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Sport England People and Places The story of doing it differently



People and Places

The story of doing it differently



Sport England

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Introduction

In 2016, we invited communities from all over England to test a new way of working with us by becoming one of 12 'local delivery pilots'.

We wanted to understand how working with places could address the stubborn inequalities that exist among the least active. Our aim was to do this in a way that would impact across the five government outcomes (physical wellbeing, mental wellbeing, social and community development, economic development, individual development) and demonstrate how sport and physical activity can shape local policy and help drive long-lasting, transformational change in areas across the country. With a shared goal of tackling inactivity in their communities, we partnered with local people, groups and organisations to address the barriers that keep people from being active. Together, we began using local networks and structures to create ways of working and approaches that can provide benefits for years to come.

We didn't know what the answers would be when we started out, but we thought they might be different for each place. What we were sure of, though, was that local people held the keys to unlocking long-lasting, positive change in their communities.

Four years later, it's clearer than ever that a place-based approach has the potential to unlock truly groundbreaking change and empower new generations of leadership in sport and physical activity across our country.

We still don't have all the answers about how to use a systemic approach to tackle inactivity. But we've learned a huge amount about the conditions, principles and practical considerations needed to influence positive change at every level of the systems we live in. And we're more convinced than ever about the power of sometimes small steps to make a big difference to people's lives. As an organisation, we're not alone in this thinking. Many other sectors and local authorities are exploring and adopting community-orientated systemic change approaches that are changing the way local services are delivered. Their experiences have showed that positive outcomes are delivered by systems and interaction within them, not by particular interventions or organisations. We hope our experiences can contribute to this wider work and help others looking to address complex issues in a similar way.



Thank you

This story, and the work of the local delivery pilots, is about more than just Sport England. It's a story of brilliant, dedicated people all over the country and their ambition to enact change at every level of the systems we live in. Without the hard work of everyone involved in the local delivery pilots, this story might have been over before it even began.

This story will take you on our journey over the past four years, and the challenges and successes of implementing a new place-based way of working across 12 local communities. It'll show you why we thought this approach was so important, the amazing people that've helped us every step of the way and where we think this journey will take us next.

We'd like to thank all those people who've taken the time to share their experiences in helping us to tell this story.

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This is the
story
of our work
so far

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The need for change

For over 20 years, we've been working to help everyone in England benefit from taking part in sport and physical activity. Despite making some great progress, we haven't been able to effectively address the fact that one in four adults are still missing out on the benefits of living a more active life.

We strongly believe that being active is about so much more than just physical wellbeing. It helps people develop, improves mental health, connects and strengthens communities and makes a major contribution to the economy. We want to help everybody in England, no matter where they come from or how active they are, to have an equal chance of experiencing these benefits.

But we also know that it's often those who could gain the most from being more active that are least likely to take part. For many people, the reasons for their inactivity are complex. They can range from personal to geographical, but they all, in some way, relate back to the places we call home. We're all influenced by the system we're part of – the social and physical environment we live in, the organisations and institutions that serve us and the local and national policies that impact our community. Trying to promote more physical activity doesn't stand a chance if these systems do not support and nurture it.



A moment of humility

I think there was a bit of frustration with some of what we were already doing. Decades of participation statistics about stubborn inequalities showed us we couldn't keep doing what we had been. We needed to change the way we thought about the problem, and there was a realisation that we needed to operate in a different way.

Our own system had defined success and value in a certain narrow way, focusing on all the different things we were doing, the money being spent and the amazing stuff being built. Instead, we decided to start with people and place and their needs, expectations and the challenges they face, and work back from that.

Chris Perks, Executive Director of Local Delivery, Sport England



Deep-rooted inequalities across our communities have a significant impact on people's lives. Despite many successes in helping the nation to be more active, there are still stubborn and stark inequalities that affect the ability of people to be active. Certain groups aren't currently taking part in physical activity as much as others and may not have done so for a long period of time. Our local work is determined to change this and make a difference where it matters most.

Understanding the systems that shape how we live

There's been a lot of thinking across the public sector in the last decade about the many ways that people are influenced by the places they live. As individuals with our own hopes, fears and personal circumstances, we all form part of a larger social, economic and political system that helps define what we see as possible and the opportunities available to us.

It's an uncomfortable fact, but many of the things that stop people from being active are just not in their power to change. The places, faces, policies and conventions that make up the system we live in have a large role in shaping our behaviour and the choices we make. But national programmes often can't tackle the barriers that can often exist at a local level, and top-down interventions don't lead to sustainable change. We realised that we needed to work across and influence all layers of the system in order to tackle the barriers to inactivity at every level of our society. This would mean collaborating with communities to learn how to create a new way of co-creating change.

Visualise all the layers in the system

We're all influenced by lots of different factors that surround us in our daily lives, especially when it comes to how active we are. To really change how active a person or a community is, all of these influencing factors need to work coherently as a 'system' around them. If we're going to help foster positive change in these places, there needs to be a change of focus.

It isn't about looking for what's 'wrong' with those residents and communities. Instead, it means looking closely at what's not working in the system that surrounds them. This makes sense in theory but doesn't always easily translate into a clear strategy. This diagram has helped all of us visualise the systems we live in, and how we might be able to change them. Each layer not only represents the thousands of people within the communities we're trying to reach, but also many others working in different organisations and institutions, each with their own ideas about their role, why it matters, and what they should be doing.

Tackling causes, not symptoms

Exploring new ways of working relies on an honest appraisal about what's gone before. While short-term intervention programmes can help address specific issues, they do have limitations. Short-term funding cycles can impact momentum as programmes peter out and the initial benefits fade. These kinds of temporary measures can actually lead to frustration in a community and create a stronger sense of not being heard.

By their nature, national programmes can't always account for the unique characteristics of different cities, towns and communities. We decided to trial a new place-based approach, one that would help us to understand whether focusing on specific places and their unique challenges, and working with local people, organisations and assets already in place, could create sustainable, positive change for communities. What we didn't realise when we started out was just how much we'd end up changing our approach, and the way we work as a team and collaborate with partners.

 See more information on p.23



Policy

Local laws, rules, regulations, codes

Physical environment

Built, natural, transport links

Organisations and institutions

Schools, health care, businesses, faith organisations, charities, clubs

Social environment

Individual relationships, families, support groups, social networks

Individual

Individual attitudes, beliefs, knowledge, needs, behaviours

Source: socio-ecological model

Preparing for change

In 2016, we knew we wanted to do things differently, but we couldn't say for certain what that would look like or even what exactly needed to change. Our aims, however, were clear. We'd work alongside organisations who would come together to form a pilot in 12 different locations across the country. We'd try to find new ways of working together to encourage communities, particularly those facing stubborn inequalities to increase their levels of physical activity. Together we'd try and address the systemic barriers that make it difficult for people in those places to live more active lives.



Doing everything differently

For an organisation used to leading from the front, it can be unnerving to give up control, and even more so to admit that you don't have all the answers. It was important that we communicated this uncertainty honestly with potential pilots and showed them that we were looking to follow their lead and co-create approaches. They also needed to know what we were certain of – our intent, commitment and desire to work together every step of the way.

