

Creating an Active Havering – a sport and physical activity strategy for Havering 2026 – 2029



Havering
LONDON BOROUGH

Creating an Active Havering – a sport and physical activity strategy for Havering 2026 – 2029

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Summary of the Sport & Physical Activity Strategy 2026–2029

The strategy, titled “Creating an Active Havering”, sets out a three-year plan to transform lives through sport and physical activity. It aims to embed physical activity into daily life, improve health and wellbeing, and reduce inequalities across the borough. The strategy is built on a whole-systems approach, recognising the need for collaboration across sectors and communities.

Key Objectives:

1. Health & Wellbeing: Increase physical activity to improve both physical and mental health.
2. Social Regeneration: Use sport to build community cohesion and reduce isolation.
3. Place Shaping: Make Havering's environment more conducive to active living.
4. Inclusion and accessibility: Ensure equitable access to sport and physical activity for all.
5. Digital Engagement: Develop accessible digital platforms to support participation.

Delivery Mechanisms:

- A borough-wide action plan co-developed with residents and partners.
- A wide range of programmes through Havering Active, leisure centres, schools, and voluntary clubs.
- Alignment with local, regional, and national strategies including Sport England's “Uniting the Movement”.

Monitoring & Evaluation:

Success will be measured through increased participation, reduced inactivity, and improved health outcomes. The strategy includes a dynamic action plan and a commitment to ongoing consultation and partnership working.

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Foreword

As Cabinet Member for Adults and Wellbeing which includes, health, sport and physical activity, I am proud to introduce Havering's Sport and Physical Activity Strategy 2026–2029.

This strategy is more than a plan—it is a commitment to our residents. A commitment to healthier lives, stronger communities, and a borough where everyone has the opportunity to be active, regardless of age, background, or ability.

Physical activity is one of the most powerful tools we have to improve wellbeing, reduce health inequalities, and bring people together. Whether it's a walk in the park, a dance class at the local leisure centre, or a school sports day, every movement matters.

Through this strategy, we will work with you the residents and our partners to create environments that inspire activity, services that are inclusive and accessible, and a culture that celebrates movement in all its forms.

I invite all residents, organisations, and community leaders to join us in making Havering a more active, healthier, and connected place to live.

Cllr Gillian Ford
Cabinet Member for Adults and Wellbeing

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Introduction & Purpose

Sport and physical activity are essential for people's physical and mental wellbeing. As working hours get longer and lifestyle related problems like obesity increase, engaging in physical activity becomes ever more important. The close links between levels of engagement in physical activity and health outcomes, means that these issues are of equal importance to both local authorities and the health service, hence why a close working relationship has been fostered by the London Borough of Havering and Havering Public Health. This strategy will supersede the Havering Sport & Physical Activity Strategy 2013-2015. Collaborative working between a wide range of partners will ensure we all have the same goals in sight.

Our vision for the next three years is to transform lives through sport and to promote physical activity and an active lifestyle. We believe that each resident of Havering should have the opportunity to be as active as they feel able, understand the impact of this on their own health and wellbeing, and feel supported to achieve this through access to relevant services, facilities and information. We recognise that there is no one solution to the issue of inactivity and a holistic, 'whole systems' approach that goes beyond the individual, is required.

For clarity we will be working to the definition of the term in the broadest sense. Periods of sustained activity that increase your heart rate are considered physical activity; this could involve anything from housework, gardening, playing in the garden with the children or walking / cycling from place to place. Physical activity also includes more structured activities such as taking part in casual or organised sports or visiting the gym or swimming to increase fitness levels.

We recognise that engagement in physical activity can have an impact on a range of cross-cutting issues beyond physical health, from reducing anti-social behaviour, to promoting mental wellbeing and a helping to encourage a sense of community.

This document seeks to set out the strategic direction for Havering's sport and physical activity over the next three years. An action plan showing key actions for delivery of this strategy, identifying who is responsible for delivery, is attached at the end of this document.

The purpose of this Sport & Physical Activity Strategy is to deliver, support and facilitate Havering residents to be more active, more often, and make sport and/or physical activity a core element of everyday life. In turn, transforming their lives through sustainable, healthier habits.

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Increased levels of physical activity = improved health and wellbeing

This strategy will establish the approach that Havering Council, in partnership with various

partner organisations and residents, will take to ensure people have the opportunities or information to enable them to become more active.

Sport & Physical Activity has a positive impact on cross cutting themes such as:

- Improving physical and mental health
- Supporting residents and building capacity within communities
- Raising aspirations and increasing quality of life
- Promoting social and economic development through positive activities

Our ‘Creating an active Havering’ strategy sets out our plan of partnership working which will build upon the current levels of provision to achieve our vision:

Focusing on sport and physical activity’s ability to make better places to live and bring people together.

“To provide Havering residents with opportunities to be physically active and to enjoy the benefits of improved physical and mental wellbeing”

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Aims, objectives and outcomes

‘Creating an active Havering’ strategy aims to increase the physical activity opportunities available, to encourage the people of Havering to become more physically active and to reduce the barriers to active participation people encounter.

Key themes and outcomes this strategy will look to deliver:

We will make physical activity an integral part of everyday life, through promotion of physical activity as a medicine for healthy lives while developing healthy habits from a young age and trying to engage with those residents who engage the least with the council.

Outcome 1

To improve the health and wellbeing of the borough by increased physical activity opportunities and engagement.

Outcome 2

Promote non-clinical pathways into services for mental and physical well-being through leisure and culture activities.

