



Active Northumberland

Annual Outcome Report 2020-2021

June 2021

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Vision

Our vision is “To be the Best Community and Wellness Provider in the UK” at delivering quality leisure, physical activity and sporting opportunities across Northumberland and to improve the health and fitness of the population of Northumberland in line with the Northumberland Health and Wellbeing strategy.

People in Northumberland will have a better quality of life as a result of their participation in physical activity and sport. Active Northumberland is not just about sport, it is about “wellness” and, feeling fitter, with a focus on improving health and wellbeing and preventing ill health and social isolation.

Background

Active Northumberland (AN) is a registered charity (company limited by guarantee) formed in 2014 from a merger of several different leisure service providers.

AN has circa 710 full and part time equivalent employees and a Board of 10 non-executive Directors (trustees) with a diverse and relevant range of expertise and senior level management experience. AN operates nine large leisure centres (some of which combine library services) and a number of smaller facilities, including school sport facilities, welfare centres and are responsible for the Pegasus Riding Centre which offers horse riding for the disabled and livery services. All of AN’s facility and service management contracts are within the county of Northumberland.

The majority of the facilities operated by AN are owned by Northumberland County Council (NCC) and are leased to AN, who in turn manages the operation of leisure facilities and services for NCC under an Operating or Partnership Agreement. The Partnership Agreement coupled with a performance management framework ensures progress is appropriately recorded and acknowledged, and that under AN’s management, NCC’s leisure assets and resources are optimised and successfully contribute to NCC’s Corporate Plan priorities and objectives.

2020-2021 Overview

Public service budget pressures present a challenge to AN of retaining and continuing to develop and improve services with a continually reducing management fee. Efficiency saving requirements deliverable over the period 2018-21/22 are £765K, with £265k in 2019/20, £200k in 2020/21 and £300k in 2021/22.

In addition to these savings requirements a further budget pressure in the region of £1 million was anticipated (per annum) from 2019, resulting from a pay/grading and harmonisation of employee terms and conditions exercise. Utilities tariff increases also represent a significant budget pressure although during 2020/21 we have seen a reduction in utility consumption due to the forced Covid 19 closures, however we estimate a 3% increase for 2021-22. NCC and AN are continuing to work closely together to manage cost pressures, including looking at green energy supply as well as invest to save schemes and working and operating more efficiently.

2020-2021 Performance

NCC INSTRUCTION: Setting out performance for the previous financial year against the Annual Service Plan and highlighting any areas of activity or outcomes where the Contractor has not contributed to the Council's Outcomes Documents and provide an action plan for the following year of how this will be addressed and how the other Authority Outcomes will continue to be delivered. The report should also identify any beneficial outcomes achieved by the Contractor in addition to those required by the Authority.

In 2020-2021 we faced a number of challenges that affected the corporate outcomes we set out to be achieved. As we head into 2021-2022, we intend to still deliver and achieve those outcomes.

2020-2021 Corporate Outcome	Delivery Challenges & Action Plan for Achievement in 2021-2022
<p>Our Partners <i>Focus: Identification and development of opportunities to co-locate, co-design and co-deliver services to support partners to reduce and better manage demand on health, social care and specialist education intervention services.</i></p>	
<p>Deliver a sustainable Alternative Provision Service model for pupils that are either at: 1. At Risk of exclusion, 2. Looked After Children 3. Permanently excluded children from school 4. 16 + SEN young adult provision</p>	<p>In partnership with The 3 Rivers Learning Trust Teaching School Alliance, we aim to deliver a programme of Secondary School Teacher Training to 20 schools, sported by Sport England funding.</p>
<p>Deliver a service to enhance Day Care Support Services (including respite for carers) and internship opportunities for adults with learning difficulties and disabilities.</p>	<p>In partnership with the Football Association, we aim to support the development of a girls' football offer in schools & the community in the Berwick area</p>
<p>Deliver a joint plan with the Education Partnership North East to improve outcomes for learners and employees.</p>	<p>We aim to improve outcomes for all children and young people and explore ways in which RISE the active partnership can support this. The delivery will be targeted, aimed predominately at disadvantaged groups within the county.</p>
<p>Deliver a joint service delivery plan with NUFC Foundation as part of North of Tyne strategic partnership work.</p>	<p>We aim to further develop joint service delivery with NUFC Foundation & Town Councils to support increased use of centre facilities in school holidays</p>
<p>1. AN School Sport service delivers high quality physical activity in schools and the community setting. 2. Teachers Performance Management policy is established and monitored successfully. 3. Maintain membership for the Association of Physical Education (AfPE). 4. Relevant support services and policies are introduced, recommendations agreed, and updates implemented as necessary.</p>	<p>To deliver a recognised high-quality Physical Education offer in partnership schools and to deliver a School Games offer that can be accessed for all students in Y3-Y12. To further develop opportunities to work collaboratively with NCC Education Service</p>

Our People

Focus: The creation of a values based culture and optimisation of workforce capacity, capability and efficiency.