It quickly became clear that every part of this place-based approach would be different from Sport England's usual way of working, particularly the pilot selection process. Unlike our traditional funding application process, we didn't expect our local partners to already have a detailed plan, but we did want them to be deeply embedded in their communities. An early challenge was communicating clearly what we were trying to do while hearing directly from places. So we held a series of workshops to allow an open sharing of thoughts and ideas. This initial



collaboration helped demonstrate early on how we wanted to work with places. We didn't just issue a written invitation to apply; we wanted to create a sense of shared purpose with potential partners.

When it came time to decide from a shortlist of locations, Sport England colleagues from across the organisation visited 19 places across the country that helped bring the challenge to life. What had previously been abstract and theoretical discussions became vividly real when we saw first-hand the commitment, leadership and passion in these communities. We were able to experience the place itself, the communities and the partners and have real conversations with people who live there to learn as much from them as possible. Spending time with partners and people in their place was the single most illuminating factor in the selection process.

As we began the process of narrowing our shortlist to 12, confidence in the leadership of each place became a key factor in our decision making. Systems change needs capable, visionary leadership at every level, and building on the work of the fantastic people already working in these communities was essential. It was clear that leadership often already existed within places. We didn't need to build it, but we could enable it to grow, do more and better connect to other parts of the system. Often there were consortiums of partners already working together in local networks that were established in the local area. These existing relationships were crucial, so that we could test the potential of these partnerships and their ability to influence every layer of local systems over the course of the initial programme. They meant we wouldn't have to build new relationships from scratch before we could start.

What were we looking for?

The criteria we used to select the pilots looked to identify the key agents for change, those who understood the aims and had the capability to try and make them happen. We looked at:

- 1 Place** – understanding the ‘story’ of place
- 2 Audience** – who applicants were trying to reach and influence
- 3 Leadership** – who was leading and what team did they have in place or aim to build?
- 4 Outcomes** – what significant or transformational local outcomes were they seeking?
- 5 Learning** – what could be tested through the work and the appetite for learning?
- 6 Partnerships** – understanding why and how the pilot is a shared priority for partners
- 7 Sustainability** – how would partnerships create long-lasting change?
- 8 Commitment** – understanding how the pilot would remain a priority over the length of the programme
- 9 Readiness** – could they demonstrate an ability to hit the ground running and grow with demand?



The capacity for curiosity

When we set off on the LDP journey, we certainly didn't expect the freedom to invest in things like engagement, ideas and the capacity to reflect and talk. We have been able to really stop and think about what we can do differently, and work on building the skills and the team we need to do it. Whilst it's not how funding programmes have worked in the past – it has definitely felt like the right thing to do. What I'm learning about systems change is that you can't just read about this work and get it. A big part of the change for a place is wrapped up in the experience and the changes that happen in our own personal attitudes and approaches. I think we're learning that it takes a certain type of person to influence change, and it's really important that we find those people in our places and give them the time and capacity to think and connect.

Ken Masser, Pilot Manager, Pennine Lancashire



Our 12 local pilots

At the end of the process, we had 12 local pilots:

1. Southall
2. Greater Manchester
3. Calderdale
4. Birmingham and Solihull
5. Exeter and Cranbrook
6. Doncaster
7. Withernsea
8. Bradford
9. Essex
10. South Tees
11. Hackney
12. Pennine Lancashire



Becoming the change you want to see

Changing the systems which impact on the choices people are able to make is a big job. And we knew it would need new ways of working and new ways of demonstrating value. But we hadn't bargained on just how much of this change had to start with us.

Taking an honest look at our work

In order to achieve our objective of changing behaviours in communities, we realised it was our own behaviours and approaches to funding and collaboration that needed to change. We had to be honest with ourselves about what was working and what wasn't, as well as what our new partners and target communities needed from us.

Previously, our approach has been to create programmes at a national level and roll them out in places across the country. Using pre-defined methods to try and achieve goals that are set before work begins, these programmes tended to focus more narrowly on building participation among specific groups or for particular activities. But this approach was found to be less effective at overcoming the multiple barriers that some people face in the places they live. While there is a role for national programmes, they can't always solve local problems that matter most to people.



This was uncharted territory that was incredibly exciting.

Jodie Bridger, Local Delivery Pilot Programme Manager, Get Doncaster Moving



Another limitation with national programmes is that they often don't facilitate the kind of relationships that achieve and support long-lasting local change. By providing funding and pre-defined goals over a set period of time, we created benefits that all too often and all too easily slipped away once our funding ended.

We realised we weren't listening to the people we needed to listen to – those that really know local areas inside and out. Talking to policy makers and those in the voluntary sector is vital, but what about others that are deeply ingrained in local systems like GPs, care workers and teachers? We were clear on the outcomes we sought to achieve but flexible on how we would get to them, which meant there was more potential for this work to be relevant to their priorities. This time we deliberately went without a pre-defined path to success and asked for the communities' help to find the way. The answers were different in every place, and for us that was uncharted territory. It was also incredibly exciting.

Redefining our approach

Reflecting our commitment to this work, we established a new directorate within Sport England to give the programme the resources and energy it needed.

We deliberately did not set fixed performance targets for the pilots at the outset, as we thought this might encourage a default to safe and familiar ways of working to deliver quick, quantifiable results. Taking the time to build trust and relationships was essential, both between ourselves and the pilots and between them and local communities. It was important not to rush this first step due to an urge to notch up easy wins and fast results. This became one of the early founding principles of this work, with the Sport England Board endorsing the view that defining targets too early could disrupt the 'test and learn' approach by incentivising outputs, which would ultimately fail to meet our aspirations for this work.

We started by asking pilots questions and listening carefully to the answers. Some of it was hard to hear, but it helped cement the goal of breaking established patterns and relationships. The local organisations told us how a narrow focus on targets had often hampered learning and creating long-lasting impacts, and that short-term funding sometimes led to a rush to use the available money without providing the time needed to come up with the right strategy. And, importantly, they told us that a traditional, top-down, funder-recipient relationship can shut out local voices and potential leaders, from the conversation.

A fundamental change was needed to our investment approach, one that shifts the power in the relationship between us and our partners and our mindset. Today, we're not awarding funding to communities and expecting to dictate how it's used and what

results we want to see. Rather, we're working together with local groups to determine how best to invest. This has meant dispensing with the traditional approaches to funding and investment in favour of a more flexible, responsive and localised approach. Our Investment Team colleagues developed creative options to enable this 'devolution' within our funding rules. For some members of our team, who are used to working to set timelines and pre-determined results, this shift has been challenging. Whilst this can be frustrating at times, colleagues recognise that it's ultimately hugely rewarding and has felt like a breath of fresh air from the start. For everyone, it's felt like we're doing work that has the power to fundamentally change things for the better.

It's important to emphasise here, we're not the only ones on this path. There's a growing movement of people across the public sector that are exploring the potential of whole systems change.

