

20 December 2023

Strategic Leisure Framework

Report of Amy Harhoff, Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth

Electoral division(s) affected:

Countywide

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To provide members with an overview of the Strategic Leisure Framework for the Wellbeing, Sport and Leisure (WS&L) section within Culture, Sport and Tourism.

Executive Summary

- 2 The evidence to support physical activity as a key component in achieving a good standard of both physical and mental health is overwhelming. Unfortunately, in modern society people are battling priorities that often don't include keeping active and there are no quick solutions to changing people's behaviour.
- 3 Some people face more challenges than others to include physical activity into their daily lives and although an average of 59% of adults in County Durham are active (150 mins per week), this increases to 68.5% in our least deprived areas and decreases to 49.5% in our most deprived areas *Sport England: Active Lives Survey 20/21*.
- 4 As the main provider of sport and leisure services across County Durham, the Wellbeing, Sport and Leisure (WS&L) section within Culture, Sport and Tourism has a huge part to play in supporting residents to become and remain physically active.
- 5 The service provides 14 indoor and one outdoor leisure facilities, a county wide community wellbeing programme, free digital support to be

active in the home and positive lifestyle messaging to encourage people to access the places and spaces that make it easier for them to be active and the reasons why it's important.

- 6 WS&L has reviewed our approach to ensure that we are maximising our resources, that we are having a positive impact on physical activity levels and that we are reaching those that are the most in need. This review has formed the basis of the Leisure Framework (Appendix2) which sets out the principles to support the people, places, systems, and enablers to improve the health of our communities. This framework will be part of the Culture, Sport & Leisure Service Plan 2024-2027, which is currently in the final stages of development. This will incorporate the cross-cutting wellbeing agenda within our Culture section through access to positive experiences such as drama, art, dance, and social activities in libraries.
- 7 The ways that we enjoy being active can be different for each of us and the leisure framework acknowledges this, ensuring that traditional organised sport and exercise is offered and encouraged, alongside informal recreational opportunities for people during their free time.
- 8 This embodies a cultural change within the WS&L service area which was perceived as a traditional sport and leisure provider that prioritised programmes for 'fit and healthy' people. The framework reflects a service commitment to support our residents throughout their life course, breaking down barriers and stigmas to reflect the importance of physical activity, and providing a service offer that is appropriate and accessible to everyone.
- 9 The framework also embraces a partnership approach to encompass the county's wider infrastructure to get people moving, linking initiatives with internal and external partners to maximise the impact of our facilities, and our natural assets within County Durhams unique landscape utilising our green and blue spaces.
- 10 In 2023 Culture, Sport & Tourism restructured and realigned resource within WS&T to ensure that we provide a leisure offer for all ages and ability levels, incorporating the health and wellbeing agenda into everyone's role to ensure that we act as service advocates and ambassadors for healthy lifestyles.
- 11 The framework will reflect a more targeted approach to our service provision to ensure that we are reaching those the most in need. Barriers to activity are complex and interrelated and our priority will be to focus on selected communities that experience the greatest disadvantage, and the groups of people who face the greatest barriers to being active (i.e., long-term conditions/disabilities, minority ethnic

groups, lower socio-economic status) *Sport England Active Lives Survey 21-22*.

- 12 WS&L has developed a framework rather than a strategy, as 'Moving Together' (Appendix 3) has recently been developed as the county wide Physical Activity Strategy aiming to tackle inactivity levels (agreed at the Health & Wellbeing Board 28 July 2023).
- 13 WS&L will be part of this whole systems approach to address inequalities, and to develop effective and sustainable solutions. This strategy sets out a social movement to get people moving and the leisure framework will be intrinsically linked to this network, identifying our role and responsibilities within this collective, complex and ever moving system.
- 14 The Moving Together partnership has identified four key priority action areas:
 - Children and Young People
 - Inclusive Communities
 - Active Environments
 - Health and Social Care settings
- 15 The Moving Together action plan (Appendix 4) has identified a number of short, medium and long-term priorities within these themes and WS&L will be represented on the working groups that will support this work. WS&L actions and team plans will sit alongside this to ensure that our service contributes to this bigger agenda, allocating resource where it is needed the most, and ensuring that we make improvements and changes as a partnership and not in isolation.
- 16 The WS&L team will provide a community-based staff resource that can be utilised by all Moving Together partners to increase their capacity work with communities to develop sustainable 'place based' solutions to get people moving.
- 17 WS&L facilities will be reinvented as 'physical activity hubs', centred at the heart of local communities breaking down perceptions of leisure centres by offering something for everyone. Individuals and communities are unique, as are the experiences and challenges that shape them and the facilities and programmes will be more focused on creating the right offer, the right environment, and upskilling our staff to support people to develop the motivation, confidence, knowledge, and capacity to move more.

