

Moving Together

in County Durham



Our Physical Activity Strategy 2023–28





Acknowledgements

Moving Together in County Durham has been developed in close collaboration between:

Public Health Team, Durham County Council

County Durham Sport

Wellbeing, Sport and Leisure Service, Durham County Council

The strategy and its action plan could not have been produced without valuable contributions made by the people and communities in County Durham, as well as many local stakeholders from a range of public, private and community sector organisations including:

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Wellbeing for Life

County Durham Area Action Partnerships

Investing in Children

Food Durham

Sport England

Age UK County Durham

We Are Undefeatable

County Durham Housing Associations

VCS Alliance

Durham Community Action

Living Streets

OASES

There are many other members of our developing Moving Together Champions Network whose insight and perspectives have been crucial to this strategy's development.

Thank you to the students at East Durham College for their hard work and creativity in designing the 'Moving Together in County Durham' logo that is displayed throughout the strategy and associated documents.

Forewords

Welcome to 'Moving Together in County Durham' – our strategy to develop and promote a culture of moving for all who live, work, study in and visit County Durham.

Regular activity is not just about physical fitness, it also includes a wide range of benefits that extend to our general wellbeing. Increased activity not only reduces the risk of many physical health conditions, but it also helps to boost self-esteem, reduce stress, and increase energy. It is also a great way to meet other people and bring communities together.

Furthermore, we must not forget the beneficial effect that moving more can have on our environment. Durham County Council is now in the second phase of its Climate Emergency Response Plan, which is committed to reaching Net Zero by 2030. One of this strategy's priority action areas is active travel, which can make a significant positive impact on carbon emissions.

We have a lot to be proud of in County Durham. Our history, landscapes, scenery, people, and sense of community make this a really unique place. Whether visiting our countryside, dales, coastlines, or parks, there is a tonne of opportunity to get together with family, friends, and neighbours to reap the benefits of moving more outdoors.

Whilst many people across our county live active lives, engaging in physical activity is more difficult for some people than others. A key objective of this strategy is to ensure that everyone has a chance to move more, and that we are all motivated to do so, regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, social situation, or health status.

A central theme of this strategy is 'working together;' calling for collaboration and collective action to effect real change. Many of you have told us how we can work towards an inclusive, active County Durham, and you have taken time to tell us how we can best achieve this goal. I would like to take this opportunity to extend my gratitude for your contribution to this important work.

My call to action is that we let this strategy serve as a catalyst for change. That we recognise the role we can play in making County Durham a place where everyone is empowered to build more movement into their daily lives. I call on communities and organisations across the county to become Moving Together Champions – to join our movement to build activity into our day-to-day lives.

Let's get together to make County Durham a place that thrives on moving more for healthier and happier lives!

**Councillor Chris Hood,
Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Adult & Health Services,
Durham County Council.**



Councillor Chris Hood,
Cabinet Portfolio Holder for
Adult & Health Services,
Durham County Council.



Working collaboratively to change the range of environmental and social factors that stifle the development of a healthy and active nation runs through all our partnerships in County Durham. However, as a County, we face persistently stubborn health inequalities. This new strategy offers us the chance to have a greater impact by challenging our principles and approaches to physical activity policy making - by seeing it as a part of everyone's agenda and not only about attracting more people into existing sport and leisure opportunities.

The innovation that can come from such an integrated partnership approach offers us all an exciting opportunity to explore what works and to learn from communities about how local resources can be better utilised to support improved health and wellbeing.

Whilst we are all aware that eating well, socialising and exercising are helpful to improved health, Moving Together is not simply about individual responsibility and behaviour change. It is a recognition that housing, green spaces, poverty and the availability of good quality food, social connections and accessible opportunities for leisure all play their part. This strategy encourages a collective commitment from communities, professionals and policy-makers to work together to change the way things are done; ensuring that the different parts of the system work in harmony to make moving an easy choice.

By being open to new ways of working, listening to communities and by tackling obstacles to a healthy and active life in a holistic way, we can ensure that everyone in County Durham can find physical activity opportunities that are fun, free, friendly and close to their neighbourhoods- supporting their ambitions for a healthy lifestyle.

As the local Active Partnership (supported by Sport England to tackle inequalities in sport and physical activity), County Durham Sport looks forward to the opportunities for learning and improvement that this strategy offers us.