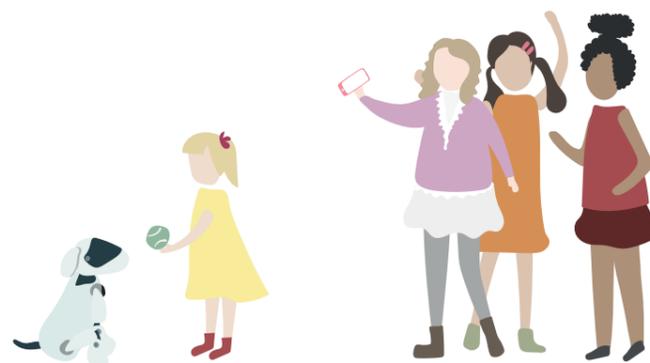
In recognising that a new mindset and behaviours were needed, we took the step of working with a partner, The Leadership Centre, to support the pilots and ourselves with knowledge, expertise and experience of whole systems approaches in other places. A key learning for us was the level of personal change needed to disrupt

some of the ways of working that had become second nature. Not only has this change been necessary to support this important work, we also like to think it's helped to bring the Sport England team closer together, as well as create more trusting and productive relationships with our partners.

Myron's maxims

The work of Myron Rogers, a leader in translating Living Systems Theory for large-scale social systems change, shaped our early thinking and has helped to guide us throughout this journey. With each learning experienced as part of this work, his maxims have become more meaningful and we've continued to develop our own interpretations.

- People own what they help create
- Real change happens in real work
- Those who do the work, do the change
- Connect the system to more of itself
- Start anywhere, follow everywhere
- The process you use to get to the future is the future you get.



A key learning for us was the level of personal change needed to disrupt some of the ways of working that had become second nature.

Angela Williams, Public Health Lead
- East Riding of Yorkshire



Moving from transactional to **relationship-based investment**

The role of investment in the pilots was one of the first difficult questions we had to navigate, both with our new partners and our colleagues. Investment is central to our role as a funder, but we needed to reinvent our approach.



Embracing flexibility

Previously at Sport England we had experimented with embedding ourselves more deeply into local places. So I had some experience of the vast benefits of spending more time in a place, building relationships. The big difference with the pilots is that we are closer than ever to the work being done - I'm seen as part of the team - it's actually less obvious who I work for. We all work with the same focus, for the same outcomes and so does it really matter? The previous power dynamic had been really prominent, and I think a consciousness of that hierarchy dictated the limited relationships we were able to build.

I've definitely moved away from a monitoring-type of local relationship to a more mature one. The key change is that Sport England's voice, though important, isn't the only one that is setting the direction through our investments. It's been so refreshing to be involved with this kind of work.

James Watmough, Pilot and Priority Place Manager, Sport England



Small changes have the potential to create



Taking the first steps

As the work of co-designing approaches began, it became clear that nearly all of our established tools and methods would have to be re-examined. Had we been too reliant on ways of working that were not only stopping programmes from reaching their full potential, but also having negative effects too? One of our key principles was to start with questions and push aside any assumptions about what success might look like. We needed to apply this level of consideration to every part of the work, and be prepared to let go of any practices that weren't up to the job.



Not just another consultation

Community consultation has long been an important part of our approach. But we discovered, for some communities, 'consultation' had become a dirty word – seen as a token effort to include the community. For them, the word had come to mean being asked for your view and then being ignored. Too often, consultations had involved narrowly focused questions aimed at producing the answers to support an existing theory rather than looking for real insight and discussion. This feeling of not being listened to has damaged trust over the years, as have temporary programmes that leave communities back where they started.

Engagement events are still an important way of meeting people and having conversations, but we needed to tweak our approach to make sure we got the right people around the table. Pilots have found that meeting people on their own terms and in their own spaces can help more honest and authentic conversations to flow naturally.

In Bradford, events where local people are able to vote in small groups on different ideas, which then become part of the pilot's priorities, have created a very collaborative approach to consultation. Even simple changes, like these, can help make these events a shared positive experience for everyone.

Engagement that's deep, genuine and ongoing

Changing our approach to consultations got us started on the right track, but genuine engagement is not a one-off event. And establishing and building honest relationships with local communities, organisations, leaders and people takes time – lots of time. Many of the pilots have spent months talking to people about shared goals and our commitment to do things differently.

Often, working to set timelines and outcomes meant projects have needed to hit the ground running and rush to create early results to guarantee their funding. For a lot of us involved in the local delivery pilots, having the space to think and build capacity and relationships wasn't just unusual, it was revolutionary.



By having more time to spend connecting and engaging with people from the local community on their terms, we are able to include activity in their lives in a way that is attractive and achievable to them. One great example is a charity that has designed exercise sessions that happen in a darkened room where people don't have to leave their contact details. There is a fear among people that they will have their benefits sanctioned if they are seen to be active, so they often would not attend if they had to pay, provide their name, or other people could see they were attending. This service helps people on low incomes become more active without making their lives more complicated, and it is really valued locally.

Kate Ahmadi-Khattir, Local Pilot Manager, Greater Manchester





Working with communities where English, more often than not, is not their first language has encouraged me to learn basic Punjabi and Urdu phrases. This has been vital in gaining, building and maintaining the trust between the local delivery pilot and South Asian communities. Being part of the pilots has helped me build the skills I need to go out and understand how local communities live and get a real insight into the mindset of people who are physically inactive.

Christopher Rigby, Local Delivery Pilot Lead, Pendle, Pennine Lancashire



Taking this time allowed us to understand the best ways we could fit into already existing networks, both formal and informal. We weren't aiming to disrupt communities, but to add to them.

In Hackney, 'go-along' journeys allow residents to point out the places they see as important, the areas they use, how they travel around and things like safety and accessibility. In other locations, pilots have even headed down to the local pub or set up informal activities in the local park to create more meaningful and natural connections with people.

By talking to as many people as possible, we were able to get a breadth of perspective that we'd never had access to before. It also meant that we got a chance to speak to the people that we've not been able to reach with our work so far. The way we communicated was tweaked to suit each location, and what was clear was that we couldn't speak like a government agency. A common tactic has been to move away from language that implies communities are "in need of help" or that pilots are here to get people to "change their behaviours".

South Tees have found that adapting their language to describe their partners and communities in terms of ownership, involvement and action has led to more interest and engagement. The team in Withernsea created their own 'Withspeak' document to communicate ideas about systems change to local people.

By showing genuine curiosity and interest, we've shown people at every level of local systems how different we want this programme to be. We're adapting to their needs, and they're guiding us to get better at this. With new levels of trust in place, we were able to listen closely to what was being said, but also notice what was not being said. This initial stage of the programme has been invaluable in paving the way for what would come next. But it was also hard to measure the impact of these subtle changes, even though we could see they were really helping to make a difference.

Engaging every layer of the system

Engaging with the local community is one aspect of changing the system, but is not enough to drive sustainable, positive change. We needed to build better relationships with every single layer of the local systems of the 12 pilots. It's a simple truth that some actors in a system are too important not to engage, and implementing systems change successfully relies on harnessing leadership at all levels. This makes getting in a room with senior leaders in the council, the local health care system and other organisations absolutely critical to the success of the local delivery pilots.

Forming the right kind of partnerships has been a priority for most of the pilots. But, just as with local communities, there are conflicting agendas, priorities and objectives between partners that must be navigated. Often it can seem like different parts of the system are isolated from each other, unwilling to distribute their leadership or power. Convening different stakeholders and identifying a shared purpose requires specific skills and many of the pilots have focused on trying to develop these further. Some pilots have used models and mapping to try and conceptualise how the networks they live and work in actually operate on a daily basis.

