



**DARLINGTON**  
Borough Council



Darlington  
Physical Activity Strategy  
2025 - 2035



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# Foreword

Physical activity is critical for promoting good health. It improves wellbeing and the number of years that people can live healthily. Our Darlington Physical Activity strategy 2025 - 2035 sets out our ambitions for those who live, work and visit Darlington to have access and support to engage in appropriate physical activity that promotes better health and wellbeing. I would like to thank everyone that took part in the consultation and helped develop it.

The strategy has been put together after 10 plus years during which inequalities across our communities have worsened. The inequality in life expectancy between the best and worse areas across Darlington is 10.6 years for women and 13 years for men. This strategy will support the Council and other organisations in addressing rising inequalities in our communities at a time of financial challenge. It is important that this strategy acknowledges this.

So, there is no quick fix but with the right values and commitment we will help more people across our communities to access physical activity, give them the freedom to get moving and the opportunity to stay healthy for longer.

## **Cllr Matthew Roche**

Darlington Borough Council Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Health and Housing



In September 2022, the Association of Directors of Public Health North East approved the sponsorship of a regional programme of Sector Led Improvement (SLI) for physical activity. With the support of national funding from the Office of Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID) the regional programme included the development of a self-assessment tool, based upon the 'Eight Investments That Work for Physical Activity' developed by the International Society for Physical Activity and Health.

The 8 themes within the self-assessment tool are set out below:

|                              |                                  |
|------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Workplaces                   | Healthcare                       |
| Sport and Recreation for All | Community Wide Physical Activity |
| Schools                      | Active Travel                    |
| Urban Design                 | Public Education and Mass Media  |



Darlington engaged with the SLI programme, carrying out a large-scale consultation across sectors. The outputs of the consultation have been used to inform the development of this Physical Activity Strategy, utilising the framework of the Eight Investments. More information on this process can be found in appendix 2.

I welcome the development of this Physical Activity Strategy, as we know being physically active has huge benefits for people. This of course includes the many physical benefits gained from becoming more active, including preventing and managing long term health conditions, whilst also supporting people to age well and maintain their independence for longer. Physical activity also has benefits for a person's mental health and wellbeing including socialising and meeting new people, managing stress, improving mood, helping with sleep and connecting with nature and the outdoors.

Encouraging and providing opportunities for everyone in Darlington to be more active, whether that is through day-to-day activities, promoting active travel or taking part in formal sessions or a sport they enjoy, will make a big difference in supporting good health and wellbeing for all.

## **Lorraine Hughes**

Darlington Borough Council Director of Public Health

# Our Plan for Darlington

Darlington is a vibrant town, with thriving communities and a lively town centre. It is a great place to live, work, learn and have fun.

We believe physical activity has a big role to play in improving the physical and mental health of our town, supporting the economy, reconnecting communities and rebuilding a stronger society for all.

The Council Plan illustrated below outlines the councils long term ambitions for Darlington and its priorities over the next three years (2024-2027). It gives strategic direction to the council and council services making clear what we will do and how we will do it. Darlington Physical Activity Strategy describes our approach to help meet the ambitions and priorities for health and wellbeing.

## Core Principles

Addressing inequalities

Efficient and effective use of resources

Tackling climate change

## Vision for the Borough

Darlington is one of the best places to live, learn, work and invest in the UK, with a strong and sustainable economy, healthy thriving communities and opportunities for all

## Our Ambitions

Inclusive and sustainable economy

Living well and staying healthy

Thriving places and connected communities

## Our Priorities

|                                                                                                            |                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                |                                                                                                             |                                                                          |                                                                                 |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Economy</b><br><br>A strong sustainable economy and highly skilled workforce with opportunities for all | <b>Homes</b><br><br>Affordable and secure homes that meet the current and future needs of residents | <b>Living Well</b><br><br>A healthier and better quality of life for longer, supporting those who need it most | <b>Children and Young People</b><br><br>The best start in life, realising potential and raising aspirations | <b>Communities</b><br><br>Safer, healthier, and more engaged communities | <b>Local Environment</b><br><br>A well-connected, clean and sustainable borough |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

## Our Approach

Collaborate and work in partnership

Data driven and intelligence led

Embed core principles in decision-making

Deliver through key strategies and plans

Model our core values in our work and behaviours

Share key challenges and celebrate success





# What are the benefits of physical activity

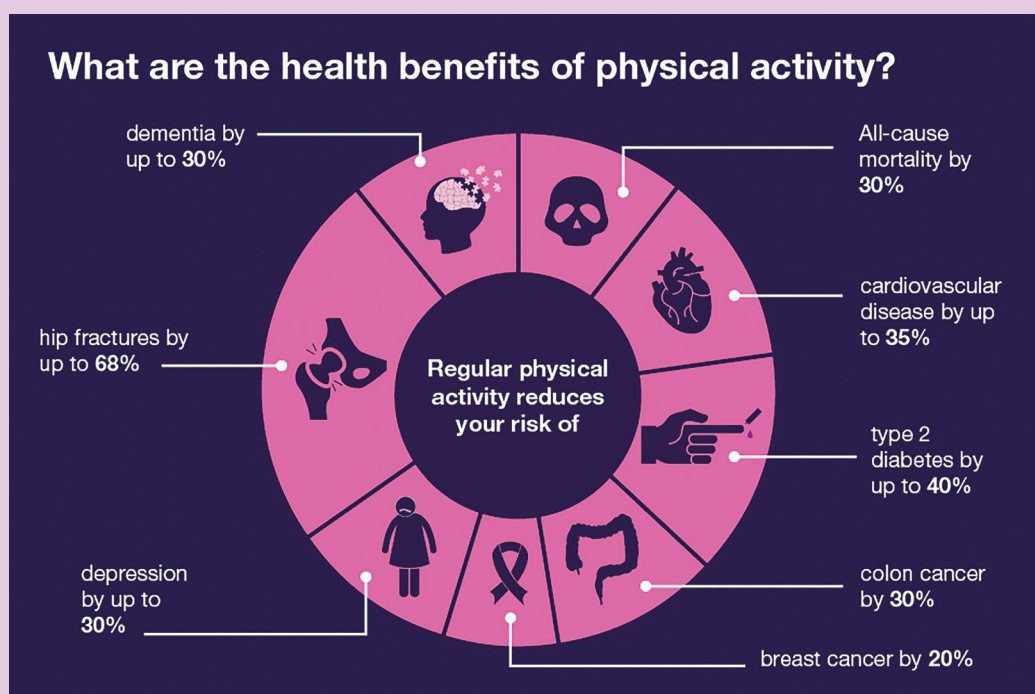
## The World Health Organisation defines physical activity as:

“Any bodily movement produced by skeletal muscles that requires energy expenditure. Physical activity refers to all movement including during leisure time, for transport to get to and from places, or as part of a person’s work or domestic activities.”

