



# Northumberland County Council

Health and Well-being Board

Thursday, 13 February 2025

## **Moving in the right direction: Director of Public Health Annual Report 2024**

**Report of Councillor(s)** Veronica Jones, Cabinet Member for Tackling Inequalities

**Responsible Officer(s):** Gill O'Neill, Executive Director for Public Health (DPH), Inequalities & Stronger Communities

### **1. Link to Key Priorities of the Corporate Plan**

Making Northumberland the Land of Great Opportunities is the vision set out in the Corporate Plan 2023-26 and is driven by our corporate priorities of value for money, tackling inequalities and driving economic growth. This DPH report recognises the important role that being active can have on the health and wellbeing of residents and communities within Northumberland, including the wider social and economic effects.

One of our corporate plan priorities is 'Tackling Inequalities' including giving children and young people the best start in life and all adults living well regardless of age, background, illness or disability. The DPH report highlights that those from our more deprived areas are less likely and have more barriers to being physically active, particularly those living with a long-term condition, disability or from an older age group. These barriers include disadvantages in our physical environment, social situations and individual circumstances. This report encourages us to look at physical activity through an inequalities lens, by ensuring we have well designed spaces and high-quality services that can be accessed by our most disadvantaged communities, strategies and partnerships that prioritises narrowing the inactivity gap and using a strength-based approach to build upon the assets already within communities.

The Corporate Plan also puts a priority on Driving Economic Growth. We know that being more active can help work productivity, reduce sickness absence and help drive a more vibrant economy. The Northumberland Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy prioritises increasing physical activity across all three of its core themes which are starting and growing up well, building blocks of a good life and adapting a whole system approach to health and care. This includes supporting both children and adults to be more physically active and improve residents use of active travel.

## **2. Purpose of report**

The purpose of this report is to present the independent Director of Public Health (DPH) Annual Report for 2024. The report focusses on physical activity across Northumberland and highlights the ways we can get more people active more often.

## **3. Recommendations**

It is recommended that the Board:

- a) Considers the content of the Director of Public Health Annual Report 2024.
- b) Comments on the contribution that Health and Wellbeing Board partners can make to promoting physical activity across Northumberland.
- c) Accept and endorse the findings in the independent Director of Public Health Annual Report 2024 attached as appendix 1 to this report.

## **4. Forward plan date and reason for urgency if applicable**

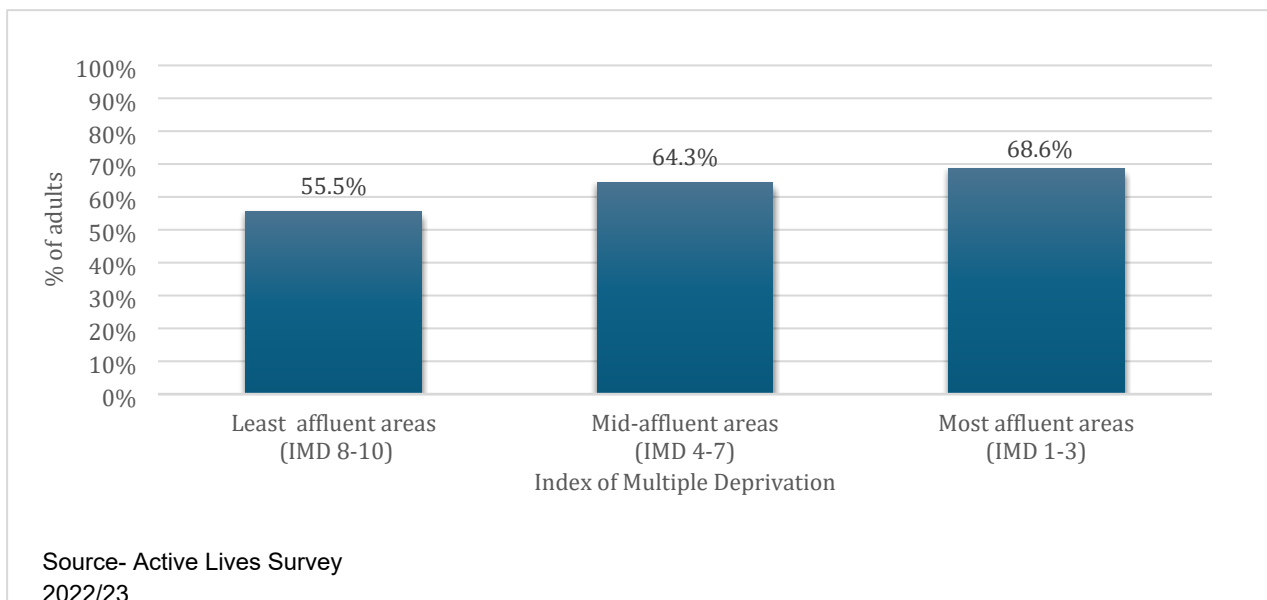
Not Applicable

## **5. Key Issues**

Having an active Northumberland will prevent our residents becoming ill, avoid and manage long-term conditions and have a better quality of life. Increasing physical activity levels also plays a role in tackling health and social inequalities and will relieve pressure from our health and social care system. Increasing physical activity in our population would also result in significant economic gains by increasing productivity; particularly through reductions in sickness absences, lower presenteeism and residents being able more likely to work till retirement age.