Calderdale's Policy, Working Practice and Delivery model shows teams the different layers in the system and how best to influence them. Others, like South Tees' Common Purpose Model, look at how change occurs within their communities as the shared vision progresses through collaborative working to embedded process, helping them to identify opportunities, areas of resistance and potential partners.





Another important aspect of finding the right partnerships is having the confidence to question, challenge and disrupt established approaches to partnership working. At one extreme this may mean walking away from existing relationships to build new ones that are more aligned with the emerging values and purpose, but often it means seeking more formal commitments from partners. Several pilots have made meetings between partners more dynamic and less transactional, including moving to workshopping and co-creation

sessions. A common challenge has been competitiveness between partners in locations, and there have been a lot of attempts to counter this by developing a shared purpose and commitment. Some pilots have opted to remove organisational lanyards to break down barriers between different partners, while others have deliberately mixed staff in steering groups. These measures are not only helping to reduce friction between partners, but also helping pilots to act quickly to adapt things that are identified as not working.

Understanding the layers

In Calderdale, we've been working with care providers to embed physical activity into adult health and social care. Through these partnerships we can help people in contact with the care system boost their physical health, mental wellbeing and quality of life. There's also a large crossover between the people who access adult social care and the groups that are most likely to be inactive.

Taking on this challenge has meant addressing the barriers that exist at many levels of the local system and which make it difficult for those receiving care to lead more active lives.

	Challenge faced	What we did
Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Those in care not asked about physical activity when assessed Physical activity not integrated into Adult Social Care's commissioning arrangements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Questions on physical activity embedded in all assessment forms Building physical activity into clients' lives is now embedded in all service specifications
Physical environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Those in care not being encouraged to move during home care visits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> People receiving care are now encouraged to get up and open the front door to let the carer into their home - if they're able to
Organisations and institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Care providers not encouraging clients to be active 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Better Living Team supports activity delivery in settings Training provided to staff to enable activity delivery
Social environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carers don't feel confident talking about or enabling physical activity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training provided to carers to have good conversations about physical activity and support clients to move more
Individual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Those in care not asked about activities they might be interested in, and clients not prompted to think about the value of being active 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Active at Home booklet issued and activities developed/delivered to match interests

By making changes to the way physical activity is promoted through adult health and social care, the Calderdale team has been able to enrich the lives of both providers and those receiving care.

Laying a foundation of trust

One thing that's emerged time and time again is just how important trust is when it comes to engaging people and creating long-term change. If local community members, policy makers and partners don't believe what we're saying, they'll never be truly engaged. On the other hand, trusting ourselves and our partners is what helps us overcome challenges and keep pushing forward.

A huge part of building trust has come down to identifying the right partners to work alongside. Sometimes this means piggybacking on the authority and trust created by others, such as encouraging GPs to talk to their patients about their levels of activity or working with care homes to include physical activity in their wellness strategies. The success of these initiatives depends on connecting strong leadership and previously distinct services together with shared purpose and an understanding that happier, healthier communities benefit us all.



In Exeter and Cranbrook, for example, they found that many GPs weren't confident or even comfortable talking to people about physical activity. This has led Wellbeing Exeter to establish a 'Network of Clinical Champions', through which the physical activity and movement message can be better communicated across the city. The 'Active Practice' ambition is to have a number of 'clinical champions' within each practice, allowing GPs to work together and learn from each other to enable Exeter to be more active. This kind of collaboration is new and exciting, helping to join together formerly distinct parts of the local system under a new shared goal of promoting physical activity.

This move from community consultation to long-term engagement and co-creation with communities is leading to innovative approaches to funding and investment.

In Greater Manchester, each locality has an allocation of funding assigned to it without a traditional competitive submission process associated with targets and performance indicators. This is supporting bottom-up solutions driven by community engagement and encouraging local leadership from people who may previously have not engaged with a perceived bureaucratic or competitive process of applying for funding. The solutions put forward by the community vary hugely across the region but often build on existing assets and only require small amounts of investment to be realised.

Really listening has opened doors that would have otherwise been closed and presented us with new opportunities to make positive change.

Bradford has seen years of different schools-based programmes that have not produced the desired results because each was designed by a single group and not adapted by schools into their policies.

In contrast, the Creating Active Schools approach has been co-created by 50 school stakeholders, including academics, practitioners, experts and school staff, working together to create something that gives schools a clear framework to work to. By helping schools work more strategically to tackle the causes of physical inactivity in both academic and home settings, the framework is shifting the system away from one-off interventions towards a more sustained commitment.

We've established and nurtured enduring relationships with the right people, both through the highs and lows. When things weren't working, we acknowledged it and created solutions together. Most of all, everyone involved was learning new things and challenging themselves every day. Many of the pilots have created their own live feedback loops by enlisting dedicated community engagement officers from the local community. These people regularly speak to a wide range of people to create a constant flow of insight back to the pilot teams.

Building enduring relationships isn't merely tactical and cannot be one-way.

In South Tees they discovered early on that you can only build trust if you truly start to shift power into communities so that collaborative working is vivid and tangible and new leadership emerges from those communities. Their emerging 'Common Purpose' model provides a framework for doing this meaningfully.



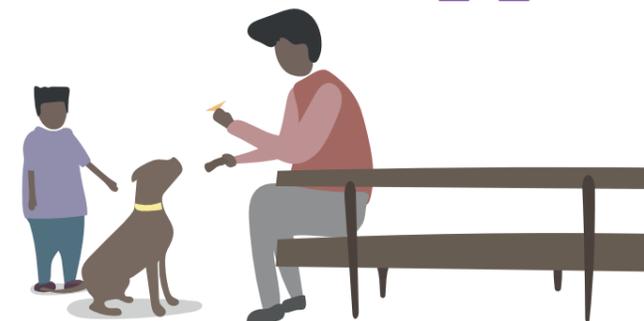
A tutorial in trust

We always want to listen to and elevate voices that might not be heard otherwise. It was not so much about going to known leaders, but trying to mobilise everyone. We wanted to go deeper and we really feel like we have involved more local people. By listening to the unusual suspects, we have been able to find new leaders and unearth a lot of hidden talent that has always been in the community.

It is also our community. It can sometimes not be the most well-versed in English or confident about filling out a survey and things like that. Our team is from the community, and we reflect every part of it. This instantly brings the language and cultural barriers down and helps us address the other barriers to health. As odd as it sounds, this is the first time local people are seeing community members instead of gatekeepers from somewhere else.

The energy that comes from working from the bottom up like this is infectious. We have three Sport England team members embedded in our process, and we feel we have really brought them closer to the community than ever before. We really believe in this approach and think it is the only way to create change that lasts, driven by the people in the place and based on a real sense of belonging.

Jaspal Gill, Head of Delivery, Southall



Helping to empower distributed leadership

Creating positive change in our communities requires strong leadership at every level of the system. Building and directing momentum from the bottom up is vital, but without the support of stakeholders it can quickly start to fade. Promoting distributed leadership is one of the main challenges we face, but is also the key that could unlock the entire process of systems change.