- 18 This will be complimented by a community offer outside of the leisure centres, led by local people for local people, to utilise the spaces and places on their doorstep.
- 19 The 'Moving Together' strategy will launch in the new year, as will the first community pilot 'Moving Together in Peterlee' which will support local stakeholders, and residents to have their say and to drive forward positive lifestyle changes in the town. This is a two-year pilot funded by Sport England in partnership with WS&L and will hopefully lead to additional investment to develop similar approaches across the county.
- 20 WS&L offers walking, running, and cycling support to local communities to set up and safely run organised sessions. Going forward this will be the 'Active Environments' action group within Moving Together to raise the profile of the environmental and the health benefits of Active Travel and using our local landscape for recreational use. It will also ensure that WS&L continues to proactively support the use of our cycle paths, rights of way etc. in line with improvements and infrastructure investment.
- 21 WS&L is part of the County Durham Together Partnership, and the leisure framework is underpinned by the County Durham 'Approach to Wellbeing' to ensure that communities are involved in the decisions that affect them. This also ensures that our agenda to improve access to inclusive opportunities to be active, is linked to the work streams that are working alongside local communities to improve engagement, resilience, housing, poverty and place, which are all potential barriers to participation.
- 22 The framework also supports the County Durham Plan and all outcomes will be connected to the aspirations for:
- More and better jobs
 - People live long and independent lives
 - Connected communities
- (County Durham Vision 2035)*
- 23 The framework links to a number of additional strategies and policy strands that will bring together wider expertise to deliver real change to our local communities:
- Uniting the Movement - Sport England
 - UK Active
 - Get Active: A strategy for the future of sport and physical activity - Active Together

- Durham County Inclusive Economy Strategy
- Durham County Poverty Action Plan
- Northeast Active Travel Strategy
- Durham Strategic Walking & Cycling Delivery Plan
- Durham County Rights of Way Improvement Plan

24 The leisure framework will define our service and ensure that CS&T links with networks, partners, and communities to embed the value of our services into everyday lives, adapting our approach, and finding solutions to make it easier for those facing the greatest challenges.

Recommendations

25 Members of the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee are invited to comment upon the information provided in the report.

Background

26 There is a huge disparity in the health and life expectancy of County Durham residents depending on where you live, those living in the most affluent parts of the county can expect to live around 8.5 years longer than those living in our most disadvantaged communities. 63,000 County Durham residents have a long-term condition or disability, and the average person in County Durham is expected to live in good health until they are 59 years old, 4 years less than the national average.

27 59% of adults in County Durham are active (150 mins per week). This increases to 68.5% in our least deprived areas and decreased to 49.5% in our most deprived areas, leaving a gap of 19% in activity levels.

28 36.9% of children and young people in County Durham are active (average of 60+ mins per day) *Academic year 21/22*. 31.7% are active for less than 30 minutes per day, this increases to 37% for children and young people living in our most deprived areas and decreases to 27.7% for those living in our least deprived areas.

Sport England: Active Lives Survey, Adult data and Children and Young People Activity Data, 2023

- 29 The Leisure framework (Appendix 2) is therefore focused on a more targeted approach to our service provision to ensure that we are reaching those the most in need. Barriers to activity are complex and interrelated and our priority will be to focus on selected communities that experience the greatest disadvantage, and the groups of people who face the greatest barriers to being active.
- 30 CS&T has developed a framework rather than a service strategy, as 'Moving Together' (Appendix 3) has recently been developed in consultation with a range of stakeholders, as the county wide strategy aiming to tackle inactivity levels. WS&L will be part of this whole systems approach to address inequalities, and to develop effective and sustainable solutions. The Moving Together strategy sets out a social movement to get people moving and the leisure framework will be intrinsically linked to this network, identifying WS&L roles and responsibilities within this collective, complex and ever moving system.
- 31 Moving Together has identified four key priority action areas:
- Children and Young People
 - Inclusive Communities
 - Active Environments
 - Health and Social Care settings
- 32 The partnership has developed an action plan (Appendix 4) and WS&L is represented on the working groups that will support these priority themes. This work will begin in January 2024 and will determine the WS&L actions to ensure that our service contributes to this bigger agenda, allocating resource where it is needed, and ensuring that we make improvements and changes as a partnership and not in isolation.
- 33 The WS&L team will also be better placed to develop programmes and good practice, adapting a more localised and targeted approach to our service delivery to potentially have a much greater impact. Current programmes that are already integrated into the Moving Together actions, led by WS&T are:

Children and Young People

- ❖ 'Ready Sett Go' offered to all Early Years providers in the county by the WS&L Community wellbeing team to develop physical literacy.
- ❖ 'Fun and Food' providing free holiday activities, funded by the Department of Education, WS&L offers activities to all children and young people within the leisure centres. This will be linked to more innovative long-term approaches to support families on low incomes.

- ❖ Play areas introduced as part of leisure transformation to support a fun, informal, recreational way to get your child, teenager or your family moving together. This will be linked to family hubs, public transport partners, Thrive Kitchen to offer a healthy family food offer.

Inclusive Communities

- ❖ Moving Together in Peterlee will launch in January 24, a place based pilot under the umbrella of Moving Together to support local stakeholders, and residents to have their say and to drive forward positive lifestyle changes in the town. This is a two-year pilot funded by Sport England in partnership with WS&L and will hopefully lead to additional investment to develop similar approaches across the county.
- ❖ A new recognition from partners that leisure centres are a valuable and underutilised asset will help us to increase inclusive participation and engagement.

Active Environments

- ❖ The Rights of Way Improvement Plan (currently out to consultation) covers Empowering Communities to 'own' their Public Right of Way Network. This is linked with the WS&L community wellbeing resource to raise awareness and maximise the local environment that supports physical activity.
- ❖ WS&L is intrinsically linked to the Strategic Cycling and Walking Delivery Plan 2019-2029 to make cycling and walking part of Durham's culture and to make them safe, affordable, enjoyable, everyday modes of transport.
- ❖ WS&L works closely with the Sustainable Transport team on the 'Borrow a Bike' scheme in local communities and this area of joint working has huge potential to impact communities.

Health and Social Care settings

- ❖ WS&L will continue our tested pilot 'We are Undefeatable' which was part of a national programme to support people with long term health conditions, increasing knowledge and confidence of individuals and professionals to remain active.
- ❖ The 'Move hub' offers a dedicated gym with power assisted equipment (pilots at Abbey in 2023 and Louisa and Teasdale in

2024), introductory level classes, low level team games (walking netball, football etc.) and a 1:1 advice and support programme at all facilities. This scheme will have the biggest impact to reach those that will benefit the most with the support of our NHS, health and social care providers.

- 34 County Durham has a number of purpose built and natural assets which can support the framework. WS&L manages 14 leisure centres, one outdoor sports facility, and develops programmes across a range of parks, open spaces, football and multi-use pitches. Moving Together will bring wider partners that manage parks, community venues, and countryside and coastal spaces around this shared agenda, which should have a massive impact on the usage figures and support potential investment and the long-term future of these assets.
- 35 CS&T leisure facilities will be reinvented as physical activity hubs, centred at the heart of local communities offering 'something for everyone'. Individuals and communities are unique, as are the experiences and challenges that shape them and the service will be more focused on creating the right offer, the right environment, and upskilling our staff to support people to develop the motivation, confidence, knowledge, and capacity to move more.
- 36 The leisure framework covers the following priorities that will make our outcomes deliverable:
- **People** - Support and develop physical activity programmes led by local people for local people. CS&T to act as physical activity ambassadors to inspire and support every person to move more.
 - **Places** - Providing a high quality and safe physical environment, integrating the wellbeing approach with mainstream leisure and sport provision. Maximizing the places and spaces that make it easier for people to be active.
 - **Society** - Using local champions to raise the importance and the profile of physical activity towards achieving a healthy lifestyle. Supporting those who are the least active through targeted interventions.
 - **Enablers** - Develop a suitably trained workforce. Use insight to understand local needs, making improvements by learning and adapting what we do. Providing a robust Marcoms plan to reach and engage people in a more innovative way.
 - **Systems** - Working with networks, partners, and communities to embed physical activity into everyday lives. Removing barriers and

finding solutions to make it easier for those facing the greatest challenges.

- 37 Any movement contributes to a healthier life and being physically active is easier for some people than it is for others. WS&L wants to contribute to changing this, connecting with Moving Together to give priority to our most vulnerable groups, geographical areas of social and health deprivation and to remove barriers for those facing the greatest challenges.

