

BACKGROUND

Physical inactivity is one of the lifestyle behaviours identified through Thrive Plymouth as a cause of ill health, poorer wellbeing, and inequalities in health.

Evidence tells us that unhealthy behaviours cluster in deprived communities because they are associated with underlying social determinants of health; this is why Thrive Plymouth considers all of these risk factors together rather than looking at one in isolation. This means that the drivers to support physical activity, and the barriers to being more active, are complex and require a whole-system approach.

Plymouth is well placed to undertake a 'whole system' approach to addressing physical inactivity, supported by a formally integrated health and social care system, a strong commitment from Plymouth City Council and a network of committed partners across the city. We are developing this approach with support from Sport England.

This brief paper is to update the Health and Wellbeing Board on our approach to physical activity and the work that we have been doing with Sport England.

WHY IS PHYSICAL INACTIVITY IMPORTANT?

Physical inactivity is linked to a range of undesirable physical and mental health outcomes including premature mortality, heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, depression and some types of cancer (World Health Organization, 2017). Despite this, only 21% of boys and 16% of girls in England do the amount of physical activity required to fully support their development (Public Health England, 2014). Persuading those who are inactive to become more active is likely to have significant health benefits across every stage of a person's life:

- Keeping physically active can reduce the likelihood of premature mortality by 30% (British Heart Foundation, 2017).
- Persuading inactive people to be more active could prevent one in ten cases of stroke and heart disease in the UK (Public Health England, 2014)
- Physical activity can reduce the risk of vascular dementia and have a positive impact on non-vascular dementia (Public Health England, 2014)

The return on investment to promote physical activity at the population level is likely to be significant particularly when targeting adults most at risk of inactivity (Department of Health, 2012). For example, Cycling England estimated that a 20% increase in cycling by 2015 would save £107 million by reducing premature deaths, £52 million from lower NHS costs and £87 million due to fewer absences from work (see (Department of Health, 2012)). UK Active (UK Active, 2014) estimates that just a 1% reduction in the rates of inactivity each year for five years would save the UK around £1.2 billion.

Which groups are at risk of being inactive?

Physical inactivity rates are high; almost a quarter of the population of Plymouth are inactive. There are a number of groups of people who are at risk of being inactive and therefore producing inequalities in health and wellbeing. These include;

- Social deprivation – people living with low income are at high risk of being less physically active.
- Gender – men are more active than women at any age group

- Age – physical activity levels decline with age, even though there are considerable benefits to older people in become more active – even if they have not been active when younger.
- Disability – despite there being many activities suitable for people with disabilities, people with disabilities are far less likely to be active. This includes people with learning disabilities, who are half as likely to take part in physical activity.
- Ethnicity – BME groups tend to be less likely to be physically active
- Gender and sexual orientation – people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender are less likely to take part in activities within sports clubs

SPORT ENGLAND APPROACH

In May 2016, Sport England published their strategy 'Towards an Active Nation'. This set out a systems leadership approach to tackling physical inactivity, stating that;

We want everyone in England regardless of age, background or level of ability to feel able to engage in sport and physical activity. Some will be young, fit and talented, but most will not.

In particular, the strategy indicates that Sport England will be;

- Focusing more money and resources on tackling inactivity because this is where the gains for the individual and for society are greatest
 - Investing more in children and young people from the age of five to build positive attitudes to sport and activity as the foundations of an active life
 - Helping those who are active now to carry on, but at lower cost to the public purse over time.
- Sport England will work with those parts of the sector that serve the core market to help them identify ways in which they can become more sustainable and self-sufficient

It is very clear that the strategic aims of Plymouth and of Sport England are strongly aligned.

Joint working

We are pleased to welcome Jo Colin, a joint appointment between Sport England and Active Devon, who is working with us as part of Sport England's 'Extended Workforce Pilot'. Jo has a background in promoting physical activity using insights to understand the barriers and opportunities for specific groups of people.

At the time of writing, we are about to hold a Physical Activity Workshop with the remit below;

We have all been working hard to try and shift inactivity levels across the country but these efforts have not been successful in making the changes we all want to see, not because of lack of effort but this is a tough challenge. Sport England is changing their strategy, focussing on a systems leadership approach which is highly collaborative. This workshop will introduce this. It will help us to look at how we want to work together across Plymouth and develop clarity over what it is we want to achieve (for the population). We know a fair bit about our physical activity levels and we know something about barriers and behaviours; but we know our partners have a wealth of knowledge and INSIGHT into this. Can we pull this together to help us to create a more coherent picture over all? We also know that risky lifestyle behaviours tend to cluster together so we need to consider how this fits with the wider system and Thrive Plymouth.

A verbal update will be provided to the Board.