From

To

Creating traditional management structures	→	Taking the time to build relationships, networks and trust around a shared purpose
Top-down delegation	→	Increased capacity for decision making across different parts of a system
Command and control	→	A focus on empowerment, participation and co-creation
Centralised decision-making	→	Decentralised processes where people collaborate to reach agreement
Leadership as defined by designated roles or individuals	→	Leadership viewed as a collective activity that anyone in the system can take up
Working towards set goals using pre-defined methods	→	Promoting flexibility and adaptable ways of working
Different teams working in isolation from one another	→	Encouraging collaboration and knowledge-sharing across all levels of an organisation
Telling others what to do and assuming 'we' know what's right	→	Learning together as equals
Egotistical and territorial	→	Being humble and breaking down silos



Without nurturing and supporting leaders across the system, it's difficult to create local networks that link up different parts of it.

Ruth Alleyne, Local Learning and Improvement Hub, Sport England



Building and directing momentum from the bottom



The learning is the doing

It's no accident that the places we're working with are called pilots. We knew they were going to involve new ways of working from the outset, and that everyone involved was going to have to learn as we went. This understanding guided our initial work in setting up the pilots and continues to inform our approach.

Because we are committed to doing things differently, making sure we always had the space to think and share learning throughout the process has been vital. Without it, we could have got lost in the complexity of what we're trying to achieve very quickly. One example of a difference that became clear very early on is the importance of a phased approach when you're not starting with pre-defined targets or timelines. By not rushing into taking action, we've created better relationships and strategies. What may have initially felt like false starts have become valuable lessons for us moving forward.

Right from the beginning, we established a Community of Learning for the pilots themselves to share and learn together, as well as a wider Community of Learning for other places who wanted to engage in the work. These were dedicated places for people to have conversations with the pilots through workshops and webinars as well as information on our website. We've learned that creating spaces for people to have conversations is one of the best ways to connect them to the work and share their thinking. More recently, the pilots' Community of Learning has evolved into Communities of Practice for small groups to explore how they're experiencing the work.



When I joined Sport England two years ago, we were only two years into the local delivery pilot programme. Initially, I had expected that we'd invest in 12 places, find something that worked and then 'buy it' for every place. Instead, I've learned the pilots are not homogenous, and what works in one place is not likely to be what works in another. But the themes that have emerged from them are consistent.

The pilots have shown us the power of turning the telescope around, not looking down on a problem in a community and deciding what to do, but asking them to tell us how we can help.

In fact, we've learned that collaboration, partnerships, co-created solutions and investment in capacity might be the most powerful weapons we have in our armoury. And as we set a course for Sport England over the coming years, we understand that how we work in the future will be as important as what we do. Our ability to influence, advocate, convene and build capacity is every bit as important to achieving our goals as our ability to buy a programme off a shelf. Because it's people who make change, not programmes.

We know now there is no single blueprint for achieving whole system change, and I hope that the lessons of the pilots so far and how to develop successful co-collaborative working can help others achieve lasting change and foster self-sufficiency with communities.

Tim Hollingsworth, Chief Executive, Sport England



Learning continuously, and with purpose

We've worked hard to set up ways to make the gathering and sharing of key learnings a central part of the pilots' work. These learnings have helped us think about our work in the same ways and helped the different teams to share progress, understanding, challenges and successes. In addition to learning from each other's experiences, we're also collecting learnings about how to effect system change in a range of locations with different characteristics. Through this work, we hope our experiences can become a useful resource for others looking to work in this way.



Resilience pays off

We talk a lot about lightbulb moments. It's when someone realises that they are not a passive observer in the work we're doing, but instead they have a role to play and that it can be an important role.

From the very beginning, we brought together people from a range of disciplines and organisations to meet. And it took some time for everyone to understand why they were there. I remember one person from a housing association came over after a session and said they were about to invest £10 million on improvements in one of the areas we were focusing on. They hadn't considered physical activity in the designs and asked us to look over them before they went to the board.

We immediately found many ways the designs could better support physical activity and shared some guidelines to help them incorporate physical activity next time. But the real breakthrough was them realising they had a major role to play in how social housing was designed, and they could help remove barriers to people being active. Because that's the change that's going to outlast the work we're doing here.

Mal Fitzgerald, Programme Director, South Tees



Principles that have guided our learning

These principles have helped us throughout this journey, and we will continue to develop them as we learn and improve our approaches.

1

Progress moves at the speed of trust

People won't engage wholeheartedly with organisations and processes that they don't trust. We've learnt that you have to start with building relationships and trust, and this cannot be skipped or leapfrogged to move programmes forward. It may take a lot of time and energy to nurture it, but trust is an invaluable resource.

2

Stubborn on the vision, flexible on the detail

We didn't know what direction this programme would take when we started it, but we knew that we wanted to change the way we worked with local partners and places. We've all had to be flexible along the way in order to accommodate each other and let investment be guided by need. And many of us have upended our personal ways of working for the better.

3

Holding our nerve

Working in a new way can often create pressure from the community as well as traditional hierarchies to justify resources invested or demonstrate value. The pilots have experienced this from nearly every aspect of the system, from colleagues to potential partners, especially with the new approach to investment. Believing in ourselves and staying true to our goals was essential to prevent defaulting to old ways of working.



4

Bridging the empathy gap

There's often a lot of distance between those making decisions and those affected by them. We've been exploring different ways of engaging communities that are honest and authentic to better understand the lived experience of those in the community. This often means reframing our language, adapting the way we communicate and pushing aside any preconceptions. Change that emerges from within a community is best placed to address the needs of local people over the long term. It's our job to support that change, not dictate it.

5

Say 'yes' to mess

There are no simple answers to complex problems, especially when you're trying to work together in new ways as well. The need to have a flexible approach that can respond to the evolving needs of communities, emerging ideas and opportunities means programmes can quickly become swamped in detail and not just a little chaos. This was uncomfortable for many of us more used to approaching challenges through a structured project plan but was important in finding the right way forward.

6

Going where the energy is

Instead of trying to create momentum from scratch, it can often be more useful to find the places where common purpose and enthusiasm exist and start there. This can help get the ball rolling and allow you to engage with other levels of the system.

7

We can't solve problems with the same mindset that created them

It's one thing to say you want to do things differently, but actually doing it can be incredibly challenging. The rigidities of existing systems and working practices can create barriers and delays that stifle innovation and erode trust. The pilots are challenging assumptions, cultural rules or ways of thinking about physical inactivity.

8

It doesn't have to be perfect to be better

One of the biggest benefits of the local delivery pilot programme has been allowing the time to build relationships and create strategies. We want to take on the real barriers to physical inactivity and their root causes, meaning that rushing to provide solutions or interventions wasn't going to work.

The practicalities of systems change

Although the experience has been different in each of the 12 places, a number of recurring themes and learnings have been common to all. Despite our original expectation in setting out, we now realise there isn't just one blueprint for place-based systems change. We have learnt that 'how' the work is done is what unlocks progress. With four years of challenging but inspiring work under our belts, we've learnt a huge amount along the way that'll help us to be better collaborators to partners and local communities across the whole country. We also hope that our learnings can help others as they embark on their own change programmes, and through our community of learning we've been sharing tools, tips and techniques along the way. Here are just some of the key practical considerations that have helped pilots navigate systems change.

1

Shared purpose

Collaboration and co-creation are so much harder without an overarching, unifying goal or idea. Despite the differences in approaches, strategies and target groups, agreeing on the core values and objectives of the work has helped keep everyone pointed in the same direction, and united in overcoming any hurdles that crop up.