## Movement has astonishing benefits for our physical health (Sport England 2023)

When we’re young, being active helps our bodies develop properly, with a strong heart, healthy bones, muscles and brain development.

As we get older, regular exercise reduces our risk of illness - from heart disease, stroke, colon and breast cancer to obesity and osteoporosis, among other conditions. Every year, leading an active lifestyle prevents 900,000 cases of diabetes and 93,000 cases of dementia (the leading cause of death in the UK) – a combined saving of £7.1 billion to the UK economy.



## Movement makes us happier (Sport England 2023)

The evidence shows that people who get active have greater levels of happiness, life satisfaction and feeling worthwhile. They’re also less likely to feel anxious. For many of us, this is thanks to the social interaction involved in sport and activity – as we meet and make new friends and share uplifting moments together, whether playing a game in a park, or being part of a team in a local league – while for others it’s about discovering a greater sense of self-worth and resilience, or a combination of these and other positive factors.

When researchers at Sheffield Hallam University valued the role of sport and physical activity to the nation’s wellbeing, they calculated it as £42bn per year – more than three times the total NHS spending on mental health in England.

Guidance on physical activity levels is captured in the images below (as of Autumn 2024). Full information can be found in Appendix 3.

### Physical activity for early years (birth – 5 years)

Active children are healthy, happy, school ready and sleep better

- BUILDS RELATIONSHIPS & SOCIAL SKILLS
- IMPROVES SLEEP
- MAINTAINS HEALTH & WEIGHT
- DEVELOPS MUSCLES & BONES
- CONTRIBUTES TO BRAIN DEVELOPMENT & LEARNING
- ENCOURAGES MOVEMENT & CO-ORDINATION

#### Every movement counts

Aim for at least **180 Minutes per day** for children 1-5 years

**Under-1s** at least 30 minutes across the day

Activities: TUMMY TIME, OBJECT PLAY, SWIM, WALK, MESSY PLAY, DANCE, SCOOT, BIKE, JUMP, CLIMB, GAMES, PLAY, THROW/CATCH, SKIP, PE

**Get Strong. Move More. Break up inactivity**

### Physical activity for children and young people (5 – 18 Years)

- BUILDS CONFIDENCE & SOCIAL SKILLS
- DEVELOPS CO-ORDINATION
- IMPROVES CONCENTRATION & LEARNING
- STRENGTHENS MUSCLES & BONES
- IMPROVES HEALTH & FITNESS
- MAINTAINS HEALTHY WEIGHT
- IMPROVES SLEEP
- MAKES YOU FEEL GOOD

#### Be physically active

Spread activity throughout the day

Aim for an average of at least **60 minutes per day across week**

All activities should make you breathe faster & feel warmer

Activities: PLAY, RUN/WALK, SWIM, SKATE, SKIP, CLIMB, BIKE, ACTIVE TRAVEL, SPORT, PE, WORKOUT, DANCE

**Get strong** (INACTIVITY)

**Move more**

Find ways to help all children and young people accumulate an average of at least 60 minutes physical activity per day across the week

UK Chief Medical Officers' Physical Activity Guidelines, 2019

### Physical activity for adults and older adults

- Benefits health
- Improves sleep
- Maintains healthy weight
- Manages stress
- Improves quality of life
- Type II Diabetes -40%
- Cardiovascular disease -35%
- Falls, depression etc. -30%
- Joint and back pain -25%
- Cancers (colon and breast) -20%

Reduces your chance of

Some is good, more is better | Make a start today: it's never too late | Every minute counts

#### Be active

at least **150 minutes** moderate intensity per week (increased breathing able to talk)

OR

at least **75 minutes** vigorous intensity per week (breathing fast difficulty talking)

**Build strength** to keep muscles, bones and joints strong

on at least **2 days a week**

Activities: Swim, Brisk walk, Cycle, Gym, Carry heavy bags, Yoga, Bows, Tai Chi, Stairs, Sport, Run

#### Minimise sedentary time

Break up periods of inactivity

For older adults, to reduce the chance of frailty and falls

**Improve balance** 2 days a week

Activities: Dance

UK Chief Medical Officers' Physical Activity Guidelines 2019

### Physical Activity for Disabled Adults

Make it a daily habit

**Disabled adults**

- Improves mental health and quality of life
- Makes maintaining a healthy weight easier
- Makes daily tasks easier and increases independence
- Strengthens muscles and bones
- Improves fitness
- Improves mobility and balance
- Helps to prevent chronic disease
- Creates opportunities to meet new people and feel part of the community
- Physical activity makes you feel good
- Being inactive is harmful to health
- Don't be still for too long
- Even a little movement is better than nothing

Remember the talk test: Can talk, but not sing = moderate intensity activity; Difficulty talking without pausing = vigorous intensity activity

Do strength and balance activities on at least two days per week

For substantial health gains aim for at least 150 minutes each week of moderate intensity activity

UK Chief Medical Officers' Physical Activity Guidelines, 2019



# Vision

We want all Darlington residents and those visiting and working here to have access to appropriate physical activity opportunities that positively supports their health and wellbeing.

# Mission

We want to ensure that being active is a right and not a privilege, for those living, working and visiting Darlington to experience the associated benefits to their physical and mental health.

In keeping with the Chief Medical Officers messaging on physical activity, 'Some is good, more is better', we will work together using a whole systems approach to ensure opportunities to be physically active are embedded into our systems. Physical activity will be used as a tool in prevention of poor health as well as treatment pathways.



# Aims

- To support wider strategies addressing inequalities, efficient and effective use of resources and tackling climate change.
- Embed physical activity into health care pathways as a means of prevention and treatment of ill health. Equip health care professionals to direct clients to appropriate physical activity opportunities.
- Increase public awareness and knowledge of the benefits of physical activity and how to embrace local opportunities to be more active.
- Enable incidental and purposeful physical activity as part of everyday life through best practice in workplaces and sympathetic urban policy and design.
- Celebrate and support the organisations and clubs in Darlington that already make provision for physical activity either through structured sport or recreational programmes.
- Ensure our education system gives young people an active learning experience to establish lifelong healthy habits.
- Host a variety of events that celebrate participation and success in sport and physical activity.
- We will prioritise areas of deprivation and high need with funding opportunities made available, such as the recently released Sport England place expansion funding.
- Darlington Borough Council are facing significant financial challenges. We will commit to making the most of opportunities presented through external funding and partnership working to deliver our action plan.

Our aims are led by local insight, evidence and multi-agency consultation. They will seek to impact most significantly on areas of social deprivation which currently experience some of the lowest levels of physical activity.

