Adult physical activity

Introduction
Physical inactivity has been identified as the fourth leading risk factor for global mortality. Increasing physical activity levels has the potential to dramatically improve both physical and mental wellbeing, reduce all-cause mortality and improve life expectancy; For example, increasing physical activity levels helps to prevent and manage more than 20 long-term conditions including coronary heart disease, cancer, diabetes, dementia, musculoskeletal disorders, obesity, stroke and mental illness. The estimated direct cost of physical inactivity to the NHS across the UK is more than £1.6 billion per year.

Recommendations by the Chief Medical Officer state that adults should aim to be active daily. Over a week, activity should add up to at least 150 minutes (2½ hours) of moderate-intensity activity in bouts of 10 minutes or more – one way to approach this is to do 30 minutes on at least 5 days a week. Physical activity includes everyday activity such as walking and cycling, work-related activity, housework, DIY and gardening. It also includes recreational activities such as working out in a gym, dancing, or playing active games, as well as organised and competitive sport.

Benefits of maintaining the recommended levels of physical activity include:

- A 30% lower risk of early death;
- Up to a 35% lower risk of coronary heart disease and stroke.
- Up to a 50% lower risk of type 2 diabetes.
- Up to a 50% lower risk of colon cancer, up to a 20% lower risk of breast cancer.
- Up to an 83% lower risk of osteoarthritis, up to a 68% lower risk of hip fracture, a 30% lower risk of falls (among older adults).
- Up to a 30% lower risk of depression.
- Up to a 30% lower risk of dementia.

Risk factors and vulnerable groups
Key risk factors of those more likely to be inactive are:

- Females, starting from adolescence.
- Adults, especially older adults.
- Black and minority ethnic groups.
- Living in a low-income household.
- People living with a disability.

What is the evidence base?
The NICE local government briefing for physical activity highlights the need for a wide ranging programme of initiatives involving all local authority departments; these include encouraging change in:

- Service planning and commissioning – ensuring local strategies support physical activity.
• Walking and cycling – including reducing road danger and perceptions, ensuring adequate network of paths and recognising health benefits.
• Leisure and sport facilities – safe, easy to reach and suitable for a range of population groups.
• Natural environment – green spaces and play areas.
• Built environment – encourage physical activity such as use of stairs.
• Schools and colleges – multi component physical activity programmes and playground design.
• Workplaces – work based physical activity programmes.

Recent guidelines are available for exercise referral schemes that try to increase physical activity among people who are inactive or sedentary and are otherwise healthy or who have an existing health condition or other risk factors for disease. Commissioning guidance is available for those working in primary care whose remit includes offering lifestyle advice, examples include: exercise professionals, GPs, health trainers, health visitors, mental health professionals, midwives, pharmacists, practice nurses and physiotherapists.

**Local picture**
In 2014, Luton was identified as the 12th (out of 150) most inactive local authority area in England. Luton also had a higher-than-average rate of premature deaths: 306.7 per 100,000 compared with 281 per 100,000 in England.

Figure 65 shows that in 2013 around 1 in 3 (30.3%) of the adult population in Luton were physically inactive - a reduction from 35.9% in 2012, which is higher than England, but is no longer significantly different. The percentage of physically active adults in Luton achieving at least 150 minutes of physical activity per week (Figure 66) was 52.3% in 2013 (an increase from 48% in the previous year). Although lower than England, the gap is closing and the rate is similar to comparator areas.

Figure 65: PHOF indicator 2.13ii - the percentage of adults classified as "inactive"
There has been a decrease in the percentage of inactive adults in Luton between 2005/06 and 2012/13 from 54.0% to 52.8%. However, a greater proportion of those aged 26-34 years do not participate in any sessions of moderate intensity physical activity. In 2012/13 inactivity in Luton was:

- Higher among females (59.5%) than males (46.3%), in England these values are females (51.9%) and males (41.9%).
- Higher in the White ethnic group (53.8%) than the non-White groups (50.5%), in England the White group is more active with a value of 46.7% compared with 48.4%.
- Higher (72.9%) than the England average (69.9%) for those with limiting disabilities.
- Higher (59.7%) in the population working in National Statistics Socio-Economic Classifications (NS-SEC) 5-8 (lower supervisory, semi-routine, routine and manual jobs and never worked and long-term unemployed) compared with 44.0% in NS-SEC 1-2 (higher and lower managerial, administrative and professional occupations).

What is being done locally?
There have been a number of initiatives designed to increase access to physical activity. Improving physical activity levels in a population is supported by developing an environment where people actively choose to walk and cycle as part of everyday life. The following areas have an impact on physical activity:

- Access to sports and leisure facilities, see Section 3.7 on cultural assets.
- Planning.
- Transport, see Section 3.1.
- Parks and green spaces, see Section 3.5.
- Promoting physical activity in the workplace – in the Council this included a walk-off challenge which saw 180 employees accumulate more than 6 million steps. The county sports partnership is also managing the Workplace Challenge initiative, a national online programme to encourage organisations, big and small to get their workforces active.
Other activities include the following:

- **LiveWell Luton** - provides an opportunity for the local population to become more active with the assistance of community health coaches.
- **Active Luton** - Exercise on Referral supports adults registered at a Luton GP surgery.
- **Active Luton** also provides bespoke exercise sessions for individuals who suffer from:
  - chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.
  - multiple sclerosis and Parkinson’s disease.
- **Let’s Get Moving** - supports patients with certain conditions to take part in physical activity through an 11-week motivational interviewing process with a community exercise professional.
- **Get Back Into** - provides adults of any age with a range of sporting and physical activity opportunities through a series of coached/tutored sessions over a 6-10 week period.
- **Full of Life Clubs and Active Retirement Club** - a programme of activity sessions for older and retired people with an emphasis on socialising and having fun while undertaking light intensity sport and physical activity.
- **Me Time** – a Sport England funded programme providing a community based sport and physical activity opportunities six days a week for women and girls aged 14 years and over.
- **Community health and wellbeing clubs** – aims help people aged 50+ years to be active and independent in the community for as long as possible as well as helping them to lead a socially inclusive lifestyle.
- **Walking football** - aims to engage older men in sporting activity as well as providing the opportunity to meet new people, play with friends and have fun.

**No Limits Disability Sport Programme** - initiative designed to create more sustainable opportunities for disabled people aged 14 and over to take part in sport and physical activity in Bedfordshire.

**Perspective of public/service users**

In 2014, three questions were included in the town-wide Your Say, Your Way residents survey on participation in sport and physical activity. These questions asked residents about the levels of participation, where they participated and what would enable them to increase their participation in sport and physical activity. 1,095 residents participated in the survey and the results indicated:

- **How often?**
  - just under 50% of those who completed the survey participated in sport and/or physical activity on 3 or more days a week.
  - 22% of those surveyed stated that they did no sport and physical activity whatsoever.
- **Where?**
  - 41% and 43% of those surveyed indicated that they participated in sport and physical activity either at a local park/field or at home respectively.
  - 17% used an Active Luton facility.
  - other venues included community centres, at work, on a golf course and general walking.
- **What would increase levels of activity?**
  - many responses indicated time, money and childcare.
– access and programming were also mentioned – including the particular need for women-only activities.

**Priorities**

1. Reduce the percentage of inactive adults and increase participation in physical activity by making facilities more accessible and targeting ‘at risk’ population groups.

2. Support physical activity initiatives across the life course: training in early years settings; increasing number of sport/physical activity-related jobs and involvement of adults and older people in designing and developing sport and physical activity.

3. Maximise the linkages across the Investment Framework to invest in sport and physical activity opportunities including environments supportive of physical activity.
References