In South Tees, the pilot's 'Vision and Programme Delivery Partnership' (PDP) terminology was revised using the 'Common Purpose' model in order to reinvigorate partner relationships. 'Partners' became 'ambassadors' for the pilot, those working on the ground became 'activists' and the PDP itself was renamed 'The Exchange' in order to emphasise co-creation. These small changes have led to an increase in people and organisations approaching the pilot to see how they can get involved.

2

Understand the lived experience

Without a genuine understanding of the way that people live, it's impossible to understand how their lives are shaped by factors outside their control. By starting with people and what matters to them, we can work together to create more meaningful change.

In Birmingham and Solihull, the pilot has organised online events during the coronavirus lockdown. This has allowed the team to talk directly with residents and community organisations about what's happening and what they can do to help. The pilot has also developed a befriending service that makes sure people do not become isolated during the pandemic.

3

Distributed leadership

Every level of the system requires strong leadership, from the community all the way to government policy. Without nurturing and supporting leaders across the system, it's difficult to create local networks that link up different parts of it.

In Greater Manchester, the leadership workforce development programme has been led by 10GM, a collaborative venture between the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector. This programme has distributed leadership as its core principle, helping to develop everyone in the system to play their part as leaders effectively and creating connections between different local organisations. In addition, the programme is looking to develop the skills of people in communities who may not have a formal paid role but are making a significant contribution in their area.

4 Capacity and time to reflect

There are very few quick fixes when it comes to long-lasting sustainable change at the community level. By changing our investment approach, we've given pilots the space and time they need to do things differently, create strategies, build their teams, engage with their communities and figure out the best way to tackle inequality and inactivity in their place.

In Hackney, the 'King's Park Moving Together' team has built relationship building and collaboration into their governance approach. Led by the Community Partnership and Oversight Board, this structure gives the team space to talk about learnings, share evaluation findings and co-create shared priorities. The focus of the pilot's current pathfinder phase is developing the capacity needed to achieve change. An important part of this is employing and training community researchers that help inform the team's community engagement, communications, partnerships, workforce and environment.

5 Top cover

It's essential to have the buy-in of senior leaders and their support in testing and learning as we go. With this backup in place, our pilots have been encouraged to take risks, try new things and change tack if some ideas don't work as hoped.

In Essex, the pilot has benefitted enormously from having the support of senior leaders in the local council. The existing Essex Assembly has provided a top-level platform for building multi-agency partnerships and creating a safe environment for innovative thinking and risk taking. The chair of the Essex Health and Wellbeing Board has been a particularly important champion and ambassador for the pilot, helping to get the programme recognised as one of the assembly's eight initiatives to sponsor.

6 Test and learn

It's OK to not know exactly where you're going to end up, as long as you're learning and growing as you go. There's simply no way of improving without practical experience and experimentation. The pilots have all found their own ways of working through trial and error and shared their learnings along the way. This shared experience has made all of the pilots stronger.

In Bradford, the work is research based, with everything based on the Theory of Change methodology for planning, participation and evaluation. This methodology is applied to everything the pilot does, and learnings are continuously shared through reports and webinars. The pilot team is able to track success through data collection and monitoring from the Born in Bradford programme, local schools and other individual projects.

7 Power shift

We've tried to move from a transactional to a collaborative relationship with the pilots and the communities they work in. Local partners have told us where investment was needed rather than the other way around, creating more trust and confidence as we listened and acted on their guidance.

In Calderdale, placing capacity into the service or organisation we're trying to embed physical activity into has empowered others to drive change. By investing in seconding a programme manager locally to help promote physical activity through the Hospital's Care Pathways and with the workforce, the pilot has led to changes in policies, working practices and service delivery. Examples of this are activity spaces that have been included in the new hospital's redesign, the Frailty Service beginning to utilise physical activity and patients and visitors being encouraged to move more by staff and via environmental nudges – such as signposting people to use the stairs rather than the lifts.

8

Having the right conversations

Building trust and relationships that last means talking to people in an honest, two-way conversation. Listening closely is often more important than what you have to say, and it can often help you find a missing detail or provide a spark of insight that illuminates the whole picture. Never presume to know the answer, and try to find the right people to ask the right questions.

In Pennine Lancashire, the use of creative engagement has changed the way the team approach every interaction. From concept and planning, through to the actual conversations, the pilot is building the skills and confidence to involve people in innovative and fun ways. This has created a lot of energy to draw people in as well as lots of new conversations and insight from local people.



9

Understand the system you're trying to shape

There are many ways to understand systems. You can look at them in economic, political or social terms, but it's the impact they have on local people that's important. Working with the pilots has helped us understand local systems, and we've gained invaluable, practical insight into the effects they have on people's daily lives.

In Doncaster, a systems mapping methodology has allowed the team to plot the connections the pilot has to all the different groups and organisations in the local system. This can then be updated in real time to show how relationships are being formed and strengthened, as well as where more focus and work is needed.

10

Start with questions, not answers

By beginning with asking people what their life is like and the challenges they face, you can remove a lot of guesswork, build trust in what you're trying to achieve and engage with people who we used to think were 'hard to reach'. People often don't feel listened to, and something as simple as a question can open doors that'd previously seemed clamped shut.

In Withernsea, the team have adopted an innovative approach to connecting with community members. One example was a quiz night at a local pub where all the questions were based on the Withernsea area, and participants were encouraged to draw on specially-designed beer mats. The beer mats asked them to either draw or write down what they liked about living in the area. This is a fun and interesting way of collecting people's views and has been successful in informing the pilot's strategy.

The local delivery pilot timeline

from December 2015 to September 2020



December 2015

- The government publishes its White Paper *Sporting Future*, stating that Sport England will launch a pilot “to support development and implementation of local physical activity strategies in a number of selected geographic areas”.

May 2016

- We published our 2016-21 strategy *Towards An Active Nation*, confirming our aim to develop a local pilot programme

Summer of 2016

- An evidence review of what’s worked well in previous place-based programmes signals the **start of the design process** together with wider research on whole systems approach



December 2016

- Proposals for the selection and development of the pilot programme are outlined and approved by Sport England Board with headline budget of at least £100m
- Invitations to exploratory workshops are sent to all local authorities and a wide range of partners

February - March 2017

- 16 workshops are held across the country, with over 700 participants, to explore the opportunity. This includes further context on a systems change approach and the socio-ecological model

700 participants

April 2017

- The appraisal process begins after we receive 119 expressions of interest
- Commitment made to develop a Community of Learning for wide and dynamic sharing of learning from the pilots

119 expressions of interest

July 2017

- 19 places are shortlisted
- Individual feedback phone calls are offered to all those whose application was not successful



November 2017

- After a rigorous final appraisal process, the Sport England Board approves 12 places as local delivery pilots
- Workshops are held to develop a Community of Learning. We take the unusual step of sharing in confidence the names of the pilots prior to formal announcement

12 places selected

September - October 2017

- Following further written submissions, we undertake day-long visits to all 19 places

19 places

December 2017

- The then Minister of Sport announces the 12 places selected
- The first collective meeting of the pilots takes place forming the pilots’ Community of Learning

The local delivery pilot timeline (continued)