# Current position

Figure 1 shows the most recent (November 22/23) comparison of adult levels of physical activity across Darlington, the Tees Valley and England. The graphs show that we do have a good percentage of adults who are being active for more than 150 minutes per week, with higher participation rates than our regional neighbours and national benchmarks. However, we also have 18.1% of our population who are inactive; not doing any physical activity at all. This is lower than our regional neighbours but higher than the national average. As recommended by the Chief Medical Officer, adults should be aiming for 150 minutes of moderate activity per week.

Figure 1: **Levels of activity per week** (November 22-23)

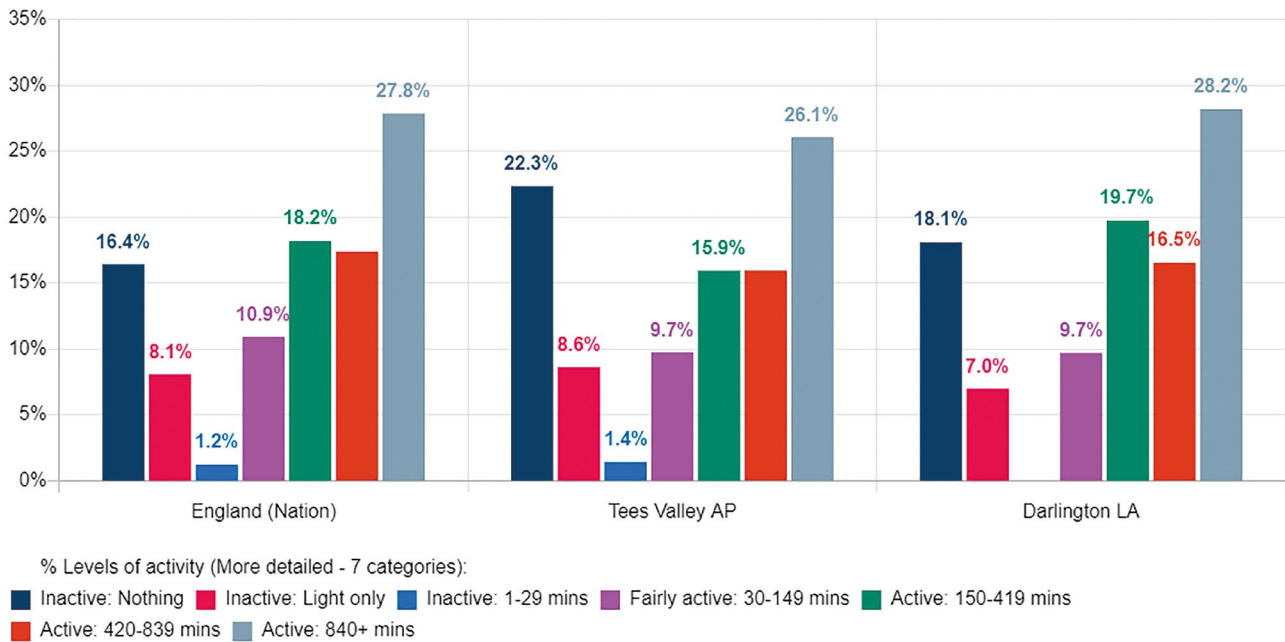
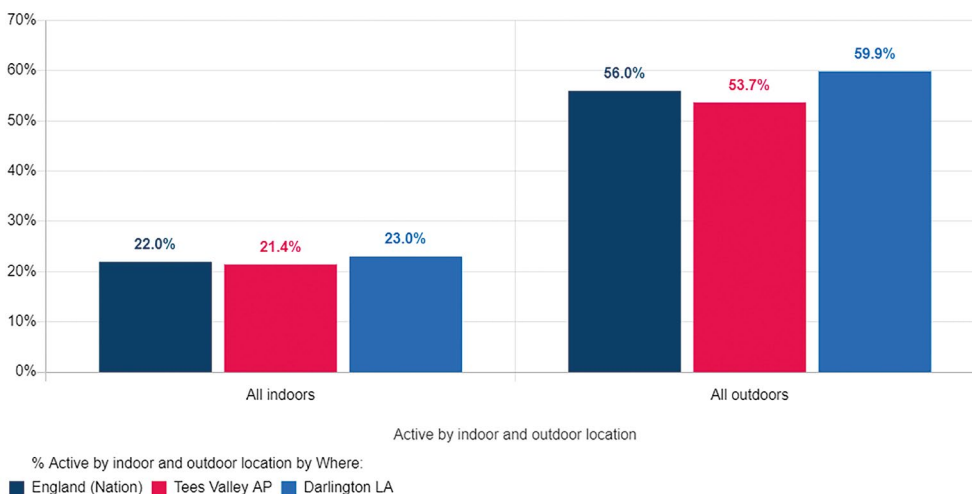


Figure 2 shows the most recent (November 22/23) comparison of the activity levels for indoor and outdoor locations across Darlington, the Tees Valley and England. Our results reflect the other areas in showing more people are active outdoors than indoors.

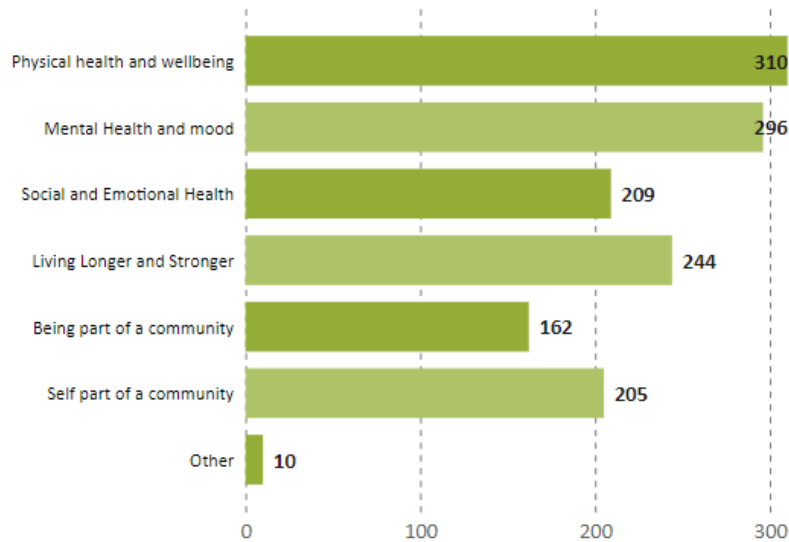
Figure 2: **Active by indoor and outdoor location** (November 22-23)



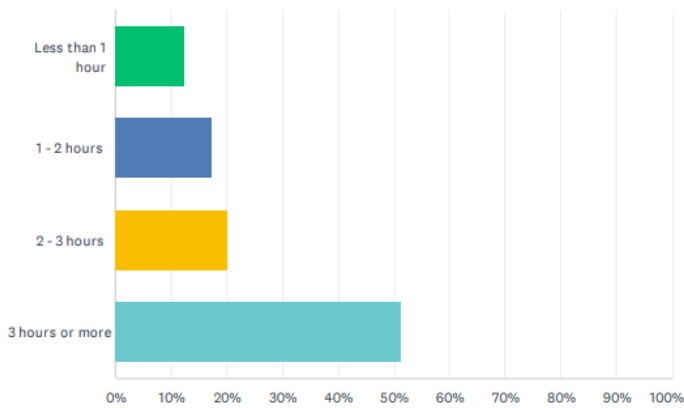
In Autumn 2023 we surveyed our residents via our communication channels to ask how active they are, why they are active and what they enjoy doing. We had 332 responses, for which we are grateful. The below images highlight and celebrate the responses.