Contact:

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Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

None.

Finance

None.

Consultation

None.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

None.

Human Rights

None.

Climate Change

None.

Crime and Disorder

None.

Staffing

None.

Accommodation

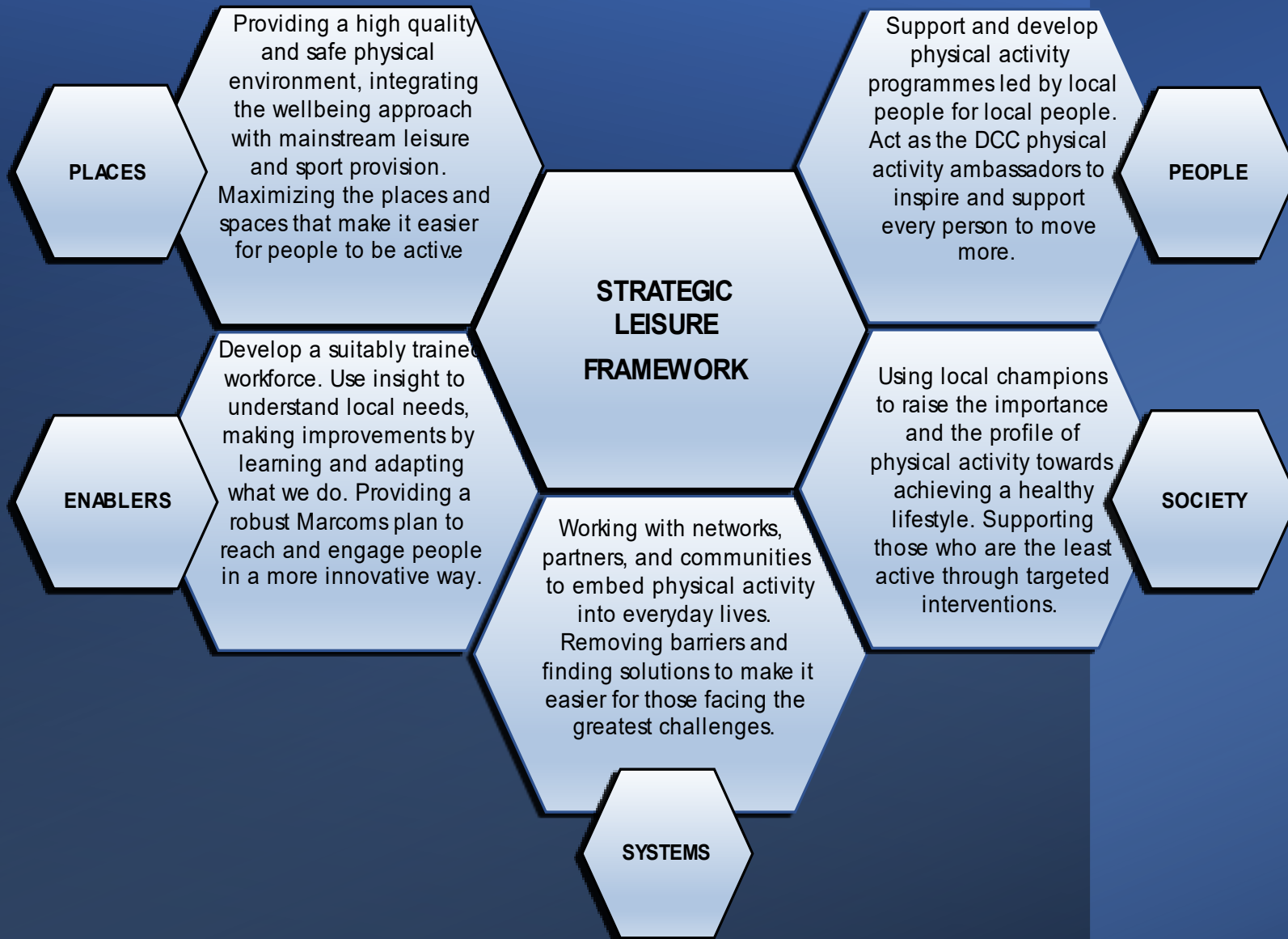
None.

Risk

None.

Procurement

None.



**Appendix 3 - Moving Together in County Durham Strategy
Accessible** *(Under separate cover)*

Appendix 4 -- Moving Together in County Durham Action Plan –
(Under separate cover)