**Maxine Rhodes,
Managing Director, County Durham Sport.**

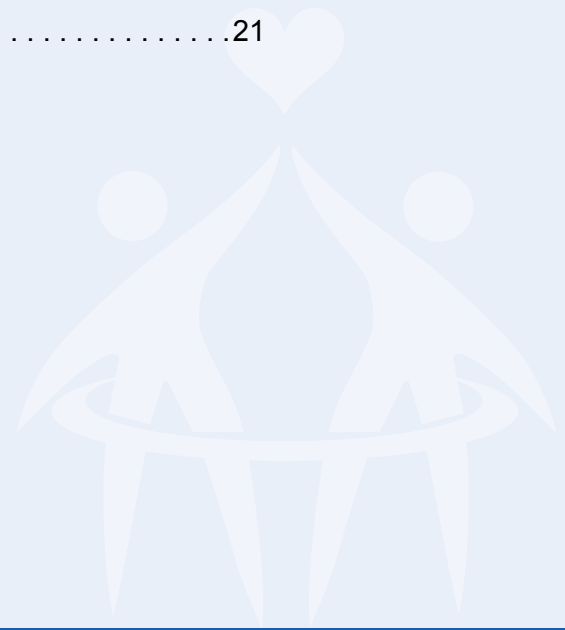


Dr Maxine Rhodes,
Managing Director,
County Durham Sport.



Contents

Acknowledgements	2
Forewords	3
Introduction	6
Our vision, mission, and core principles	7
Moving Together to reduce health inequalities	8
% population inactive (less than 30 mins per day) by other inequalities: Nov 2021 – 22	9
We are County Durham	11
How active are we?	12
Why moving matters?	13
Our communities are at the heart of Moving Together	14
Moving Together with a purpose	15
Healthy weight for all	16
Supporting change through a whole systems approach	17
How we will work together to achieve our goals	18
Moving Together Champions	19
Our priority action areas	20
What can we do?	20
Appendix	21
Our core principles	21



Introduction

We call our strategy 'Moving Together in County Durham' to show that every way we move counts towards our physical and mental health and wellbeing. Whether by walking, wheeling, or cycling to the shops, doing domestic chores, gardening, walking by the sea, playing in the park or playing football, it is all movement that contributes to a healthier life.

Daily activity can help us feel good in many ways, and now more than ever we see the importance of moving more each day. Findings from the COVID-19 pandemic, for example, showed us that physical activity is not only important for wellbeing but can lower the risk of ill health, and support recovery from illness.

So many people in County Durham are already active. In 2021/22, around 60% (260,200) of adults across the county were active for at least 150 minutes each week (Active Lives Survey 2022, Sport England). It remains, however, that some people face more challenges than others to include physical activity into their daily lives. The ways we enjoy moving can be different for each of us; whether participating in chair exercises, taking gentle steps, enjoying walking programmes, accessing gym facilities, engaging in competitive sports or meeting with friends and taking activity in the open air. We want these opportunities to be accessible to all.

County Durham is a great place to be active! Communities across the county have many assets that help us to be physically active, including green and blue spaces, clubs, and walking and cycling routes, as well as a wide range of local leisure centres, sports clubs, and organised activities. Our communities and visitors enjoy our unique countryside and coastal landscapes, and benefit from them when undertaking a range of outdoor active pursuits. Moving Together in County Durham will show how we can work together to ensure that we can all make the most of what the county has to offer.

We all have a role to play!

We want County Durham to be a place where everyone who lives, works, studies, or visits can take the opportunity to enjoy the benefits of living an active life. We also want to ensure that those who are least likely to be physically active are supported to move more.

No one organisation in County Durham can achieve this strategy alone, so this work is a partnership approach which places our people and communities at its heart. It is underpinned by the [County Durham Approach to Wellbeing](#); involving communities in decisions that affect them, to ensure that people of all ages across County Durham are motivated to move more, and have access to inclusive opportunities to be more active.

“ I'm now steadier walking and have more stamina, this is all thanks to the Gentle Walks programme. ”

Gordon Ridpath, Member of Gentle Walks



Note

For the purposes of this strategy, activity or movement are used to refer to all kinds of physical activity, including active living (e.g., stair climbing, walking, and wheeling), sport, planned structured exercise and informal, incidental activity.

The word 'system' is used to refer to the many people, organisations and factors which influence physical activity and is defined in the strategy. The ['Building blocks of good health'](#) show how many factors impact on our ability to be active in our daily lives.