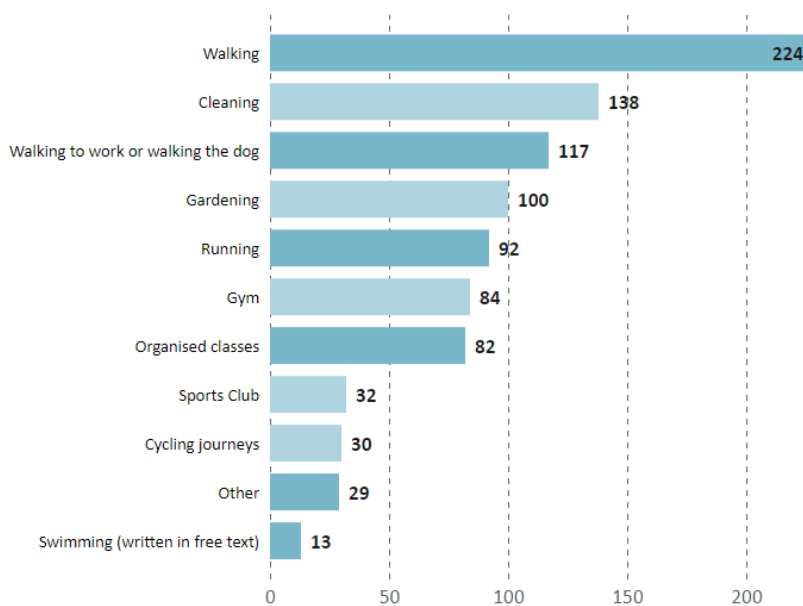
## Which of the following do you think physical activity helps with?



## How much physical activity do you do per week in hours?



## What physical activity do you do?



# Our population and assets

In Darlington we are lucky to boast an extensive number of assets that enable us to be active. The following image captures some of these. More information on this can be found on the council Move More web pages.





# What we will do

Extensive research has been carried out by Sport England online, in communities and in the Houses of Parliament to identify issues that have the greatest potential for preventing and tackling inequalities in engagement with sport and physical activities. The Five Big Issues are listed below and have influenced our delivery plan.

## Recover and reinvent

Recover from the damage of covid-19 and reinvent as a vibrant network of organisations providing sport and physical activity opportunities that meet the needs of different people.

## Connecting communities

Focusing on sport and physical activity's ability to make better places to live and bring people together.

## Positive experiences for children and young people

An unrelenting focus on positive experiences for all children and young people as the foundations for a long and healthy life.

## Connecting health and wellbeing

Strengthening the connections between sport, physical activity, health and wellbeing so more people can feel the benefits of, and advocate for an active life.

## Active environments

Creating and protecting the places and spaces that make it easier for people to be active.

# Delivery Plan

Our delivery plan is broken down into the sections from the “Eight Investments That Work for Physical Activity” (Appendix 2) as advised by the International Society for Physical Activity and Health. This is the summary of our delivery plan in the eight key areas.

## Healthcare

Working with health and social care professionals to develop their confidence in physical activity as a tool in prevention and treatment. We will do this by offering opportunities to increase their knowledge, training opportunities and ensure they are up to date with the local signposting options.

## Active Travel

Working in partnership with key stakeholders to encourage making cycling and walking the natural choice for travel. Raising awareness of opportunities within community, workplace and residential settings to encourage access, increase awareness and confidence on active travel.

## Urban Design

Our policies and plans will support equitable access to parks, local amenities and good walking and cycling infrastructure. Making being active more accessible and appealing.

## Workplaces

Provide workplaces in Darlington advice, guidance, and examples of best practice that they can use to develop and promote an active workplace including active travel to the workplace and homeworking.

## Public Education and Mass Media

Make marketing and media a priority theme within this strategy to promote and celebrate physical activity opportunities in Darlington. Signpost clubs, community groups and voluntary groups to the resources available to them to help promote their physical activity offer.

## Sport and Recreation for all

Provide and support equitable access for the residents of Darlington to formal and informal sporting opportunities across the lifespan of the strategy.

## Schools

Work with all education providers and partners in Darlington to support a wide range of physical activity opportunities within and beyond the curriculum.

## Community Wide Physical Activity

Offer a multi-faceted approach to engage the residents of Darlington in physical activity. We will work with a wide range of stakeholders ensuring a whole systems approach in promoting and providing community wide physical activity opportunities.







# How we will measure impact

We will be able to measure our success by use of data and insight, and measures against our action plan. Utilising Sport England Active Lives survey data to inform a Darlington physical activity insight tool. We will engage with the residents via our annual survey using the Darlington Borough Council communications channels. This will measure attitudes, participation and types of physical activity that our residents are doing. This will be benchmarked against our first survey in 2023.

We will continue to monitor responses to our schools Healthy Lifestyles survey where we will analyse responses from pupils in years 5, 6, 7 and 8 across Darlington, capturing their attitudes towards physical activity and their own activity levels.

We will form a Physical Activity steering group to ensure a whole systems approach is being used to implement the action plan. This will ensure we continue to focus on increasing physical activity across the eight sectors involved in the design and delivery of this strategy. The action plan can be seen at Appendix 1.

We will commit to sharing key challenges and celebrating success. We will be open in our communication with residents, businesses and stakeholders to help everyone stay informed.

