

**Physical activity strategy: Moving Together in  
County Durham**

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**Report of Jane Robinson, Corporate Director of Adult & Health  
Services, Durham County Council;**

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**Cllr Chris Hood Portfolio Holder for Adult & Health Services.**

**Electoral division(s) affected:**

Countywide

**Purpose of the Report**

- 1 To present the physical activity strategy and action plan.
- 2 To obtain feedback from the board and approval for publication.

**Executive summary**

- 3 Moving Together in County Durham (MT) is a shared strategy which has involved extensive consultation and collaboration with partners across all sectors, groups and communities in County Durham. This Social movement draws upon principles of activity for the 'social good' and behavioural insights for social change ([STT 2021](#)).
- 4 It is a call for action to all who can influence a friend, family member, neighbour, colleagues, staff or organisation to commit to the goal to get County Durham more active, to help embed and weave activity into our daily lives, regardless of circumstance, age, sexuality, gender, race, ethnicity, religion or ability.
- 5 Initial plans are for the County Durham Physical Activity Strategy Committee (PASC) to oversee this strategy. The Healthy Weight Alliance is a partnership steering group also supporting the core principles and aims of the strategy.

6 More than 150 stakeholders have contributed to the development of the vision, mission and core principles, with approximately 900 contributing to the consultation and strategy development:

- **Vision:** County Durham residents will be more active, enabling them to live longer, healthier, and happier lives
- **Mission:** Bringing people and organisations together with a shared purpose of helping everyone in County Durham to move more
- **Core principles:** Community, Collaborate, Engage, Focus (inequalities), Celebrate and Learn

7 This report concerns the strategy's purpose, development and proposed next steps, and should be read in conjunction with the strategy document and action plan.

## **Recommendations**

8 The Health and Wellbeing Board is recommended to:

- (a) Agree the strategy and its recommendations/action plan
- (b) Approve publication

## Background

- 9 Physical inactivity can shorten life and significantly impact healthy life expectancy ([OHIDa 2022](#)), and it is the fourth leading risk factor for early death, associated with one in six deaths in the UK. People who have a physically active lifestyle have a 20-35% lower risk of cardiovascular disease, coronary heart disease and stroke compared to those who are less active ([OHIDb 2022](#)).
- 10 One in three adults in County Durham are reported to be 'inactive' (less than 30 minutes of activity per week), and although national trends have varied, there has been a reported 10% decrease in activity levels in County Durham since 2015/16. ([Sport England Active Lives Survey 2021](#))
- 11 The pandemic has disproportionately affected physical activity levels of adults from lower socioeconomic groups, and those with disabilities and long-term health conditions ([Sport England, 2020](#)). For children, stubborn inequalities persist. Those from less affluent families are far less likely to be meeting physical activity guidelines than their more affluent peers ([Sport England, 2021](#)).

## Purpose

- 12 The benefits of physical activity are widely acknowledged. Being physically active at every age increases quality of life and plays a key role in brain development in early childhood and healthy weight across the life course. People who exercise regularly have a lower risk of developing many long-term (chronic) conditions. In older adults' physical activity is associated with increased functional capacities.
- 13 Improving activity levels, with a focus on those facing the most barriers to physical activity, has the potential to benefit multiple health and wellbeing outcomes at all stages of the life course. ([WHO 2022](#)).
- 14 Increasing activity levels in a population also has potential to positively impact to climate change goals and local and wider economy. Effective planning to increase residents' opportunities to walk, cycle or wheel in their local communities is good for health, environment and the economy.
- 15 Moving Together in County Durham strategy is based on a 'whole systems approach', which recognises that all stakeholders must work together to create long-term change and a culture of moving more. It is underpinned by the County Durham Approach to Wellbeing.