Our vision, mission, and core principles

Our Vision

County Durham residents will be more active, enabling them to live longer, healthier, and happier lives.



Our Mission

Bringing people and organisations together with a shared purpose of helping everyone in County Durham.

- **County Durham is a wonderful place to live with unique beauty**, but many of us are not active enough for good health
- **Building activity into all parts of our lives** will help us connect with our communities to be healthier, happier, and stronger



Community

The heart of 'Moving Together'
People and places are our greatest power



Collaborate

We are stronger together
Every individual, community and organisation sharing the vision



Engage

Thinking big together
Creatively engaging and joining people together at every place and level



Focus

Creating equal chance together
Together removing challenges to make sure everyone has an equal chance to have better health



Celebrate

Recognising success together
Sharing and nurturing our community's success across the County



Learn

Changing and learning together
Listening and adapting to the needs of all our people and communities

You can read more detail about our core principles in the Appendix.

Moving Together to reduce health inequalities



Fairness for all

Our health (and our healthy life expectancy) can be determined by the circumstances in which we are born, where we grow up, our education, and our work. Any unfair or avoidable differences in health across our populations, and between different groups are known as 'health inequalities' or 'health disparities.'

We all have a right to live long, healthy, happy, and productive lives; however, there are some significant gaps in the number of years some of us will live compared to others. 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. There is also inequality in how healthy those years will be. For example, men and women born in County Durham can expect to live in good health for about 4 years less than the England average.

Whilst our behaviours, such as what we eat, how often we are physically active, and whether we smoke, all have a huge effect on our state of health and wellbeing, achieving and maintaining a healthy lifestyle can be challenging for many within our population. We know that there are many positive health benefits associated with moving more and being physically active; however, many people do not meet national [physical activity guidelines.pdf](#).

Being physically active will be easier for some people than it is for others, and we want to change this. Everyone in County Durham should be able to be more active, and we want to ensure that our homes, communities (including our community assets), schools, colleges, and workplaces help everyone to move more.

The Sport England Active Lives Survey (Nov 2021-22) shows there are differences in individual's physical activity levels from different groups (i.e., long-term conditions/disabilities, Black, Asian, minority ethnic groups, socio-economic status).



% population inactive (less than 30 mins per day) by other inequalities: Nov 2021 – 22

Characteristic	Least deprived (IMD* 1-3)	Most deprived (IMD 8-10)
Socioeconomic group	20.5	38.9
Disability/long-term condition	36.8	47.1
Asian (excluding Chinese)	23.0	38.4
Black	28.7	34.3
Chinese	26.9	27.1
Mixed	16.3	23.1
Other ethnic group	26.3	40.2
White (British)	20.2	32.9
White (Other)	19.1	27.0
Higher education	15.2	22.5
No qualifications	44.6	57.8
Employed	15.9	27.7
Unemployed	28.2	41.9
Long term sickness	52.1	62.0

*Indices of multiple deprivation

Around 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. Increasing movement can help people live healthier for longer, so a key objective of this strategy is to ensure that everyone is afforded the opportunity to move more in their everyday lives.

Every minute of movement counts towards better health. Whilst many of our residents incorporate some physical activity into their days, nearly a third are active for less than 5 minutes per day. This can be seen in the table below which shows the difference in inactivity levels according to age and socioeconomic status:

% population Inactive (less than 20 mins per day) by age: Nov 2021 – 22 (Sport England Active Lives)

Age group	Least deprived (IMD 1-3)	Most deprived (IMD 8-10w)
5-15	27.2	34.2
16-34	14.7	27.3
35-54	15.3	33.0
55-74	20.0	38.3
75+	42.0	57.0

Opportunities for physical activity must be fair and accessible to all, giving everyone an equal chance to be active.

This strategy recognises that this not solely a result of individual choice. Moving Together in County Durham is a framework for partnerships to give priority to our most vulnerable groups. Striving to remove barriers to moving more and making it easier for those facing the greatest challenges to improve activity levels and contribute to improved mental and physical health and wellbeing. Through this approach, together we will reduce inequalities.

Physical activity is about more than just health, it should be fun, enjoyable, and help bring people and communities together. We understand the positive impact that can be achieved by helping everyone to be more active, and we are working together to help build active communities by promoting the benefits of moving more, and constantly striving to remove any barriers to participation at all levels.

