



## SUPPORTING ACTIVE LIFESTYLES IN YORKSHIRE AND THE HUMBER – STATEMENT FOLLOWING PUBLICATION OF THE LEVELLING UP WHITE PAPER

As organisations committed to improving levels of physical activity across Yorkshire and The Humber, we welcome the publication of the Government's Levelling Up White Paper<sup>1</sup>.

Across a range of the paper's objectives, including improved rates of Healthy Life Expectancy (HLE), greater pride in local communities and more sustainable forms of transport, there is a common need for improved levels of, and support for, physical activity on a day-to-day basis. The case for such improvements across Yorkshire and The Humber has never been so great.

According to the Office for National Statistics<sup>2</sup>, across Yorkshire and The Humber average HLE at birth for women varies by over 10 years from 56.1 years in Doncaster to 67.9 years in the East Riding of Yorkshire. This compares to an average across England of 63.9 years. For men, the range is even larger, from 53.8 years in Hull to 67.3 years in North Yorkshire. This compares to an England wide average of 63.1 years<sup>3</sup>. Within many individual cities and between villages and towns in the region this gap is as wide as 20 years.

We know that most people in Yorkshire and Humber are active in their day to day lives. However, we also know that too many of us, 28.4% of the population, are damaging our health through being inactive. (defined as less than 30 minutes per week of moderate activity, the minimum that produces health benefits). Addressing this inequality will contribute to reducing the gap in HLE between the areas where it is highest and lowest as well as increasing overall HLE and wellbeing.

Physical inactivity levels vary significantly across the region from less than 1 in 5 (19.2%) in Craven to 38.6% of people in Hull<sup>4</sup>. In addition, evidence shows that those least likely to be active are also those who experience the poorest health and are more likely to be female, living with one or more long term health condition, disabled, from an ethnically diverse community and /or from a lower socio-economic group. Research shows that the reasons why people are inactive are complex and variable and that they are related to the social and economic conditions with which people live as well as capability, opportunity and motivation.

The cost of physical inactivity to the economy is significant, with estimates suggesting that it costs the UK £7.4 billion annually (including £0.9 billion to the NHS alone)<sup>5</sup>.

Conversely, for every £1 spent on community sport and physical activity in England, an economic and social return on investment of almost £4 is generated<sup>6</sup>.

Given this, we are calling on central Government, and all local authorities, Mayors and Integrated Care Systems in the region to work with partners to:

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<sup>1</sup> DLUHC, *Levelling UP*, February 2022, available at:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1052706/Levelling\\_Up\\_WP\\_HRES.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1052706/Levelling_Up_WP_HRES.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> Office for national Statistics, *Health state life expectancy at birth and at age 65 years by local areas, UK*, December 2019, available at:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/file?uri=%2fpeoplepopulationandcommunity%2fhealthandsocialcare%2fhealthandlifeexpectancies%2fdatasets%2fhealthstatelifeexpectancyatbirthandage65bylocalareasuk%2fcurrent/hsleatbirthandage65byukla201618.xlsx>.

<sup>3</sup> Office for National Statistics, *Health state life expectancies, UK: 2018 to 2020*, March 2022, available at:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/healthandlifeexpectancies/bulletins/healthstatelifeexpectanciesuk/2018to2020>.

<sup>4</sup> Sports England, *Active Lives data tables*, November 2020-21, available at: <https://www.sportengland.org/know-your-audience/data/active-lives/active-lives-data-tables#november202021-17274>,

<sup>5</sup> Public Health England, *Physical activity: applying All Our Health*, October 2019, available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/physical-activity-applying-all-our-health/physical-activity-applying-all-our-health>.

<sup>6</sup> Sport England, *Why investing in physical activity is great for our health – and our nation*, September 2020, available at: <https://www.sportengland.org/news/why-investing-physical-activity-great-our-health-and-our-nation>.