January 2018

- A new Local Delivery Directorate is established which includes new posts focused on each pilot and a team for sharing the learning
- A 'pathway' is developed based on the evidence review in order to help set out first practical steps and a process to ensure each pilot can access an initial development award to fund core capacity

March 2018

- IFF Research is appointed to support national evaluation requirements and outcomes framework

April 2018

- The Leadership Centre is appointed to support the leadership journey of the pilots and a collective two-day pilot workshop held in Loughborough



November 2018

- Following co-design with the pilots, the investment plan for the remaining pilot budget is agreed by Sport England Board, establishing the pathfinder and accelerator approach
- Three wider Community of Learning workshops take place

September 2018

- Six-monthly process evaluation and sharing of learning takes place
- Further national pilot network meetings are held

June 2018

- A two-day workshop for all pilots focusing on evaluation takes place

January 2019

- We host the first webinar as part of the wider Community of Learning, sharing the overarching themes from the first learning exercise

December 2018

- Sport England inductions for newly recruited core teams

March 2019

- Six-monthly process evaluation and sharing of learning

February 2019

- Birmingham and Solihull, and Essex, have their pathfinder/accelerator investment agreed by Sport England

April 2019

- Second wider Community of Learning webinar takes place, focusing on community engagement and the Birmingham and Solihull, and Withernsea pilots

May 2019

- The Bradford pathfinder investment is approved

July 2019

- Third wider Community of Learning webinar shares the overarching learning from the last six months



June 2019

- Three wider Community of Learning events take place

The local delivery pilot timeline (continued)

October 2019

- A collective Community of Learning event is held for staff involved in each pilot – resulting in an agreement to establish distinct communities of practice
- The fourth wider Community of Learning webinar themed around community engagement is presented by Greater Manchester

December 2019

- The Calderdale and South Tees pathfinder investments are approved

January 2020

- A process evaluation learning session with pilots is held

February 2020

- The fifth wider Community of Learning webinar, led by Doncaster and South Tees, focuses on collective action, collaborative partnerships and co-creation with communities
- The Withernsea pathfinder investment is approved



March 2020

- The impact of coronavirus causes immediate disruption to all organisations
- Six-monthly process evaluation and sharing of learning

May 2020

- First two pilot Communities of Practice are established, focusing on social prescribing and active environments

First two pilot Communities of Practice established

April 2020

- Responses to coronavirus emerge from a number of pilots
- Sport England confirms agreement in principle to core fund local delivery pilots up to 2025 – with further funding applications received during Summer 2020

June 2020

- A process learning 'sensemaking' workshop is held with the pilots
- The Doncaster pathfinder investments and accelerator are approved
- The third pilot Community of Practice is established, bringing together the pilot leads to focus on strategic leadership challenges

July - September 2020

- The pilot leads take part in a Community of Practice monthly

September 2020

- Six-monthly process evaluation and sharing of learning

There's plenty
more
journey to come

Understanding value

A key challenge of taking a systemic approach is how you understand and show that valuable change is happening. The need to move away from traditional models of measurement and attributing progress or success to a particular intervention or organisation is essential.

Not setting hard and fast targets was an important part of enabling the pilots to work in their own way and providing the space and flexibility needed to find the right path. But we still wanted to be able to measure and test what the pilots were achieving and still had a responsibility to ensure the investment of public funds was working towards a shared benefit.

We needed to find a way to evaluate progress in a way that was consistent with the principles of the work.

Demonstrating value

When your focus isn't about delivering tangible outputs like new buildings or increasing participation by a particular percentage, how do you measure value and show your achievements? Our goal has been to improve people's lives in very real and tangible ways, yet this often doesn't fit neatly within our traditional ways of evaluating programmes. It's a complicated issue, and one we're still working our way through.

For us, it's been a real challenge to demonstrate value when some of the progress is not immediately visible or tangible. Providing new balls and equipment for sports teams is easy to measure in terms of monetary value and assess the ongoing benefits to a relatively small and focused group of people. On the other hand, systems and communities are not so easy to control and define in order to measure value. For example, working with midwifery units to set up a new referral process that helps new mothers with complex lives or existing medical conditions be more active is not as easy to measure in terms of value. Why? There are so many different variables and factors that can impact on whether a new mother becomes more active, many of which we can't control. In complex systems, a simple cause-and-effect relationship between inputs and outputs doesn't exist, so it's impossible and unfair to measure value

simply by reference to outputs. To help address this, we encouraged pilots to develop a strong understanding of their systems in order to create robust logic models (known as 'theories of change') which show how a proposed approach has a strong potential to provide an ongoing benefit to a whole community and impact positively over time. Getting this understood and accepted by decision-makers has to be considered a critical success.

In short, value in the eyes of our communities hasn't always been the same as value in the eyes of the public sector or other organisations. Hopefully, programmes like ours and others across the public sector can help to align these two viewpoints going forward by building understanding that complex outcomes require a more nuanced language of value.

Demonstrating progress

Ultimately though, we're a public body using public funds and we need to be accountable and transparent. Despite the flexibility of the pilot work, we have to make sure that we're rigorous about demonstrating and measuring the value of this work. Doing this is important to not only show that this approach has been effective, but to reassure those taking part that positive change is happening.

This presents us with a unique challenge though. Many of the successes of this programme are intangible, and the pace of some of the work can make it seem like not much 'stuff' has been delivered. But we know that we have better, more productive relationships with local communities and organisations, as well as our partners. And we know that we've created some really beneficial connections between parts of the system that were previously separate. This will bring lasting change over time. Some innovative new ways of demonstrating progress have emerged as well.

For example, Doncaster's Social Network Analysis helps show the connections between the council and its partners in relation to promoting more physical activity. This allows the team to better demonstrate its impact and show how it's connecting a network of like-minded people under a shared purpose.



For the first time, we have real insight into the ways that local doctors, care staff and local government can make small changes that can have a big effect. Having Department for Work and Pensions staff ask every job seeker about their levels of physical activity may seem a small change, but the potential benefits to thousands of people's lives could be huge. These achievements are all built on the fact that we've had more time to think about our approach and the space to have meaningful conversations.

There are many successes we can point to. Here are some examples we want to highlight:

- **We're gradually shifting the lens** through which physical activity programmes are understood, designed and funded at national and local level. Various principles around seeing and connecting to the wider system and authentic local engagement are starting to supplant single barrier programmes and remote consultation. Sport England itself has declared in its strategy framework 'Shaping the Future' that it will "stop working and funding in silos".
- **We are witnessing relationships** bringing implementation of change at all levels of local systems; particularly we're seeing non-sport policies now giving a priority to sport and physical activity, and senior leaders thinking, acting and investing differently.

- **Traditional experiences of sport and physical activity** are being transformed and reframed to be more genuinely community-based, and the local delivery pilots' approach is influencing how other parts of the local system think and operate.
- **The 'Let's Go Southall'** programme is mobilising a social movement approach, which encourages engaged community members to reach out to inactive ones to try and get them involved in activities. This peer-to-peer model is helping to power bottom-up momentum in the area.
- **In some parts of Greater Manchester**, colleagues are working closely with Transport for Greater Manchester, alongside residents, to help it adjust and amend its resources to be more accessible and attractive to particular communities where activity levels are low, and where residents are interested in becoming more active.
- **The 'Doncaster Talks' research** sought to understand the motivations and barriers that exist around improving the health and wellbeing of people who live in the borough. The process has been a huge success with 3,610 residents contributing. The findings have influenced a more insight-led and community-led approach to the design, commissioning and improvement of services across Doncaster.