Increased activity levels for our most disadvantaged people can not only contribute to reducing inequalities in healthy life years, but it can also improve general wellbeing and contribute to work readiness and increased productivity in the workplace. We will consider how this can be achieved in our ‘priority action areas’ later in this strategy.

“ Being active has many benefits not only physically, but mentally. Having a strategy like Moving Together ensures structure and outlines what should or will happen to have a definite impact.

Moving Together isn’t just for sporty people, it’s for everyone and aims to fight the stigma stopping everyone from exercise, – allowing us to move together. ”

Durham Youth Council



We are County Durham

County Durham is one of the biggest counties in England, with a diverse geography comprising many locations in which we can reap the benefits of outdoor activity. Indeed, our county attracts many visitors for this purpose. We are well known for our natural assets, including stunning [countryside and landscapes](#), hills, dales, rivers, waterfalls and coastline. These are such an important part of our current and future physical activity environment. Our public rights of way span around 3,500km, we have three country parks, 25 nature reserves, 150 miles of accessible railway paths, and 285 square miles of accessible green space.

Where we live:

- 14,565 businesses
- 12 green flags for parks and open spaces
- 2 in 5 residents living in rural areas
- 12 miles of coastline
- 150 miles of former railway path
- Durham world heritage site

Our Services:

- 223 early years and primary schools, 31 secondary schools, 4 colleges
- 9 enhanced mainstream schools and 11 special schools
- 1 university
- 15 council owned leisure centres
- 63 GP practices
- 124 pharmacies

Our Communities supporting each other:

- 411 sports clubs accessing support
- 59 active community champions
- Around 115 active volunteer leaders in walking, running and cycling
- 600 people attending sessions ran by the Cree* network last year
- Over 3,000 Voluntary and Community Sector organisations

*A Cree is County Durham's version of Australia's Men's Shed. Crees aim to engage with those at risk of suicide by tackling social isolation and self-harm through skill-sharing and informal learning to promote social interaction. Although Crees were originally aimed at men, some have developed for women and young people.

Spending time outdoors in our parks, woodlands or on the coast can improve our wellbeing, and it is recognised that 'green environments' are linked to reduced levels of depression, anxiety and enhanced energy and quality of life at all ages. Those who access outdoor leisure activities regularly benefit from reduced blood pressure, less chance of heart disease and are more likely to maintain healthier weight (Green space review OHID, 2020). Here in County Durham, we have many opportunities for such outdoor activities on our doorstep!

There is an abundance of evidence to support the role of such natural assets to increase activity levels, improve our physical health and wellbeing, and increase social connections.

Walking is the most popular activity in County Durham. In 2020/21, the average adult spent 249 minutes walking for leisure or travel per week.

Source: Sport England Active Lives Adult Survey 2020/21

How active are we?

Physical activity can hold different meanings for different people, based on their individual circumstances, goals and preferences. For example, many may engage in physical activity for health and fitness reasons, whilst others may be motivated by recreation and enjoyment of the outdoors. Some may exercise as a form of stress relief, whilst others might use activities as an opportunity for social interaction and connection.

It is important to realise that any amount of movement is better than none, and of course, more is better! We will look at this later in this strategy.

What do we know about physical activity levels in County Durham?*

Active (adults) at least 150 minutes a week

- 59% met this minimum guideline
- This increased to 68.5% in our least deprived areas and decreased to 49.5% in our most deprived areas
- Gap of almost 20% between least and most deprived areas of County Durham

Inactive (adults) less than 30 mins per week

- 30.8% were inactive
- This increased to 38.9% in our most deprived areas and decreased to 20.5% in our least deprived areas
- Gap of just over 18% between our most and least deprived areas.

Active (children and young people) on average 60+ mins per day

- 36.9% of children and young people met this minimum guideline
- Academic year 21/22

Active (children and young people) on average less than 30 mins per day

- 31.7% are active for less than 30 minutes per day
- This increases to 37% for those children and young people living in our most deprived areas and decreases to 27.7% for those living in our least deprived areas.
- Academic year 21/22

Opportunity (adults Nov 20/21)

- In County Durham, around 73% of people either agreed or strongly agreed with the assertion that they had the opportunity to be physically active.
- This dropped to 68.5% for those living in our most deprived areas and increased to 83.4% of those living in our least deprived areas.

