Proposed next steps regarding governance and publication of the strategy and its action plan.

**Executive summary**

- 2 Regular physical activity, or indeed increased movement is known to have a positive effect on both mental and physical health and wellbeing, yet there is stark variation in levels of activity (and sedentary behaviour) across communities in County Durham.
- 3 These issues cannot be resolved by individual organisations working in silo. A systems-based approach is required to ensure that long-term, sustainable change can be achieved and maintained.
- 4 Accordingly, meaningful collaboration across key public, private, voluntary and community stakeholders is required.
- 5 This Physical Activity Strategy document sets out a bold vision and mission, which is supported by key principles to improve levels of movement and activity in those who live, work and play in County Durham.

- 6 Around 100 professional stakeholders representing DCC, the health care sector, higher education, community organisations, and sports clubs and organisations attended three workshops that have informed the vision, mission and principles set out in this document.
- 7 Please note, however that this strategy is in development. The latest draft is a high-level document that starts the journey towards our objectives. A meaningful action plan will be co-produced with our people and communities, including those who are from vulnerable and under-represented groups. This will supplement the strategy document and bring it to life.
- 8 Accordingly, the Health and Wellbeing Board is asked to note that the final document will contain more context and detail to top and tail the strategic direction that is outlined in this document. This will include:
  - (a) Explicit detail on how the strategy will be aligned to our approach to healthy weight, obesity, active travel and other strategic interdependencies;
  - (b) Systems mapping to highlight connections with other key parts of the system;
  - (c) More detail on work between the strategy's key collaborators, i.e. Public Health, Culture, Sport and Tourism, County Durham Sport.

## **Recommendations**

- 9 The Health and Wellbeing Board is recommended to:
  - (a) Consider and feedback on the high-level Physical Activity Strategy document;
  - (b) Accept proposals for co-production of the Physical Activity Strategy action plan.

## **Background**

- 10 The evidence base is irrefutable regarding the positive impact of regular movement on both physical and mental health across the life course. The causes of physical inactivity are multiple and complex, and the COVID-19 pandemic has added to what was already a significant public health challenge.
- 11 These at scale issues cannot be resolved by individuals, sectors or players responding unilaterally. In County Durham, we recognise that levels of inactivity are impacted by a range of influences, and that we must work as a system to effect sustainable, at scale change.
- 12 County Durham does not have a current physical activity strategy. This report outlines the development of such a strategy, as well as proposing how we will co-produce a meaningful action plan with our people and communities.
- 13 A key objective of this work is to focus on a system wide partnership approach to ensure that all ages in County Durham have access to inclusive opportunities to be more physically active. This will be done by bringing people, partners and organisations together with a shared purpose.

## **Key partners**

- 14 This work is being undertaken in collaboration with key local partners including County Durham Sport, Culture, Sport and Tourism, and Durham University, and is overseen by the Physical Activity Strategy Committee (PASC) which sits quarterly.
- 15 The PASC recognises that the creation of a system-focussed strategy is on the first stage of our journey to increasing movement and physical activity amongst those who live, work and play in County Durham. A key element of this work is the co-production of a meaningful action plan that breathes life into the overarching strategy document.
- 16 It does, however, also recognise that it is important to have a focussed vision and mission, that is supported by a clear set of core principles. This will be the focus of this report.

## **Professional stakeholder consultation**

- 17 Between November and December 2021, a collaboration between Public Health, Culture Sports and Tourism, County Durham Sport planned and delivered three stakeholder workshops to develop the vision, mission and core principles of this strategy.

- 18 This was attended by over 100 representatives of various partner organisations including the Local Authority, health care settings, VCS, sports clubs and organisations, and higher education.

### **Vision, mission and core principles**

- 19 The strategy is underpinned by the County Durham Approach to Wellbeing, with a firm focus on people and place. It adopts a partnership approach, involving communities in decisions that affect them to ensure that people of all ages are motivated, and have access to inclusive opportunities to start moving and stay moving.
- 20 Vision: County Durham residents will be more active, enabling them to live longer, healthier and happier lives.
- 21 Mission: bring people and organisations together with a shared purpose of helping everyone in County Durham to move more.

### ***Core principles***

#### **Principle 1 – Person and community-centred**

- 22 “Our people and communities are County Durham’s biggest asset. We will work with communities to support and empower our most disadvantaged and vulnerable, helping them to live healthier, longer more active lives. We will help people develop the motivation, confidence, knowledge and capacity to move more, and explore why regular movement is important.”
- 23 This is a central drive to the success of the strategy. It builds upon existing community assets, whilst engaging the system to empower local residents to understand what matters to them regarding increased movement and activity.
- 24 Close work and engagement with local communities will add to our existing knowledge, so that we can develop new insight on the issues and barriers people face in relation to moving more. We will coproduce solutions with local people and partners so that we can create meaningful ways to help people move more and increase their activity levels.
- 25 The key to success is a ‘bottom up approach’ with an emphasis on people, community groups, clubs and organisations working together to achieve improved outcomes.

## **Principle 2 – Whole systems working and collaboration with partners**

- 26 “Key to creating system change is a focus on people and local communities, supported by close collaboration and shared decision-making with County Durham organisations.”
- 27 County Durham will adopt and continually develop a whole systems approach to increasing movement and physical activity across the life course. Partnership working will help identify where the need is greatest, identify opportunities for change that will support regular movement, and build upon the existing physical activity culture across the county.
- 28 The strategy will encourage partners from all sectors to work as a network, so that they can use their experience and expertise to make progress and achieve long-term, positive and sustainable change.
- 29 The key to success is creating meaningful connections and building and strengthening positive relationships to ensure a co-ordinated approach to increasing movement and reducing inactivity.

