

**CABINET  
10 JUNE 2025**

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**PHYSICAL ACTIVITY STRATEGY**

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**Responsible Cabinet Member -  
Councillor Matthew Roche, Health and Housing Portfolio**

**Responsible Director -  
Dave Winstanley, Executive Director – Environment, Highways & Community Services**

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**SUMMARY REPORT**

**Purpose of the Report**

1. To update members on the review of Darlington's Physical Activity Strategy and seek approval of a renewed Strategy for the period 2025-2035.

**Summary**

2. The purpose of Darlington's Physical Activity Strategy is to improve participation and engagement in sport and physical activity.
3. It is one of the key delivery strategies to support the Council Plan and has been reviewed to align the objectives with the Council's priorities.
4. Consultation and engagement has been undertaken to develop the Darlington Physical Activity Strategy 2025-2035, which was approved by the Health and Wellbeing Board on 5 December 2024 and is attached at **Appendix 1**.
5. Reviews of the strategy will be scheduled with reviews of the Council Plan and any other significant legislative changes to adjust and realign the content of the strategy, if required.

**Recommendation**

6. It is recommended that Members approve the renewed strategy for 2025-2035.

**Reasons**

7. The recommendations are supported by the following reason; to ensure the strategy aligns with the Council Plan and provide strategic direction to improve participation and engagement in sports and physical activity.

**Executive Director - Environment, Highways & Community Services  
Dave Winstanley**

## **Background Papers**

- (i) Darlington Physical Activity Strategy 2025-2035
- (ii) Eight Investments That Work for Physical Activity (International Society for Physical Activity and Health)
- (iii) Uniting the Movement Strategy (Sport England)

Lisa Soderman: Extension 6985  
Joanne Hennessey: Extension 6205

Council Plan	This report supports the Council Plan priorities of Living Well and Tackling Climate Change.
Addressing inequalities	The strategy provides a detailed action plan.
Tackling Climate Change	There is an action plan around transport, and sustainable travel.
Efficient and effective use of resources	In the development and delivery of the strategy and action plan, the efficient and effective use of resources is key to ensure maximum benefits are achieved.
Health and Wellbeing	This proposed collaborative project will provide improvements for health and wellbeing of residents with prevention and management of a multitude of health conditions.
S17 Crime and Disorder	Consideration to public safety to be reflected within the implementation of relevant action plans.
Wards Affected	All.
Groups Affected	All.
Budget and Policy Framework	There is no impact on the Council's Budget and Policy Framework.
Key Decision	No.
Urgent Decision	No.
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	Looked After Children and Care Leavers receive free access to the Council's leisure services. Consideration to active learning and general accessibility to be given to Looked After Children within the implementation of relevant action plans.

## MAIN REPORT

### Information and Analysis

8. National data shows that 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. Around one in three men and one in two women are not achieving recommended levels of activity for good health.
9. The most recent Darlington data (November 22/23) shows that in Darlington we have 19.7% 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 per the UK Chief Medical Officer's guidelines, adults should be aiming for 150 minutes of moderate activity per week.
10. Public Health and Leisure Services agreed a collaborative review of the Physical Activity Strategy to respond to changes in environments and behaviours which has been amplified following the pandemic.
11. The benefits of physical activity are significant, and these are outlined in more detail in the strategy.

12. The strategy at Appendix 1 sets out the vision, mission and aims that the Council and partners are seeking to achieve. At the highest level, the vision is that: “We want all residents in the borough of Darlington, and those visiting and working here to have access to appropriate physical activity opportunities that positively supports their health and wellbeing.” The mission is clear that “We want to ensure that being active is a right and not a privilege, for those living, working and visiting the borough of Darlington to experience the associated benefits to their physical and mental health. We particularly want to make sure there are opportunities for physical activity for those facing disadvantage and inequality.”
13. The strategy has been developed using our current evidence base, our population information, assets data and best practice. The strategy has been developed utilising Sport England’s ‘Uniting the Movement Strategy’ that identified the five big issues that have the greatest potential for preventing and tackling inequalities in engagement with sport and physical activity. The strategy and delivery plan has also been developed using a self-assessment-based approach using the ‘Eight Investments That Work for Physical Activity’ produced by the International Society for Physical Activity and Health. The Eight themes used to complete the self-assessment are:
  - (a) Whole of School Programmes
  - (b) Community Wide Programmes
  - (c) Workplaces
  - (d) Active Travel
  - (e) Sport and Recreation for All
  - (f) Active Urban Design
  - (g) Healthcare
  - (h) Public Education and Mass Media
14. The strategy is designed to align with the new Council Plan and the objectives of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy. This will be reviewed periodically as the Council Plan or any other significant policies change.
15. The delivery plan within the strategy has been developed around the eight investment areas that work for physical activity that are listed above. Over the initial year of the strategy the governance will be put in place to develop the actions identified and a measurement framework will be put in place to monitor progress.

### **Financial Implications**

16. The action plan and any updates will need to be delivered with the financial resources available. Officers will look for any external opportunities to increase the resources available to deliver this strategy, in partnership with others.

### **Carbon Impact and Climate Change**

17. Darlington Physical Activity Strategy 2025-2035 includes an action plan focussed on active travel, which features as a running theme through other action plans contained within the strategy, including workplace health, public education and mass media.

18. The draft action plans are comprised of high-level actions. Steering groups will develop these into detailed plans and will be encouraged to consider climate considerations as an ongoing agenda item.

### **Consultation**

19. A roadshow of consultation workshops covering these themes took place in 2023/2024 with over 100 stakeholders invited alongside public consultation that generated feedback from 332 residents. In collaboration with an assigned Public Health Consultant, the outcomes of the workshops have been translated into an action plan for Darlington, which details actions ranging from short, medium and long-term.
20. Health and Housing Scrutiny Committee considered the Physical Activity Strategy at their meeting on 26 February and members resolved:
  - (a) Members to provide further comments on the Physical Activity Strategy 2025-2035 by 5 March 2025.
  - (b) That Members request that consideration be given to the inclusion of 'Physical Activity Strategy' in all reports.