## A timeline of the process is outlined below

### Delivery Phases

#### Year 1

- Establish structures
- Undertake system mapping
- Produce delivery plans
- Design measurement framework

#### Years 2-4

- Short term actions delivered - Review action plan alongside Council Plan review

#### Years 4-6

- Medium term actions delivered

#### Years 6-9

- Long term action and delivery

#### Year 9-10

- Evaluation
- Consultation on next strategy

# Appendix 1 - Action Plan

| SHORT       | MEDIUM      | LONG        |
|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| 2 - 4 YEARS | 4 - 6 YEARS | 6 - 9 YEARS |

## Healthcare

| TERM     | ACTION                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | LEAD BODY                                                                                              |
|----------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>S</b> | Review existing physical activity training packages and programmes for health care professionals. Consolidate and standardise the training offer to support standardisation of learning. Increase the availability of online formats so that healthcare professionals can access more flexibly. (Training offer to consider - GPCC, MECC, MI, Stroke Rehabilitation, PACC.)                                                   | Darlington Primary Care Network (PCN) and Darlington Borough Council Public Health Team.               |
| <b>S</b> | Move away from over emphasis of the medical model and clinical language and terminology, better equipping healthcare professionals to relay information to clients and patients.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Darlington PCN                                                                                         |
| <b>S</b> | Physical activity training should highlight and sign post locally provided opportunities and case studies. Imagery should be representative of the wider Darlington community.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Darlington PCN and Darlington Borough Council Public Health Team.                                      |
| <b>S</b> | Improve the signposting of local physical activity provision to the personalised healthcare offer made by Social Prescribers, Health Coaches and Care Co-ordinators. These links should be established and validated by the PCN.                                                                                                                                                                                              | Darlington PCN                                                                                         |
| <b>S</b> | Increased physical activity and reduction of inactivity to be considered as an intervention for most presenting clients either as a main or secondary support mechanism.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Darlington PCN                                                                                         |
| <b>M</b> | Promote the good practice currently taking place with specific health related groups such as Exercise on Referral, Cancer Prehabilitation/Rehabilitation and Exercise. After Stroke. Capture the participant experience and journey through video (to be used as a promotional tool but also as a guide to new participants - i.e. what will it be like, what do I need to bring with me, who will be leading the class etc.) | Darlington Borough Council Communications, Move More and Public Health teams.                          |
| <b>M</b> | Create case studies of local people to capture best practise and impact of physical activity on health care. Support a shift away from cure, towards prevention and early intervention. To be utilised on service websites and via social media channels.                                                                                                                                                                     | Darlington Borough Council Public Health and Communications team. Primary Healthcare Darlington (PHD). |
| <b>M</b> | Review the pathways into existing physical activity interventions to identify opportunities to make these services more inclusive, accessible and consistently signposted.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Darlington PCN                                                                                         |
| <b>M</b> | Encourage the development of 'Active GP Practices' across Darlington. Establish a pilot with one practice to share findings.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Darlington Public Health and Tees Valley Sport.                                                        |
| <b>L</b> | Work with health and social care to establish the most impactful approach to promoting the local physical activity offer.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Darlington Public Health and Tees Valley Sport.                                                        |
| <b>L</b> | Optimise the use of available technology both in terms of promotion of opportunity and enabling self service where appropriate. Increase awareness of physical activity apps and programmes (such as Couch to 5k and We are undefeatable )                                                                                                                                                                                    | Darlington PCN                                                                                         |



## Public education and mass media

| TERM     | ACTION                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | LEAD BODY                                                      |
|----------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>S</b> | Create a marketing and media plan to promote physical activity benefits and opportunities to be active in Darlington. Link with national campaigns and resources.                                                                                                                                                              | Darlington Borough Council Move More and Communications teams. |
|          | Through Darlington Borough Council facilities, website and the marketing and media plan, encourage families to utilise local and national guidance and support with getting and staying active. Local examples include the Growing Healthy Darlington app. National examples include the NHS Better Health campaign resources. | Darlington Borough Council Move More and communications teams. |
| <b>S</b> | Recognise and celebrate high level performers and the clubs and organisations that support their progression to elite level through Darlington Sports Winners Awards and Future Champions scheme.                                                                                                                              | Darlington Borough Council Move More and Communications teams. |
| <b>M</b> | Encourage physical activity providers and community groups to sign up to Sport Englands Digital Hub which provides access to a series of resources aimed at improving the digital marketing skills of the sport and physical activity sector.                                                                                  | Darlington Borough Council Move More and Communications teams. |
| <b>M</b> | Offer a digital marketing support service to physical activity providers in Darlington. This may include support in designing media content, signposting services and hosting guides on the Move More website.                                                                                                                 | Darlington Borough Council Move More and Communications teams. |
| <b>M</b> | Build on the success of Darlington's existing events and supplement these with broader physical activity offers to encourage higher levels of sustained participation associated with the main event - e.g. spin off events for the Darlington 10k, Move More Days and Active Parks.                                           | Darlington Borough Council Move More and Events Team           |
| <b>L</b> | Create a digital guide to physical activity opportunities in Darlington that can be promoted via the marketing and media plan. This can also be downloaded by developers to include in welcome packs for new homeowners and developments.                                                                                      | Darlington Borough Council Move More and Communications teams. |



## Workplace health

| TERM     | ACTION                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | LEAD BODY                                                                      |
|----------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>S</b> | Signpost organisations to work with Sustrans to introduce active travel into the workplace.                                                                                                                                                                             | Darlington Borough Council Communications Team, Sustrans.                      |
| <b>M</b> | Develop the Darlington Borough Council Employee Wellbeing Programme. This should include referral to physical activity opportunities as well as corporate discounts. Prepare this as a template of 'good practice' to share with local businesses.                      | Darlington Borough Council Human Resources and Move More Teams.                |
| <b>M</b> | Produce a secure cycle storage, shower and changing facilities map for Darlington to encourage active travel to the workplace and leisure activities.                                                                                                                   | Sustrans and Darlington Borough Council Communications Team                    |
| <b>M</b> | Prepare guidance on opportunities to be active at work including walking meetings, standing desks, lunch time walks and active commuting as part of the wellbeing offer. This should be representative of sectors with lower paid jobs, part time jobs, and shift work. | Darlington Borough Council Human Resources and Public Health Teams.            |
| <b>M</b> | Make guidance available on being active whilst working from home as part of the wellbeing offer.                                                                                                                                                                        | Darlington Borough Council Human Resources and Public Health Teams.            |
| <b>L</b> | Explore a workplace health & wellbeing award for Darlington. Recognise and celebrate best practice through Darlington Sports Awards or the Stronger Communities Awards.                                                                                                 | Darlington Borough Council Human Resources, Public Health and Move More Teams. |