## **Principle 3 – Focus where the need is greatest**

- 30 “Encourage and support those within our communities who are least active to move more to help address the inequalities that currently exist”.
- 31 These principles embed the concepts of equity, equality, proportionate universalism and the wider social determinants that impact upon physical activity.
- 32 Safe transport environments, for example, influence how children integrate walking and cycling into their daily routines, whilst safe transport systems enable older aged adults to maintain their autonomy. So, without such systems, the opportunity for active travel could be much more limited.
- 33 Evidence suggests that there are several demographic groups that are physically inactive or under-represented such as those lower socio-economic groups, women, older adults and those with long term conditions. We will focus efforts where the need is greatest to reduce those inequalities that impact upon activity and health.
- 34 The key to success is using local knowledge and evidence to prioritise improving the health of those who are most disadvantaged, and tailor approaches to the specific needs of different communities to address inequalities.

## **Principle 4 – Engaging individuals and organisations with the strategy – what can I do?**

- 35 “There is no single answer or solution to help all ages move more across County Durham. In order to increase movement and promote physical activity, partners need a shared sense of purpose and an alignment of resources so they can work together”.
- 36 This element of the strategy document speaks directly to those who will work together to increase movement and physical activity amongst our residents. Examples include:
- Sharing it with the organisations, groups, clubs and people you work or collaborate with;
  - Adopting and embrace its key principles;
  - Considering how regular movement features into organisation's policies, and putting it on the agenda in workplaces and/or communities.

## **Principle 5 – Continued learning and evaluation**

- 37 “Using evidence supported by local conversations”.
- 38 Capturing what is working well across the county, and learning from elsewhere, is very important. We must focus on positive change – no matter how big or small, and always consider where such change is possible. This strategy will help identify and celebrate progress and success, and inspire others to join in and take action.
- 39 This strategy will be monitored and reviewed through the creation of a strong network across County Durham. Stakeholders will capture and share learning to best understand what motivates our communities and helps our people to become more active. Efforts will be focussed on working together to create the best possible environment that will help people to move more.
- 40 The key to success is stakeholders making time for learning, to understand what has, and has not worked. Evaluation and review of efforts and interventions will be a central part of this approach.

## **Priority areas for change**

- 41 Short-term:
- Mental health.
  - Workplace.

- Active travel.
- Current system mapping and sharing best practice.
- Children and young people particularly around supporting mental health, and in education/school.
- Promotion of movement linked Social Prescribing.

42 Long-term:

- Build stronger active communities- including improved facilities and infrastructure to help make regular movement the best option;
- Embed regular movement into all health and social care pathways with better connections to support services e.g. drug and alcohol services, gambling, stop-smoking;
- Canvas our people and communities to obtain their opinions;
- Evaluate our approach and share good practice and evidence;
- Influence national policy and lobby for change.

**Public consultation: co-production of action plan**

- 43 This strategy document gives a clear summary of what will be achieved. A co-produced action plan will bring this strategy to life, engaging people and communities from across the county to learn how we will best achieve the strategy's objectives.
- 44 Working with DCC Consultation and Engagement, and County Durham Together teams, Public Health will consult with our people and communities – particularly those where we know there are typically lower levels of physical activity, or those who are traditionally under-represented.
- 45 The professional consultation events held in late 2021 were attended by partners from across the Local Authority, health care settings, VCS, sports club and organisations and higher education. The wider public consultation will build upon this by gathering the perspectives of local residents. We want to know:
- What does physical activity mean to people and what do they believe to be the benefits of moving more?
  - What stops people from being active?

- Do people agree with the focus of our strategy?
- What helps our residents to be more active (including community assets)?
- How can we help people to be more active?

46 This consultation will broadly target children and young people, families, adults (including older adults), VCS, AAP's, and private sector organisations – including those within these groups who are under-represented.

### **Limitations**

47 The Public Health Advanced Practitioner (Healthy Weight, Place and Policy) has been vacant for five months. Whilst some resource has been available to review the strategy document and undertake initial planning for the action plan co-production phase, the new Public Health Advanced Practitioner started in the role on 1 July 2022.

### **Conclusion**

48 The PAS document will be reported to the County Durham Health and Wellbeing Board as an update on progress.

49 Planning of action plan co-production is now underway. It will be progressed by the new Public Health Advanced Practitioner (Healthy Weight, Place and Policy), and this will be overseen by the Public Health Strategic Manager, Healthy Settings, Strategy and Assurance to ensure that this phase of the project is expedited.

50 The proposed action plan will supplement the PAS document to produce a more detailed, people and place-based strategy that will be launched once the final product has progressed through all relevant governance.

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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### **Legal Implications**

None.

### **Finance**

None

### **Consultation**

Local authority, health care, higher education, community organisations, and sports clubs and organisations have directly contributed to the content of this work through attendance at workshops. Public consultation is now being planned, as well as a full public coproduction exercise to inform the strategy's action plan.

### **Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty**

This strategy is based upon the concept of proportionate universalism; therefore, work will be focussed where need is greatest. Public consultation will ensure that vulnerable and under-represented groups are given a voice in the development of this work.

### **Climate Change**

N/A

### **Human Rights**

N/A

### **Crime and Disorder**

Sport and recreation programmes can prevent boredom, teach important life skills, divert young people from crime and foster social inclusion. Much of this could be applied to adults whose wellbeing is improved through more movement and exercise.

### **Staffing**

N/A

### **Accommodation**

N/A

### **Risk**

Temporary risk associated with recruitment; however, this will be addressed when new PHAP moves into role. Other risk includes lack of engagement with public coproduction exercise. This is factored into current consultation planning.

### **Procurement**

None.

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## **Appendix 2: Physical Activity Strategy document**

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The report is attached as a separate document.