<p>To have facilities that provide a safe operating environment for both employees and customers post pandemic (COVID-19).</p>	<p>Despite ever changing guidance and with both national and local restrictions imposed upon the operation, we successfully opened our facilities in a safe manner, being the first Trust in the North East to open after lockdown 1.0. We will continue to monitor the operational guidance around Covid-19 and update our safe working practices to ensure that our facilities remain safe and accessible for all.</p>
<p>To have a high willed and high performing workforce that is aligned to the strategy and values of the organisation.</p>	<p>During the period 2020-21, a large percentage of our people were furloughed for significant periods of the year, making it extremely difficult to align workforce to the strategy. We did, however, ensure that all our people were provided with training opportunities both whilst on leave and prior to returning to work, to ensure that they felt safe and supported in the workplace. We will use 2021-22 to roll out our performance management policy to ensure that all our people have an appraisal that will align their Personal Development Plans to the strategy and values of the organisation.</p>
<p>To have a strategic workforce development partner and produce a workforce training and development plan aligned to the Transformation Strategy objectives.</p>	<p>We appointed Future Fit as our strategic workforce development partner earlier this year, a company that offers training and development specific to the industry. We have successfully migrated our safeguarding policy onto the platform and asked the workforce to undertake online competency tests. We are currently working to identify development opportunities via the apprenticeship levy, whilst building a training plan for all job roles that will be migrated onto the system, along with all statutory and mandatory training to ensure successful delivery of training and development objectives.</p>
<p>To produce a strategic level Board action plan to optimise the gross added value provided by Non-Executive Directors.</p>	<p>The CEO and Chair of the Board of Trustees have undertaken a strategic analysis of director skills and identified where there is a gap in skills at Board level. Future recruitment to Board will ensure that candidates are recruited to fill gaps in skills.</p>
<p>To have appropriate support services in place to help the Company achieve its goals, through an appropriate service level agreement with key partners and stakeholders.</p>	<p>Industry support services and relationships have been crucial in exchanging critical re-opening and operating information.</p> <p>We have realigned our SLA's with NCC departments to the end of our management agreement at the end of March 2022.</p>

	We will work with Officers and Members of the Council during this year to secure a new management agreement from April 2022 and to realign support service agreements in line with any length of contract agreed, providing stability for Active and NCC workforces.
<p>Our Places</p> <p><i>Focus: To drive continuous improvement through the implementation of a Quality Management System to support service operations and the capital programme.</i></p>	
To have a Company that is able to successfully operate post pandemic (COVID-19) and continue to deliver desired outcomes across the business.	The period 2020-21 was certainly financially challenging for the Company due to the restrictive ability to generate income. Although a greater subsidy was required from NCC, the amount of subsidy required was a lot less than originally budgeted for due to the diligence of the team. There is agreement from NCC to support the Company until March 2022 and during this time, we will be working to maximise our income across the portfolio to reduce any subsidy required. We will also continue to work with local companies to deliver to the Health and Wellbeing agenda and ensure that we are at the forefront of post covid health issues, whilst continuing to expand our health schemes such as Momenta, Health walks, exercise on referral and cardiac rehabilitation.
To have high class, high value leisure facilities that meet the needs of the community and drive increased footfall to offset reductions in the management fee.	Work continued on the development of the new facilities at Berwick and Morpeth and the refurbishment of Blyth during the pandemic and we were able to successfully open Ponteland in January, with restricted activities. We will aim to drive increased footfall during 2021-22 in line with any Covid-19 restrictions and work to recover members and users that were lost during 2020-21.
To have long term lease agreement in place with NCC for all facilities to provide longevity for the management of the facilities	In conjunction with any new management agreement from April 2022, leases will be rearranged and realigned to provide for longevity of the management of facilities.
To have top performing leisure facilities in the country that are able to document a journey of continuous improvement and underpinned by both internal and external quality assessments and a robust health and safety management system.	A series of internal and external audits have been completed with further assessments booked for the end of the financial year. QUEST Prime a new product developed by Right Directions has been undertaken by Ashington Leisure Centre. The development, review and introduction of new Health & Safety documentation is ongoing with a suite of accessible documents being available to team members through an online system.