However historically, we have seen a decline in physical activity levels across Northumberland, which is a real concern for population health and wellbeing. We also know that those from more deprived or disadvantaged backgrounds are less likely to be active (this is illustrated in figure 1) and face greater barriers, whether that be at an individual, social or environmental level.

**Figure 1- Adults completing 150 minutes of physical activity a week by deprivation in England.**



Therefore, the report focuses on building active people, active opportunities and active neighbourhoods, which will help us enable active communities across Northumberland. The recommendations of the report for those of us working together to promote physical activity across the county are:

1. To refresh the **Northumberland physical activity strategy** using feedback from the 8 International Society of Physical Activity and Health (ISPAH) workshops.
2. Develop **design codes** in Northumberland to consider physical activity in neighbourhood design and include in new countywide Housing Strategy.
3. Continue to support development of **good quality walking and cycling routes**.
4. Places Leisure to continue to develop our **Active Communities offer** so that people in Northumberland can have access to inclusive opportunities.
5. Support communities to **start new initiatives to become more active**, such as through Thriving Together.
6. Northumberland's **new Leisure and Wellbeing contract** to continue to support the strategic objectives within the county, aiming to reduce the inactivity gap and have a more physically active population.

This focus on raising physical activity levels in our population links into our inequalities work with the Institute for Health Equity. A more physically active population will support both participation in employment as well as a healthier and more productive workforce. Our work with Anchor institutions to promote healthy working conditions will build on these themes.

## 6. Background

Directors of Public Health in England have a statutory duty to write an Annual Public Health Report on the health of the local population; the Local Authority has a duty to publish it. It is an independent report. The DPH Annual Report is a vehicle for informing local people about the health of their community, as well as providing necessary information for commissioners and providers of services on health and wellbeing issues and priorities that need to be addressed.

This year's report is about increasing physical activity in our communities across Northumberland. The report is split into four main areas which are:

- Active People
- Active Opportunities
- Active Neighbourhoods
- Active Communities

We set the scene within our active people's section, by explaining what we mean by physical activity and the importance of making small changes. A local picture of physical activity levels compared regionally and nationally is also explained to show the work needed to increase levels within Northumberland, particularly within our disadvantaged groups.

The active opportunities section explores the physical activity opportunities we currently have available to support individuals to be active in Northumberland, including our leisure services. This section also explores the importance of an Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) approach to physical activity and partnership working. Case studies are used throughout this section to highlight success stories and good practice throughout Northumberland.

The active neighbourhood section looks at the impact our built and natural environment can have on physical activity levels. This section looks at work being done within the built environment to make it easier and safer to complete active travel, including active corridors and a design code for physical developments.

The final active communities section looks at strategic work currently being done to improve physical activity levels within Northumberland. We conclude this section with recommendations on how we can become a more physically active county.

The report calls for all of us in Northumberland to take steps in helping our residents be more physically active. We believe this can be achieved through strengthening our community-based support, coupled with neighbourhoods designed to promote activity in our day to day lives.

## 7. Implications

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| <b>Policy</b> | Recommendations from the report will be directed to relevant policy areas and integrated into existing workstreams or action plans |
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| <b>Finance and value for money</b>  | The report has no direct financial implications, but if the recommendations are carried out, it is expected to benefit the economy of Northumberland           |
| <b>Legal</b>  | The report meets the statutory requirement of the DPH to produce an annual report on a health issue relevant to the local population                           |
| <b>Procurement</b>  | N/A  |
| <b>Human resources</b>  | N/A  |
| <b>Property</b>   | N/A  |
| <b>The Equalities Act: is a full impact assessment required and attached?</b> | No - not required at this point<br>The report highlights the ways that having good access to physical activity can contribute to reducing health inequalities. |
| <b>Risk assessment</b>  | None undertaken  |
| <b>Crime and disorder</b>   | N/A  |
| <b>Customer considerations</b>  | An easy-read print version of the report is being designed and will be published alongside the report  |
| <b>Carbon reduction</b>   | N/A  |
| <b>Health and wellbeing</b>   | The report thoroughly explores the contribution that improving physical activity levels can make to improving health and reducing health inequalities.         |
| <b>Wards</b>  | (All Wards);   |

## 8. Background papers

Moving in the right direction- Director of Public Health Annual Report 2024

## 9. Links to other key reports already published

Not applicable

## **10. Author and Contact Details**

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