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



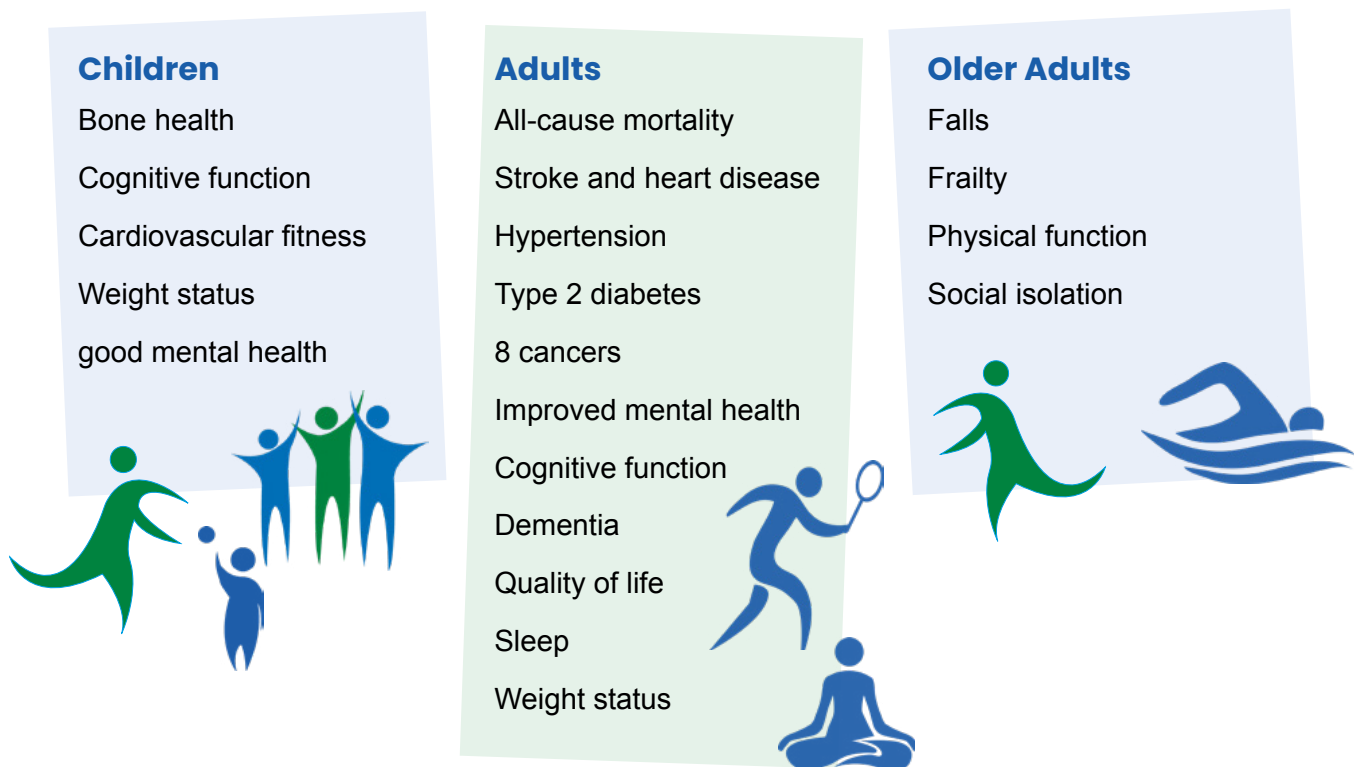
Why moving matters?

Some is good, more is better!

Being active has so many benefits to our health and our environment. Moving, physical activity and sport can change lives, not only by supporting good physical health, but also by making us feel happier, helping us to be more productive in our personal and working lives, and even by improving quality of sleep.

Around 8.5% of those living in County Durham have a diabetes diagnosis, whilst 17.2% live with high blood pressure. Furthermore, 15% of the population have heart disease, whilst 2.4% have suffered a stroke event. Moving more can reduce the risk associated with many of these conditions, and where there are opportunities for all groups to move together, communities can thrive, and this brings many benefits. Moving with others, for example, can prevent social isolation, which in turn can reduce the risk of both cardiovascular disease and dementia.

Moderate or strong evidence for health benefit



Movement is good for all, and we know that some of the greatest benefits will be achieved by supporting those who are currently inactive. Regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, economic status or ability, we want all residents of County Durham to have accessible, safe, and convenient choices to help them move more. This strategy supports everyone to be active, whilst recognising that some barriers to increased activity may not be within an individual's own control.