<p>To have leisure facilities that maximise energy efficiency opportunities and contribute to the environment through a reduced carbon footprint along with reducing waste in other areas of the operation.</p>	<p>Continued investments in new facilities and refurbishments to major plant has reduced the average DEC score to 11 points lower than the industry average. Further inhouse opportunities are being developed with the assistance of Energy Champions at each of the sites.</p>
<p>To have appropriate support services in place with deliverable service level agreements (SLA).</p>	<p>We have realigned our SLA's with NCC departments to the end of our management agreement at the end of March 2022.</p> <p>Each SLA is detailed and sets out responsibilities and expected deliverables from each party.</p> <p>New deliverable SLA's will be written and agreed in line with any new management agreement from April 2022.</p> <p>Where support services are not delivered by NCC, appropriate SLA's will be in place with external agencies.</p>
<p><i>Our Products (& Services)</i></p> <p><i>Focus: Optimise aquatics services and progress the fitness service towards a fully integrated wellness service to improve outcomes and retention.</i></p>	
<p>To deliver a Health & wellness customer experience that will enable us to retain and recruit new members post pandemic (Covid-19).</p>	<p>A full review of our member journey has been undertaken and a Sales & Retention policy produced and now in circulation, with training to support the policy ongoing. We have continued to work with our strategic partners at Technogym to ensure we continue to utilise the MyWellness platform to its full potential whilst also ensuring we followed all Covid protocols. Throughout the pandemic we continued to support our members and the wider communities through the provision of online content both through our social media channels as well as our Active Wellness platform.</p>
<p>To provide a safe and efficient aquatic customer experience post pandemic (Covid19).</p>	<p>We adapted our pool programs across the full estate to ensure our pool program catered for all user groups during the pandemic. Our structured pool sessions have allowed us to gain a full appreciation of our pool usage whilst also ensuring our customers could participate in their chosen aquatic activity in a safe environment.</p>
<p>To review and redesign the gym and group exercise offer and customer journey using insight from partners coupled with research and evaluation activity.</p>	<p>We continue to monitor the data and remodel our journey and group exercise program depending upon what the data is telling us. This is a very fluent process that will enable us to meet our customer demands.</p>

<p>To review and redesign the Exercise on Referral Service to optimise the customer experience, improve impact and extend the pathways offered linking to Primary Care.</p>	<p>Whilst the pandemic has delayed us in exploring other opportunities in terms of referral pathways, we have adapted our service during the pandemic to ensure our Exercise on Referral clients received some level of support during the lockdown period, whether that be by participation in online sessions or by simply providing the clients with a welfare call to check on their wellbeing both from a physical perspective as well as a mental one.</p>
<p>To review, redesign and standardise aquatics services and customer experience to meet latent demand and optimise quality and efficiency.</p>	<p>A lot of work has been undertaken in the last 12 months to ensure both our school swimming program and Learn2Swim program and framework is consistent across all of our facilities. We have also undertaken a lot of work to ensure our session etiquette across all our facilities is consistent whether that be for a lane session, swim4all session or fun4all session.</p>
<p>To review and redesign catering services to optimise commercial opportunity, and to ensure alignment with wellness objectives.</p>	<p>We have introduced a new brand "HIVE" across all the catering venues, the areas have had a facelift and a new menu introduced. We have standardised our core menu across the estate to ensure consistency. We will continue to develop and grow once restrictions have been lifted.</p>
<p>To review relevant support services and policies and introduce agreed recommendations.</p>	<p>We have realigned our SLA's with NCC departments to the end of our management agreement at the end of March 2022.</p> <p>Each SLA is detailed and sets out responsibilities and expected deliverables from each party.</p> <p>New deliverable SLA's will be written and agreed in line with any new management agreement from April 2022.</p> <p>Where support services are not delivered by NCC, appropriate SLA's will be in place with external agencies.</p>
<p><i>Other Additional Outcomes Achieved</i></p>	
<p>Active Northumberland continued to deliver a digital offer to all residents whilst facilities were closed.</p>	
<p>Hirst Nursey continued to offer childcare places for key workers and remained open during all lockdowns.</p>	
<p>Mental Health Support continued for Mams on the Move at risk of post-natal depression.</p>	
<p>External Audits for the safe operation of 4 swimming pools returned very good reports.</p>	