## The Journey so far

- 16 Initial Stakeholder meetings in November 2021 engaged partners in exploring what a physical activity strategy would mean for their organisation and communities and to develop a shared purpose. The Moving Together vision, mission, and six core principles were collaboratively developed from these meetings.
- 17 A scoping exercise was conducted to gather evidence around impactful population approaches to moving more. This was followed by the gathering of local insights from the various relevant consultations, local activities, research, and pilots.
- 18 From July to November 2022, a broader range of partners including GP's, practice managers, PCN leads and health and social care professionals, and voluntary sector partners were engaged. These also explored inherent challenges from the various sectors, including Health and Social Care.
- 19 A public consultation took place between November to December 2022, targeting of those who are less active to better understand the fundamental reasons for this status. The consultation comprised of an online survey, informal focus groups with vulnerable population groups (those with disabilities, refugee families, LGBT+), and a young people's survey.

## The Moving Together in County Durham Strategy

- 20 The vision, mission and core principles of this strategy are as follows:
  - **Vision:** County Durham residents will be more active, enabling them to live longer, healthier, and happier lives
  - **Mission:** Bringing people and organisations together with a shared purpose of helping everyone in County Durham to move more
  - **Core principles:** Community, Collaborate, Engage, Focus (inequalities), Celebrate and Learn
- 21 This is a shared strategy which has involved extensive consultation and collaboration with partners across all sectors, groups and communities. It is a call for action to all who can influence a friend, family member, neighbour, colleagues, staff or organisation to commit to the goal to get County Durham more active, to embed activity into our daily lives,

regardless of circumstance, age, sexuality, gender, race, ethnicity, religion or ability.

- 22 Discussions with the Physical Activity Strategy Committee (PASC - which governs the strategic direction for physical activity in County Durham) will take place in September 2023 to agree oversight of the strategy. The Healthy Weight Alliance will also be supporting the core principles and aims of the strategy.
- 23 Public Health, Culture Sport and Tourism and County Durham Sport have closely collaborated in the development of this strategy. The Culture Sport and Tourism's leisure transformation programme is key to supporting the whole systems approach, with the restructure of its leisure offer to be more community focused and accessible.
- 24 County Durham Sport has supported the strategy development process, as a critical friend, and by providing key insights and messaging to share with partners, also supporting the Sector led improvement pilot work.

### **Priority areas: the action plan**

- 25 The Moving Together consultations, coproduction work and data gathering exercises identified the following five priority action areas:
  - (a) **Children and Young people (CYP) Moving Together**  
Local communities, stakeholders and experts in children and young people's physical activity and will work together to ensure an equitable physical activity offer across the County, identifying and learning from areas of good practice, whilst addressing gaps in provision.
  - (b) **Community Wide**  
Empowering local communities to move more in their daily lives and provision of equitable opportunities to engage in physical activity are key objectives within this strategy. Local insights show that the least active of our population are 'harder to reach'; therefore, engaging communities, valuing our assets, listening, and adapting is a critical part of the Moving Together mission. This group will comprise the gatekeepers to our communities including Action Area Partnerships, Community Action Teams, Social Prescriber Link workers, Refugee settlement officers/coordinators, participation and engagement staff (DCC and CDS), Police and fire service, community pilot and project leads, Durham Community Action, CREE, Local councillors, and any others who are connectors to the community

(c) **Active Travel and Planning**

Active Travel, planning, road safety/safer streets, and climate change areas of work are closely aligned. There was evidence that a group to combine these agendas would be useful in communicating and driving forward the health, wellbeing, and climate change focus of these partnerships. A working group comprising partners from Planning, Climate and Regeneration, Woodlands, Active Valleys, and Active Travel will work together to address identified actions and recommendations.

(d) **Health and Social care**

A wide range of champions from NHS, Wellbeing for Life and Social Care have engaged in the Moving Together process so far. The aim is to establish a group of key influencers who will drive forward actions to make physical activity a standard part of health and social care across County Durham. Training needs have been identified, and a healthy weight conversation group led by Public Health is coproducing brief intervention tools to support health practitioners to increase confidence and improve support for patients in achieving a healthy weight. Further collaboration with secondary care providers and the Prison Service is also recommended.

26 Existing partnership groups will oversee each priority area and feed into the Physical Activity Strategy Committee, which will report annually to the County Durham Health and Wellbeing Board.