While there are [recommended levels of physical activity for adults and children](#), even 5-10 minutes of movement at a time can be effective as a long-term goal for people starting from low levels of movement. In today's society, where people's lives are busy with many competing priorities, even small amounts or bursts of movement throughout the day will be of benefit. For example, taking the stairs instead of the lift or walking to the local shop instead of driving.

Our communities are at the heart of Moving Together

Benefits for the whole community

Walking, cycling, group activities, sport and play bring a whole host of benefits to our communities (OHID, 2020).



Physical wellbeing

- Longer and healthier life years



Mental wellbeing

- Feel good
- Helps memory and long term mental health



Individual development

- School readiness
- Productivity and independence



Social

- Better quality of life
- Sense of belonging and togetherness
- Road safety
- Reduced loneliness



Economic

- Improved employment
- Community
- Wealth building
- Work productivity
- Reduced sickness absence



Environment

- Cleaner air
- Suitable travel and places
- Reduced CO2 emissions
- Healthier environment

Our people and communities are County Durham's biggest assets. We have worked together to understand and recognise diverse needs, and to identify those local assets that help people to be more active. We will continue to ensure that local environments support people to move more – whether that is where they live, work or play - as well as by supporting communities to become more connected to better enable this to happen. We call this a 'whole systems approach' and will consider this in more detail later.

'The more an environment consistently promotes healthy behaviour, the greater the likelihood that such behaviour will be adopted and continue'

World Obesity Federation

We have used local data, insight from our communities, and evidence-based approaches will help us to focus our efforts on those with greatest need - supporting those who move least to move more. Building on consultation and co-production of this strategy, we will expand on the good work already taking place across our communities to encourage people to become more active.

Making it easier to be active every day and achieve healthy weight is everyone's business, which can be better achieved by making changes together. Local businesses, Health and Social Care organisations, education providers, early years settings, children services, VCS organisations, libraries, employment services and programmes, can all make positive change.



Moving Together with a purpose

This strategy sets out a vision and mission that encourages everyone to join a movement and make a change. It is not simply a list of actions, because we recognise it is time to think differently and listen to the changing needs of our communities. Those actions needed to achieve our goals are driven with, and by, our residents and communities, and this strategy highlights how we can and will make change together.

Moving Together is everyone's business

Engaging leadership across the system is important to the success of the Moving Together vision. A key focus of this strategy is to collaborate with partners in all sectors who support people to live healthier lives, whether that is in workplaces, schools, play, or community support groups. Our aim is to ensure all partners are equipped to help those they work with to move more.

“ Blue Gym is an activity programme designed to get participants active in blue space to benefit their physical and mental health. Being in coastal and river environments offers the opportunity to reduce the amount of ‘noise’ in people’s minds and focus on the environment around them rather than their own problems ”

Sarah Campbell,
Community and Volunteer Manager,
National Trust



Healthy weight for all

We know obesity cuts lives short and contributes to many conditions including type 2 diabetes, depression, anxiety, and cancer. Having excessive body fat not only increases disease risk, but can also impact on mobility, work productivity, social engagement, the enjoyment of healthy relationships.

In County Durham 24% of reception age children, and 40% of children in Year 6 are living with overweight including obesity. Among adults, this figure increases to 71%. (Office for Health Improvement and Disparities, 2022).

It is important to understand that our surroundings have a huge impact on our ability to achieve and maintain a healthy weight, and it can be misleading to believe that obesity is an individual problem, as more than one hundred factors contribute to a person having obesity (Lawrence et al 2022). Willpower and people have not changed, but our environments, the systems we live in have. For example, fewer of us are active at work, as technology encourages us to sit for longer periods. It can be easier to rely on the car for short journeys or take the lift rather than the stairs. This is why we must continue to work together to ensure that where possible, our physical environment shapes our individual behaviours – maximising all opportunities to increase activity levels and levels of healthy weight.



“ We build and nurture our physical literacy throughout our lives, forming our initial love of movement in the early years and through our school life. It is important that we know and understand the barriers that increase disengagement, reduce motivation, and prevent our children and young people from accessing movement. Where we can reduce barriers and improve inclusive opportunity we can build and empower individuals to self-select to be active, however that may look. Every movement counts!