## Active travel

| TERM     | ACTION                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | LEAD BODY                                                              |
|----------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>S</b> | Darlington Transport Strategy 2022 - 2030. Objective 1. Reduce Transport's impact on the environment and support Health and Wellbeing. Our aim is to support these proposals and work to maximise positive impact of the local plan in terms of reducing physical inactivity. (sections 1.8.1 and 5.3.1).                             | Darlington Borough Council Transport team                              |
| <b>S</b> | Include active travel campaigns within the physical activity marketing and media plan e.g. promote cycling and walking as greener, healthier and less costly ways to travel for shorter journeys or the benefits of active travel using climate change & sustainability as alternative motivations.                                   | Darlington Borough Council Transport team                              |
| <b>M</b> | Darlington Active Travel Hub 2024 - 2027 (subject to funding) will provide a variety of opportunities within community, workplace and residential settings to increase access, awareness and confidence on active travel. We will support this work through the physical activity marketing and media plan and within Council venues. | Sustrans and Darlington Borough Council Communications Team.           |
| <b>L</b> | Develop the existing Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) to incorporate insight on active travel rates in Darlington.                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Darlington Borough Council Public Health team                          |
| <b>L</b> | Consider integrating active travel into holiday activity programmes. This would include teaching children in Darlington how to independently travel to the town centre to access leisure facilities such as the Dolphin Centre and other physical activity assets.                                                                    | Darlington Borough Council Move More Team                              |
| <b>L</b> | To explore the School Streets initiative. A scheme that restricts traffic outside schools during pick up and drop off times, reducing congestion, boosting safety and enabling more pupils to walk, wheel or cycle.                                                                                                                   | Darlington Borough Council Transport, Public Health and Highway teams. |





## Sport and recreation for all

| TERM     | ACTION                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | LEAD BODY                                                                 |
|----------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>M</b> | Survey sports clubs on capacity and access to facilities. This will establish opportunities for growth and demand on facilities. We will continue to work with education facility providers to encourage ease and consistent access to school sports facilities for local clubs and communities. Extend this to private providers as well as local authority and voluntary sports clubs. This should inform the imminent sports facility and playing pitch strategy refresh. | Darlington Borough Council Move More Team                                 |
| <b>M</b> | Explore the Play Streets initiative which involves neighbour led short road closures to enable safe spaces to play.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Darlington Borough Council Public Health and Highways Teams. And PSAG.    |
| <b>M</b> | Produce a swim development plan linked with the Dolphin Centre and wider community pools. Looking to increase engagement and access.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Dolphin Centre and School Academy Trusts.                                 |
| <b>M</b> | Seek to attract high profile sports events to the town and sub region, to raise awareness, provide role models and encourage participation. A recent example being British Cycling National Championships 2024.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Darlington Borough Council Events team                                    |
| <b>M</b> | Continue to recognise and celebrate high level performers and the clubs and organisations that support their progression to elite level. Provide local role models to inspire people of Darlington.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Darlington Borough Council Move More and Communications teams.            |
| <b>M</b> | Create a network to support the promotion and provision of active ageing. To support people to live longer and stronger. Linking with provider services to support opportunities and provide guidance.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Darlington Borough Council Public Health Team, Tees Valley Sport and NHS. |
| <b>L</b> | Continue to invest in key assets such as the Dolphin Centre and Eastbourne Sports Complex to widen participation in recreation and leisure facilities.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Darlington Borough Council Leisure services                               |
| <b>L</b> | Consider developing more place based activities that focus on deprived areas. Working with families and priority groups in those areas to co-design the physical activity offer using the Houghton Matters project as an example of good practice. We will target funding from Sport England to target placed based work in our deprived wards in Darlington.                                                                                                                | Darlington Borough Council Move More and Public Health Teams.             |

## Community wide physical activity

| TERM     | ACTION                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | LEAD BODY                                                     |
|----------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>S</b> | Identify real and perceived gaps in physical activity provision (activities wise and geographically). Capture this information on the annual public survey and any additional data collection required. Use the information to shape future provision and marketing.                                 | Darlington Borough Council Move More and Public Health Teams. |
| <b>S</b> | Provide an advisory service for good practice on club and community group governance, community based delivery and facility management through the Darlington Move More Team.                                                                                                                        | Darlington Borough Council Move More team                     |
| <b>M</b> | Explore developing a network or forum that brings together voluntary community organisations, sports clubs and other stakeholders to share good practice and promote the integration of physical activity into broader wellbeing interventions. This could be web based, online, email or in person. | Darlington Borough Council Move More team                     |
| <b>M</b> | Support a volunteer pathway for clubs, community groups and events to increase capacity for delivery. We will work alongside National Governing Bodies, Active Partnerships, School Games and wider national voluntary networks to implement.                                                        | Darlington Borough Council Move More team                     |
| <b>M</b> | Publish a website page dedicated to providing up to date funding opportunities available to community groups to enable local physical activity opportunities and programmes to be delivered for example Haughton matters.                                                                            | Darlington Borough Council Move More team                     |
| <b>L</b> | Identify opportunities to expand community outreach programmes in priority areas of the town, subject to funding opportunities and requirements.                                                                                                                                                     | Darlington Borough Council Move More team                     |



## Active urban design

| TERM     | ACTION                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | LEAD BODY                                                      |
|----------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>S</b> | Continued commitment in Darlington Local Plan 2016-2036 to consider the impact urban design has on health and wellbeing. Darlington Public Health will provide advice and recommendations on the best ways to impact health and wellbeing through urban design (WHO guidance). See 1.8.1 and 5.3.1 of the local plan.             | Darlington Borough Council Planning Teams.                     |
| <b>M</b> | Create a digital guide to physical activity opportunities in Darlington. This can then be downloaded by developers to include in welcome packs for new homeowners and developments.                                                                                                                                               | Darlington Borough Council Move More and Communications Teams. |
| <b>M</b> | Work with the planning team to understand what statutory and non statutory processes are in place in relation to consultation in the local plan and in relation to planning applications.                                                                                                                                         | Darlington Borough Council Public Health and Planning Teams.   |
| <b>M</b> | Explore funding and partnership opportunities to enable initiatives such as Play Streets and Park Play. These primarily target areas of high deprivation or where there is limited green space. Examples include the Sport England place based fund.                                                                              | Darlington Borough Council                                     |
| <b>M</b> | Ensuring Health Impact Assessments (HIAs) are produced and submitted by the developer for relevant new developments in Darlington. Working collaboratively we will maximise the opportunities for healthy design and physical activity. Considering approaches such as 20 minute neighbourhoods and the healthy streets approach. | Darlington Borough Council - Public Health and Planning teams. |
| <b>M</b> | We will link urban design into the Darlington Playing Pitch and Facilities strategy action plan refresh. This will maximise opportunities on any new or existing sport and physical activity capital projects.                                                                                                                    | Darlington Borough Council - Move More team                    |