- **In Calderdale**, the pilot's been able to build specialist capacity into local hospitals, mental health services and drug and alcohol recovery services to provide expertise and guidance when it comes to physical activity.
- **In South Tees**, prehabilitation is improving the health and wellbeing of patients who've just undergone surgery. The pre-operative, community-based programme is helping primary care, secondary care and public health teams to work together to use surgery as a 'teachable moment' to help change people's behaviour.
- **In Bradford**, the team is able to use the data collected through the Bradford birth cohort of 13,600 children born in the city since 2007 and their families. It's the largest longitudinal ongoing study in the world, providing an unprecedented level of insight into the local area and helping us to understand how the system affects young people and their levels of physical activity over a long period of time but also how physical activity is contributing to other valuable social outcomes.

These changes are just the start, but they're important, and need to be celebrated because these types of initial changes have the potential to create big wins. They lay the foundations for the next phase of work and the potential for transformational change.



Essex has been quick to recognise the value of building trusting relationships with system leaders from sectors such as health, social care, active travel, criminal justice, and education. These systems have enormous reach to inactive people and communities, and we are excited to see physical activity being hard wired into these wider system settings, demonstrating that valuable change is happening

Jason Fergus, Director of Active Essex and LDP Project Lead



A shift in the way we think about value

There's a collective acknowledgment throughout the programme that the methods we use to evaluate success need to shift. The challenge for us is how we demonstrate the change that we feel and know is happening in our places in a way that energises and reassures stakeholders. We still need to evaluate our work against our national impact measures, so being able to show positive change is hugely important. But we were clear right from the start that meaningful impact will take time to detect. We're trying new ways to do this by describing how change is occurring and how that brings value.



We were clear right from the start that meaningful impact will take time to detect.

Naomi Shearon, Strategic Lead - Strategy, Sport England



From

To

- Proving the impact of the programmes at the end → Talking about value that's accumulating right now on an ongoing basis and explaining why it'll lead to impact
- Evaluation as performance measurement → Curating personal and shared learning that shows how systems are improving
- Collecting data that shows value for money → Collecting personal stories of change that inspire others to take action
- Releasing findings at the end of the process → Sharing learnings throughout the process with colleagues, partners and communities
- Funding with a requirement to demonstrate accountability and value via numerical targets → Accountability is continuous and human-centred through rigorous dialogue and regular process evaluation. Stories showing the human impact of the work should be the basis of value
- Pre-defined views of what success looks like → An ongoing and evolving evaluation of aims
- A focus on tangible deliverables/'stuff' → A focus on relationships, trust and organisational change

Demonstrating the change that we



Looking forward

With the initial phase completed, most of the pilots have been awarded 'Pathfinder' funding to take the next step forward and start, in earnest, to test and learn from their ideas. We're excited about what we'll continue to learn, and the work completed so far with communities will go on to help shape their places to ones where it's an easier choice to be active.

As we enter the next crucial stage of this programme, it's important to remember just how different this work has been. Over four years of honest conversations, co-creation, personal evaluation, changing working practices and new ways of thinking, we've looked closely at our organisations and ourselves. This change hasn't always been easy, but it's always felt positive and beneficial to the local people we're trying to reach. This work represents an honest attempt to improve the way we work, both individually and collectively, in the face of big challenges and entrenched inequalities. If we continue to build on this momentum, we've a real chance to support generational change and play a part in reshaping society for the better. We've made a start on scaling up what we know works, focusing on sharing and supporting other places with the thinking, behaviours and type of leadership we know's needed in this approach.

But, we've also had an unexpected, although not unwanted, demonstration of the potential of this work in the role the local delivery pilots have played in their communities' responses to the floods (in Doncaster in November 2019 and Calderdale in February 2020) and the coronavirus pandemic.

Because of the work already carried out by the pilots, they were able to play an important role in bringing community organisations and volunteers together with a shared purpose.

We'd already had the right conversations, knew the right people and had built the links between organisations to harness the power and reach of all of us and point in the right direction to help. The response to coronavirus was remarkable, with pilots being able to quickly adapt to the needs of communities and provide targeted support. In some areas, the pilots have been seen as the 'go to'

partnerships to get the community response moving, while in others the sudden drop in red tape has created new relationships. By supporting local people when they needed it most, the pilots have demonstrated the value of being a trusted part of a local system.

This is not only systems change in action, but it's confirmation of the power of distributed leadership and trust-based relationships. The most important lesson learned from the last four years is that the need to develop leadership at every level of the system is absolutely central to the success of place-based strategies. The huge potential of this work lies in the people who see opportunities where previously there weren't any, those that can now access the support they need to set up programmes, talk to the right people and create lasting connections with other parts of the system. It's these people who have the chance to unleash the transformative power of place and drive real, lasting change across our communities.



The courage of our convictions

To me, the value of the local delivery pilots is immense because it's not about Sport England's agenda; it's about the future of the country. We're part of a movement, a different approach which is locked in battle with other approaches. But if this one wins, then we stand a chance of becoming a modern healthy country. If it doesn't work, then we risk becoming even more of a compartmentalised and fragmented country. One where kids go hungry, where people living only three miles from each other can have differences in life expectancy of up to 20 years.

Local delivery pilots are a good example of how to create a different kind of future. So the value is immeasurable.

Chris Grant, Sport England
Board member



Looking to the future,
**it's clear this
work has
only just begun.**

Thank you

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We hope that you have enjoyed reading about our journey, and we'd love to hear where you are on yours.

Please stay connected to this system change journey by joining our community of learning where we create spaces to develop thinking and share learning.

We're interested to hear about what you've been learning and any questions that you'd like to explore further.

You can do this emailing LDPCommunityofLearning@sportengland.org or via our social media channels.

If you want to explore the work of the local delivery pilots further, then please visit their websites, where you will find many examples and stories of local systems change.

Local Delivery Pilot

Active Communities Birmingham and Solihull LDP

<https://theaws.co.uk/active-communities/>

JU:MP Bradford LDP

<https://joinusmoveplay.org/>

Active Calderdale Calderdale LDP

<https://active.calderdale.gov.uk/>

Get Doncaster Moving Doncaster LDP

<https://getdoncastermoving.org/>

Live & Move Exeter and Cranbrook LDP

<https://liveandmove.co.uk/>

Active Essex Essex LDP

<https://www.activeessex.org/essex-local-delivery-pilot/>

GM Moving Greater Manchester LDP

<https://www.gmmoving.co.uk/>

King's Park Moving Together Hackney LDP

<https://kingsparkmap.commonplace.is/>

Together An Active Future Pennine Lancashire LDP

<https://healthierpenninelancashire.co.uk/together-active-future>

Let's Go Southall Southall LDP

<https://letsgosouthall.org.uk/>

You've Got This South Tees LDP

<http://www.youvegotthis.org.uk/>

Active Withernsea Withernsea LDP

<https://eastridingcoastandcountryside.co.uk/active-withernsea/>