From parents, school leaders and business managers, to politicians and policy makers, every stakeholder can contribute to the societal shift overall and a journey to reducing sedentary behaviour. ”

Kate Stephenson

Education Durham, Education Advisor and Specialist Physical Education,
School Sport and Physical Activity Advisor



Supporting change through a whole systems approach

Opportunities to move during the course of our daily lives have changed a lot in the past few decades. Compared to times when people walked and cycled to their workplaces or school, we now see more reliance upon cars and personal transport. Rapid developments in digital technology mean that we can now buy almost anything online and have it delivered to our homes. More people now work from home, so it seems more challenging than ever before to make movement part of our daily lives.

This means that is now more important than ever to look at how we can work together as a system to make it easier to build more physical activity into our daily lives.



Our system is built upon relationships between our people, our communities, our organisations, and our infrastructure. We live and work in communities that are rich with assets and resources, and by working together we can all use these to develop effective solutions to improve our health and wellbeing and make moving more a part of our lives.



How we will work together to achieve our goals

We have collaborated with local people, communities, and a range of organisations in County Durham about how we can improve opportunities to increase movement and physical activity in County Durham. Feedback has helped us to produce a framework that shows how we will work together to achieve our goals.

Moving Together Framework for Change

Vision

County Durham residents will be more active, enabling them to live longer, healthier and happier lives

Our core principles



Our priority action areas



Focus on 'the asks'

1. Create accessible, enjoyable, and inclusive opportunities for play, recreation, and physical activity for children and young people at home, school, and community settings.
2. Build a 'Moving Together in County Durham' culture that increases opportunities for everyone to move more and ensure the benefits of physical activity are promoted across all settings.
3. Increase accessibility to active travel for all who live, work/study in, and visit County Durham, and ensure active principles are considered in all local policies concerning the built and natural environment

Our framework for change is informed by the Moving Together vision and mission. It is based upon what you have told us is important, and how we should focus our joint resources to effect the biggest change.

Moving Together Champions

We cannot do this alone! We are creating our goals with the help of Moving Together Champions who 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.

A Moving Together Champion is a person, community, group, business, or organisation who is committed to supporting those they can influence to move more each day. They:

- Understand the importance of being more active to improve health outcomes of all those who they may influence
- Take specific actions to embed the 'Moving Together' core principles into their everyday practices
- Promote the benefits of being active, by sharing consistent messages to all who will benefit, with a particular focus on those who face biggest challenges to move more

Champions will share resources and insight, promoting good practice and celebrating success as the movement develops. As the network grows, so will our progress towards a healthier and more active County Durham.

“ *OASES (Outdoor and Sustainability Education Specialists) is a charity based in Esh Winning that works with young people, schools and families to support global sustainability and outdoor learning, encouraging young people to get outside, get active and enjoy nature in their local environment. We are consequently delighted to be part of Moving Together, and we offer lots of programmes that will support this agenda, from family gardening to orienteering, Forest schools to Active Learning.* **”**

Joanne Appleby,
OASES CEO



Growing



Active Learning



Orienteering

Our priority action areas

Local people, organisations and physical activity stakeholders gave their views through a variety of consultations, surveys, roundtables, and focus groups, and identified the following priority areas for action:

- Children and young people
- Inclusive communities
- Active environments
- Health and social care settings

You will find more detail on each group in our action plan, including our ambitions and key priorities.

How do we know we have made a difference?

Measuring outcomes in systems and behaviour change can be challenging; however, County Durham has very well-established collaborations that are well placed to ascertain and monitor system connectivity, growth in our common purpose, and achievement of our joint Moving Together ambitions.

Local consultation has informed our action plan. As well as measuring quantitative performance through national indicators and datasets (Sport England Active Lives, Office for Health Improvement and Disparities Public Health Outcomes Frameworks), local stakeholders will monitor cultural and systems change through existing and developing networks such as the Physical Activity Strategy Committee, the Healthy Weight Alliance, the County Durham Children and Young People's Partnership, the Early Years Framework, the Active Environments Partnership, the County Durham Care Partnership, as well as through other health improvement initiatives that are focussed on improving levels of physical activity and healthy weight.

Data and information will be reported on an annual basis through the County Durham Health and Wellbeing Board.

What can we do?

The strategy encourages individuals, organisations, community groups, clubs, and wider partners to collaborate by creating a plan that will help more people in County Durham to be active. This is why we have developed some key core principles to help focus and support individual and organisational action.

We have also identified key priority areas that, as a network, we will focus upon. They have been informed by local evidence and feedback from partners from across the system. These priority areas will help our key partners to coordinate and align approaches towards helping people to move more.