## **Moving Together Champions**

27 Moving Together Champions represent our local communities, and a wide range of County Durham organisations who are invested in combatting inactivity and promoting the benefits of moving more. These include education, health and social care providers, a range of voluntary and community sector organisations, as well as those from our local institutions of further and higher educations.

28 This work requires time to grow and develop through continuous messaging partnership engagement, and there are areas of our resident population who we are yet to reach. The County Durham Together community focus and the collaborations with County Durham Sport, Culture Sport and Tourism and Academic partners will support plans to use creative engagement techniques to support the growth of the movement.

## **Communications process and plans**

- 29 The Durham County Council Communications team and Public Health are working together plan the launch and ongoing promotion of this strategy. This includes:
- A dedicated web page on the DCC site including a section for Moving Together Champions and case studies to promote success.
  - County Durham focussed multi-media promotional assets
  - Proposals to hold a roundtable Moving Together in County Durham Champions event supporting the launch of the strategy, informing and taking the opportunity to collaborate on shared agreement of actionable next steps

## **Monitoring and evaluation**

- 30 The aim is that the County Durham Physical Activity Strategy Committee (PASC) will have oversight of this strategy, subject to discussion and agreement at its September 2023 meeting. This will include consideration of how processes can be updated to ensure that progress against the priority action areas are reported to the committee, and how these discrete work packages can be utilised to inform wider whole system ways of working across a broad range of partners.
- 31 Matters relating to evaluation of the strategy, and of whole systems approaches, will be for key stakeholders to decide through the PASC. A whole systems approach to physical activity in County Durham is a long-term objective; therefore, there must be sufficient time for improvement and growth. Again, this will be subject to discussion and agreement once the Health and Wellbeing Board has agreed the strategy document and its action plan.
- 32 Key points that require further discussion and agreement by PASC include the focus of any evaluation, what resources (including funding) are required, and how the PASC might provide strategic oversight.
- 33 Systems mapping is being tested by Public Health data intelligence team and provides an opportunity to measure partnership engagement, identify leverage points and communication channels, by supporting and understanding of how partner organisations, programmes and groups interconnect.

- 34 Whole systems outcomes for consideration include the following: (1) Partners are engaged from every level of the system; (2) Communities are engaged in the approach; (3) Actions are taken to address the upstream drivers of inactivity; (4) Systems thinking practice is being integrated across local partnerships; (5) Collaborative working is happening across departments and organisations; (6) Actions are jointly prioritised and aligned across the local system to address physical inactivity and to reduce inequalities; (7) Learning is being captured and shared

## **Main challenges**

- 35 The success of a 'Whole Systems' approach relies on strong partnership collaboration. There has been good engagement so far; however, sustaining the momentum (and growing the movement across the system) requires specific and dedicated capacity to:
- (a) Continue to create further engagement and strengthen relationships with Moving Together champions
  - (b) Lead on the evaluation process
  - (c) Keep learning from best practice i.e., LGA behavioural insights and Active partnerships, and using recognised, evidence-based models to diagnose and identify actions.

## **Conclusion**

- 36 This report outlines a robust process in coproducing a physical activity strategy which incorporates the voice of a wide range of partners and people across County Durham. Established working groups will oversee progress against those actions identified in the five key priority areas to ensure ongoing progress towards a County Durham that empowers those who live, work, study in, and visit to incorporate moving more into their daily lives.

## **Background papers**

- See attached strategy

## **Author**

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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### **Legal Implications**

None

### **Finance**

None

### **Consultation**

This strategy has been subject to consultation with County Durham communities, as well as a wide range of physical activity stakeholders who operate across the county.

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

Health inequalities and inequities are an important consideration throughout the strategy, and specific chapters consider fairness for all engaging in physical activity in County Durham.

### **Climate Change**

Aspects of this strategy refer to the beneficial impact of increased physical activity upon the environment and climate.

### **Human Rights**

None

### **Crime and Disorder**

None

### **Staffing**

Key staffing considerations include resources that may be required for any strategy evaluation.

### **Accommodation**

None

### **Risk**

No risk assessment required

### **Procurement**

None