## Schools

| TERM     | ACTION                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | LEAD BODY                                                     |
|----------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>S</b> | Schools to adopt a whole school approach to physical activity before, within and beyond the curriculum, offering a broad range of activities and opportunities including high quality physical education and develop pathways to community providers which are inclusive for all.                                                         | Schools                                                       |
| <b>S</b> | Work with the School Games Organiser to offer leadership opportunities from primary through to secondary and beyond.                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Schools and School Game Organiser.                            |
| <b>S</b> | Work with the School Games Organiser on the Darlington School Games, offer targeting specific groups who would most benefit from taking part. Consider the different motivations for young people to take part in physical activity and sport e.g. social, mental, emotional as well as physical.                                         | Schools and School Game Organiser.                            |
| <b>S</b> | Widen access to eligible children to the Holiday Activities and Food programme which focuses on health, wellbeing and raising aspirations.                                                                                                                                                                                                | Schools and Darlington Borough Council Move More Team.        |
| <b>S</b> | Make the Healthy Early Years award (which includes physical activity criteria) available to all pre school provider settings. The awards offers advice on active settings and opportunities for activity throughout the day.                                                                                                              | Darlington Borough Council Education and Public Health Team.  |
| <b>M</b> | Active School examples, good practice and case studies to be shared across Darlington schools through network opportunities.                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Tees Valley Sport, Darlington Public Health Team and Schools. |
| <b>M</b> | Engage with initiatives to support and encourage active travel, such as WOW (Living Streets) and the Sustrans Big Walk and Wheel and promote active classrooms across all schools for opportunities to be active throughout the day.                                                                                                      | Schools                                                       |
| <b>M</b> | Encourage the opening of school facilities for community use, to meet the needs of local community.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Schools                                                       |
| <b>M</b> | Promote participation in positive activities. Building on the strong links made with local colleges, where students are facilitating consultation and engagement on our service's behalf with young people as part of their curricular activity. Implement student champions as the voice of Darlington Borough Council leisure services. | Schools, Dolphin Centre.                                      |
| <b>L</b> | Use pupil voice as a mechanism to understand the barriers to young people being physically active. Involve them in the co - creation and design of activities and plans.                                                                                                                                                                  | Schools and Darlington Borough Council Education Team.        |
| <b>L</b> | Consider the use of a range of PE schemes and resources to support the delivery of high quality PE, such as Teach Active, Complete PE , Real PE and the PE Hub.                                                                                                                                                                           | Schools                                                       |
| <b>L</b> | Raise Key Stage 2 swimming attainment levels in Darlington schools through ongoing delivery, monitoring and engagement in swimming.                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Schools, Dolphin Centre.                                      |
| <b>L</b> | Explore opportunities to link the water education journey of young people in Darlington with career pathways into leisure.                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Schools, Dolphin Centre.                                      |
| <b>L</b> | Ensure that all pre - school and school aged actions are adapted and shared with those who are educated outside of a school setting. This will encourage access and develop an understanding of the benefits of physical activity.                                                                                                        | Darlington Borough Council Education Team.                    |

# Appendix 2 - Sector Led Improvement approach

## Regional Physical Activity Collaboration in the North East using a Sector Led Improvement (SLI) Approach

We want all Darlington residents and those visiting and working here to have access to appropriate physical activity that positively supports their health and wellbeing.

- Sector-led improvement (SLI) is the approach to put improvements in place by local authorities and is a framework set out by the Local Government Association since 2011
- SLI takes the view that the responsibility and regulation of improvement in local government should stay with councils and is underpinned by the following key principles:
  - Councils are responsible for their own performance and improvement
  - Councils are primarily accountable to local communities
  - Councils have a collective responsibility for the performance of the sector as a whole
  - Coordinate across the local system.

### Outline line of decision-making process:

- Scoping meetings between Chair of NE Association of Directors of Public Health (ADPH) Healthy Weight and Physical Activity (PA) Network and regional Office of Health Improvement and Disparities.
- Established a regional leadership group with representation from Office of Health Improvement and Disparities, Active Partnerships, Sport England and local authorities.
- Agreed a Sector Led Improvement (SLI) approach using International Society for Physical Activity & Health - Eight Investments That Work for Physical Activity
- NE ADPH network – approval and sponsorship for PA SLI regional programme secured in September 2022.
- National funding secured in November 2022 to help develop the SLI physical activity self assessment tool

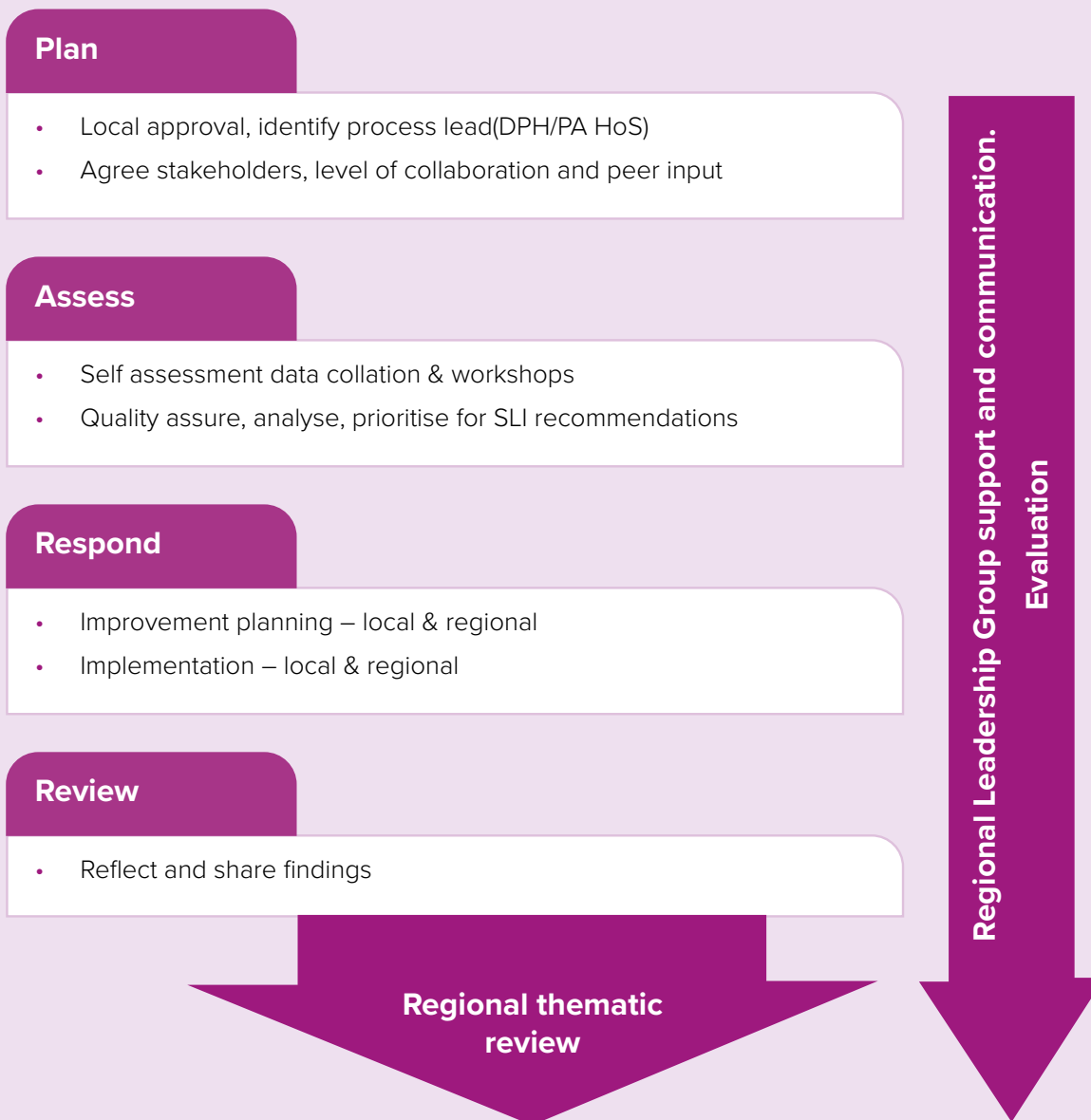
### The SLI physical activity tool:

- Is based on the ISPAH Eight Investments that Work for Physical Activity which will help us better understand what is going on across the local and regional physical activity system
- Looks at all activities through an inequalities lens to determine how inequalities are being tackled
- Incorporates other evidence (National Institute for Health and Care Excellence, Sport England etc) to provide evidence-based questions
- Looks to capture evidence of impact; local priorities & evidence and opportunities to do more at local or regional level



- Is at pilot stage so there are opportunities to inform its future development and use
- Success of the approach very much depends on an open and honest appraisal of current activities and approaches
- There are likely to be variations in the activities that local authorities are undertaking owing to local priorities and available resources
- The approach should be viewed to take a snapshot of where we are and to help identify opportunities.

## Example SLI process





# Appendix 3 - UK Chief Medical Officer recommendations on physical activity (Autumn 2024)

Inequalities in health arise because of inequalities in society. The conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work, and age. Over the last few decades physical activity levels have gradually declined in daily life and the impact of this has been felt disproportionately by certain disadvantaged groups

The coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic and cost of living crises have further exacerbated inequalities in physical activity levels and has been most acute with women; young people aged 16-34; over 75s; disabled people and people with long-term health conditions; those from Black, Asian and other minority ethnic backgrounds; and those living in deprived areas.

It is widely acknowledged that being physically active can help in the prevention and management of a range of health conditions, including: some cancers; obesity; type 2 diabetes; cardiovascular diseases (CVD) including coronary heart disease and stroke; hypertension; osteoarthritis; mental health conditions including depression and anxiety; and many other conditions

In addition to supporting good physical and mental health and functioning, regular physical activity also contributes to a range of wider social, environmental and economic benefits for individuals, communities and wider society.

## Summary of Guidelines by age group

### Under-5s Infants (less than 1 year)

Infants should be physically active several times every day in a variety of ways, including interactive floor-based activity, e.g. crawling. For infants not yet mobile, this includes at least

30 minutes of tummy time spread throughout the day while awake (and other movements such as reaching and grasping, pushing and pulling themselves independently, or rolling over); more is better. NB: Tummy time may be unfamiliar to babies at first, but can be increased gradually, starting from a minute or two at a time, as the baby becomes used to it. Babies should not sleep on their tummies.

### Toddlers (1-2 years)

Toddlers should spend at least 180 minutes (3 hours) per day in a variety of physical activities at any intensity, including active and outdoor play, spread throughout the day; more is better.

### Pre-schoolers (3-4 years)

Pre-schoolers should spend at least 180 minutes (3 hours) per day in a variety of physical activities spread throughout the day, including active and outdoor play. More is better; the 180 minutes should include at least 60 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous intensity physical activity.

### Children and Young People (5 to 18 years)

Children and young people should engage in moderate-to-vigorous intensity physical activity for an average of at least 60 minutes per day across the week. This can include all forms of activity such as physical education, active travel, after-school activities, play and sports. Children and young people should engage in a variety of types and intensities of physical activity across the week to develop movement skills, muscular fitness, and bone strength. Children and young people should aim to minimise the amount of time spent being sedentary, and when physically possible should break up long periods of not moving with at least light physical activity.

### **Adults (19 to 64 years)**

For good physical and mental health, adults should aim to be physically active every day. Any activity is better than none, and more is better still. Adults should do activities to develop or maintain strength in the major muscle groups. These could include heavy gardening, carrying heavy shopping, or resistance exercise. Muscle strengthening activities should be done on at least two days a week, but any strengthening activity is better than none. Each week, adults should accumulate at least 150 minutes (2 1/2 hours) of moderate intensity activity (such as brisk walking or cycling); or 75 minutes of vigorous intensity activity (such as running); or even shorter durations of very vigorous intensity activity (such as sprinting or stair climbing); or a combination of moderate, vigorous and very vigorous intensity activity. Adults should aim to minimise the amount of time spent being sedentary, and when physically possible should break up long periods of inactivity with at least light physical activity.

### **Older Adults (65 years and over)**

Older adults should participate in daily physical activity to gain health benefits, including maintenance of good physical and mental health, wellbeing, and social functioning. Some physical activity is better than none: even light activity brings some health benefits compared to being sedentary, while more daily physical activity provides greater health and social benefits. Older adults should maintain or improve their physical function by undertaking activities aimed at improving or maintaining muscle strength, balance and flexibility on at least two days a week. These could be combined with sessions involving moderate aerobic activity or could be additional sessions aimed specifically at these components of fitness. Each week older adults should aim to accumulate 150 minutes (two and a half hours)

of moderate intensity aerobic activity, building up gradually from current levels. Those who are already regularly active can achieve these benefits through 75 minutes of vigorous intensity activity, or a combination of moderate and vigorous activity, to achieve greater benefits. Weight-bearing activities which create an impact through the body help to maintain bone health. Older adults should break up prolonged periods of being sedentary with light activity when physically possible, or at least with standing, as this has distinct health benefits for older people.

Despite the widely reported benefits of physical activity, most adults and many children across the UK are insufficiently active to meet the full set of recommendations. We want this report to act as a catalyst for a change in our attitudes to physical activity. These guidelines present a UK-wide consensus on the amount and type of physical activity that is needed to benefit health across the life course. The guidelines have been updated using the best available evidence and reflect what we know now about the relationship between physical activity and health. The guidelines apply across the population, irrespective of gender, age or socio-economic status. We know there are clear health inequalities in relation to physical inactivity and therefore interventions to promote physical activity must consider this. We want as many people as possible to make use of these guidelines to work towards and achieve the recommended activity levels. With that in mind, we have developed the updated infographics included in this report to help bring the guidelines to life and make them easy for everyone to use. We hope these guidelines help all individuals to become more active. The good news is that even small changes can make a big difference over time. As we say in these guidelines: some is good, more is better.





**DARLINGTON**  
Borough Council