Making it easier to be active every day and achieve healthy weight is your business, our business, and everyone's business, and this can be better achieved by making changes together!

We can all work to make County Durham a place where there are lots of opportunities to move more. Our people, our communities, our local businesses, our health and social care providers, our education providers, our VCS organisations – indeed, any organisation in County Durham - can all make positive changes to help us move together!

Our core principles



Community



Collaborate



Engage



Focus



Celebrate



Learn

Community

Our people and communities are County Durham's biggest asset. We will collaborate 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.

Working with our communities is a central driver to the success of the strategy. What drives this work is building on community strengths and empowering people to understand what matters to them in the context of increasing activity levels. Communities have been involved in developing the principles of the strategy through consultation, and we have co-produced an action plan to agree how change will be achieved.

The key is a bottom-up approach with the emphasis on 'people, organisations, community groups, and clubs working together.' 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 co-produce solutions with local people and partners so that we can create meaningful ways to help people move more and increase their activity levels.

Sport England's Sport Outcomes Evidence Review (2017) demonstrated the impact of building stronger communities by bringing people from diverse backgrounds together via participating, volunteering and spectating, improving community links, levels of cohesion, and social capital. Improving residents' sense of belonging, increasing levels of social trust, and feeling more connected to neighbourhoods and communities are also recognised as key factors in building a strong sense of community.

Collaborate

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.

County Durham will adopt and continually develop a whole systems approach to increasing movement and physical activity. This will help our people and communities work with local organisations to better understand their needs and ideas, help identify where the need is greatest, identify opportunities for change that will support regular movement, and build upon the existing vibrant physical activity culture across the county.

The strategy encourages 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.

This strategy will encourage people of all ages to move more. This 'life course approach' acknowledges that people have different levels of movement throughout different stages of their lives, and that these stages can be influenced by many internal and external factors. We want to collaborate with partners, communities, and organisations to help people overcome any such barriers and make positive lifestyle changes.

Engage

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.

There are many ways to become involved with the implementation of this strategy so that you can maximise its impact:

- Share it with the organisations, groups, clubs, and people you work or collaborate with
- Adopt and embrace its key principles
- Help others to move more. Ask someone else (a neighbour, family, colleague, friend, patient) what matters to them, how they would like to get moving more, and find out how you can best support them
- Be an advocate or role model for change – help to grow the momentum of this strategy and build regular movement into your day
- Consider how regular movement features into your organisation's policies, and put it on the agenda in your work or community
- Connect with partners – whether in person, virtually or through social media to access resources and share information



Focus

Encourage and support those within our communities who are least active to move more to help address the inequalities that currently exist

We know that life chances and health are determined by the conditions which a person is born, grows, lives, works, and ages. Social and physical environments are known to directly influence the opportunity to move more and do more physical activity, so we need to work together to reduce barriers to active lifestyles.

Safe transport environments, for example, influence how children integrate walking and cycling into their daily routines, and enable older aged adults to maintain their autonomy. So, without such systems, the opportunity for active travel could be much more limited.

Although everyone, regardless of age, gender, language, ethnicity, economic status, or ability, should have accessible, safe, convenient opportunities to be active we know this isn't always the case. We will focus efforts where the need is greatest to reduce those inequalities that impact upon activity and health. Our data tells us that some of our communities experience worse health outcomes than others and we want to support all residents to live more active, healthier lives.

Celebrate

Inspiring everyone in County Durham by sharing the passion, opportunities, and assets

We want this strategy to help identify and celebrate progress and success and inspire others to join in and take action. By being asset-focused we will acknowledge the different strengths and nurture movement leadership across the County

Learning

Using evidence supported by local conversations

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.

Creating long term change takes time. A combination of data (such as the number of people active) and local engagement will help us to measure the impact of this strategy. However, learning about the experiences of our people, and our network of partners, will also help us to monitor progress. A combination of data, case studies and practical examples from communities across the county will be key to continually improving and maximising our current physical activity opportunities.

This strategy will be monitored and reviewed through the creation of a strong network across County Durham, we will capture and share learning so that we can best understand what motivates our communities and helps our people to become more active. We will focus our efforts on working together to create the best possible environment that will help people to move more.

Partners and communities are encouraged to regularly share case studies to highlight success and learning. A partnership approach to evaluation will involve celebrating and sharing when things go well, and learning and trying again when things aren't so successful.

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