- Ensure that central government funding is targeted to support the priorities within the Levelling Up White Paper, Uniting the Movement (Sport England's strategy), The government's soon to be published Sports Strategy and Everybody Active Every Day Strategy. This should particularly focus on those communities with the lowest levels of physical activity.
- Ensure that Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) investment plans across the region include a focus on the promotion of physical activity and sport, demonstrating where it adds value to SPF priorities, particularly creating great communities and places; supporting local businesses; and people and skills. As part of this, it is important to ensure the infrastructure is in place to engage community organisations to deliver and add value to plans allocated SPF funding.
- Learning from the success of South Yorkshire over the last 2 years, all Mayoral Combined Authorities in Yorkshire and The Humber should appoint an Active Travel Commissioner. Across Leeds City Region, two-thirds of journeys are less than five miles in distance - this could be done in 30 minutes by bike with the right infrastructure. In the South Yorkshire City Region, 40% of journeys of less than one kilometre are driven. If more people walked or cycled these short journeys, they would be more active, and reduce congestion and pollution. We should also take advantage of the new Active Travel England body being based in York and the region's internationally acclaimed natural landscapes, Areas of Outstanding Beauty (ANOBs), Marine Conservation Zones and the region's three National Parks; the North Yorkshire Moors, Yorkshire Dales and the Peak District.
- Local authorities and combined authorities should ensure that opportunities to be active are designed into all infrastructure developments, including housing, transport systems and retail and industrial developments.
- Once the Government's National Sports Strategy and Everybody Active Every Day Strategy is published, local authority leaders, Metro Mayors and ICS's should work with the three Yorkshire and The Humber Active Partnerships to enable them to lead on the implementation of these strategies in Yorkshire and The Humber. It is vital that these strategies are translated into tangible and clear action plans if they are to succeed. The overarching objective needs to be improving rates of physical activity, particularly within communities that are less active, through adopting proportionate universalism, and asset based, place-based approaches.
- It is vital that local authorities across Yorkshire and The Humber share learning and insight about the reasons why some communities have the lower levels of physical activity than others. This insight can be used to help communities across the region to become more active. We also encourage a collaborative approach, including with our universities, to find the means to track progress locally in improving activity levels and reducing the inequality gap on an annual basis.
- Local Authorities should refresh or conduct an audit of facilities, including playing pitches, leisure facilities, swimming pools, parks and outdoor spaces, to ensure that they are fully accessible to all communities, particularly communities that are least likely to be active. This should include considering the importance of open and green space, community halls and school facilities for those who are inactive and can live up to 30 miles from a leisure facility.
- In light of the growing importance of leisure facilities in contributing to population health priorities, central government should ensure leisure facilities, particularly swimming pools, have the required resources to stay open, particularly in light of the increase in energy costs. A recent report by the District Council's Network demonstrates how involving inactive populations in physical activity services offered by local authorities can reduce the healthy life expectancy inequality gap by 3.7 years<sup>7</sup>. NHS Foundation Trusts should learn from each other so that all areas have successful collaborations with leisure providers to support pre and rehab pathways.
- In line with proposals from the House of Lords National Plan for Sport and Recreation Committee, local authorities should work with Health and Wellbeing Boards, local NHS Trusts, Public Health Teams and ICSs to ensure that physical activity and sport are adding value across the health system, including population health, waiting lists, elective surgery and social prescribing. Primary care and the Voluntary Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector are well positioned to advise on how to create successful social prescribing models.
- All local authorities across the Yorkshire and Humber Region should work with their partners to create the conditions for all children to learn to swim and to ride a bike. Learning to swim should remain an important public safety issue and Covid lockdown has prevented hundreds of thousands of primary aged children from

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<sup>7</sup> District Councils Network, *Fit for the Future: The Health Value of Wellbeing and Leisure Services*, May 2022, available at: <https://districtcouncils.info/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Fit-For-the-Future-The-Health-Value-of-Wellbeing-and-Leisure-Services.pdf>.

learning to swim. By the end of the 2020/2021 academic year it was estimated that just 54% of children living in the most deprived areas of England will be able to swim 25 metres. In comparison, 68% of those living in the least deprived areas will be able to do so. In five years' time, among children in year 7 in the most deprived areas of England, just 35% will be able to swim 25 metres. In comparison, 77% of those in the least deprived areas will be able to swim that distance<sup>8</sup>.

- All education leaders should introduce the Creating Active Schools Framework, which takes a whole school approach to embedding physical activity within and beyond the school day to support the raising of attendance and attainment in all primary schools.
- Sedentary behaviours are carbon intensive and high levels of physical inactivity directly contributes to the emissions we produce as a region. Physical activity as a core part of active travel helps not only reduce such emissions but improves air quality and overall population health. The effective use of green spaces assists in flood prevention and provides places for people to be active to build resilience for the region around climate change.

**For further information on achieving the above, please contact:**

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<sup>8</sup> APPG on Swimming, *Impact of Coronavirus on school swimming and water safety*, May 2021, available at: <https://www.swimming.org/library/documents/files/7842/download>.