We will use physical activity as a social engagement tool, build community cohesion and fulfil potential through sport and physical activity to reduce isolation within older adults and provide a positive impact on social integration and inclusion.

Outcome 3

Increase awareness of the benefits and how to be more physically active within the community and with professionals.

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Outcome 4

To ensure sport & physical activity are integral to the social regeneration of the borough. We will work with partner organisations and the community to shape future developments so we can provide a range of positive activities for residents, to assist in reducing crime and antisocial behaviour; while improving how Havering, as a place, supports residents to be active as a routine part of daily life to create improved physical environments that encourage increase activity

Outcome 5

to position physical activity at the heart of place shaping and ensure the environment in Havering is motivational and inspiring to enhance and sustain the uptake of physical activity and outdoor activities.

Outcome 6

ensure people engage with their local environment to improve their levels of physical activity.

We will encourage and enable people to stay involved in sport and physical activity by widening access and ensure people who do not traditionally participate are supported to do so. Through the strengthening of organisation and partnerships, to increase the number and quality of volunteers, coaches and clubs will enable us to ensure partner organisations commission in house services for health & wellbeing, utilising expertise within the Local Authority.

Outcome 7

To make sure our services work together around our resident's needs - services are inclusive and equitable, and support people around the factors contributing to their health and wellbeing.

Outcome 8

develop and implement an online digital experience that ensures the resident is easily able to participate in physical activity. Information is readily accessible as well as an effective booking system in place to encourage sign up.

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Where are we now? – What is the current offer being provided?

Health and Sports Development Service – Havering Active

The Health and Sports Development Service is responsible for providing a sports development programme across the borough catering for all ages and abilities. The team have a wide range of partners who assist in delivering high quality, affordable activity sessions to Havering residents. The team are also involved in shaping the development opportunities at various sites across Havering including Bretons and Brittons. Consulting on plans and working on projects to further enhance the local offer for sport & physical activity.

More information on all of the current activities on offer are outlined below and an up-to-date list can always be found at www.haveringactive.co.uk

- Children's Activities – 5+
- Youth Sport – 11+
- Para Activities for people with disabilities or special educational needs
- Adult Health & Fitness Activities –
 - Havering's Walking for Health programme, focusing on those currently engaged in the lowest levels of physical activity and provides a supportive, friendly environment for getting moving.
 - Havering Active Tea Dances offered an opportunity for individuals, and particularly older age cohorts, to engage in physical activity and socialise.
- Specific women and girls' program
- Creating employment through casual coaching database
- Continuous partner working with voluntary sports clubs and coaches to promote wider sport & physical activity offer
- Pathways for elite sport by entering Havering teams into the London Youth Games and the extensive voluntary club network
- Workplace Wellbeing initiatives
- Applications for external funding with partners for various projects including diversionary activities in deprived areas and social integration activities for our older residents.

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Internal Partners within Havering Council

Health & Wellbeing team work with various internal departments within the London Borough of Havering – a joined up approach allows all cross cutting themes are resourced together to maximise efficiencies. Thus ensuring sport & physical activity is on the agenda across the Local Authority.

- Public Health Team in Havering
- Communications & Marketing
- Human Resources – workplace wellbeing
- Live Well Havering Network Partnership
- Planning – to ensure suitable environment for health
- Smarter Travel Team - integrating the active travel strategy and increasing awareness of healthier travel
- Havering Youth Service & Youth Offending Service
- Havering Housing Team
- Wider Health & Wellbeing Team
- Events Team

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Leisure Centres in Havering

There are five current leisure centres in Havering operated and managed by SLM Ltd (Everyone Active). SLM manage the day-to-day operations and programming at the centres with a view to creating a holistic approach to health and wellbeing while creating exciting and innovative ways to engage residents through physical activity. SLM are a key partner in delivering the aims and objectives in this strategy. Bespoke membership packages and free use available for some targeted users including cared for children, care experienced young people and people living with Parkinsons.

Harrow Lodge Sports Centre

Replaced the old Hornchurch Sports Centre and opened as the Covid pandemic lockdown restrictions eased in April 2021. The Centre has a 25-metre, eight-lane swimming pool and a 20-metre-wide learning and diving pool, which has a movable floor to change the depth. It also features a 100-station health and fitness suite, sports hall and three exercise studios which includes Fortis, a new HIIT workout program. The Exercise Referral Scheme, run by Everyone Active, continues to provide the opportunity and support for individuals with health conditions to use exercise to improve their health.

Sapphire Ice & Leisure

Is Romford's premier ice skating and leisure facility, which newly opened in 2018 and offers a fantastic range of facilities and activities. At the forefront is a full-sized ice rink that, as well as being open to the public, is also home to the Everyone Active Raiders ice hockey team. Alongside the ice rink, you can also enjoy the state-of-the-art gym, two swimming pools and dance studios, as well as refuel and refresh at two cafés that serve a range of healthy eating options.

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Rainham Leisure Centre

The brand-new, state-of-the-art Rainham Leisure Centre has been designed specifically to help everyone in the local community enjoy getting active. The centre boasts a fantastic range of facilities, meaning there is sure to be something for everybody. Rainham boasts a gym that's packed with all the very latest equipment, a swimming pool, group exercise studio, an outdoor recreation ground and an outside children's play area.

Central Park Leisure Centre

Provides residents with a huge range of activities to choose from. As well as a 75-station state-of-the-art gym and its two swimming pools – in which award-winning swimming lessons are hosted – there's also plenty of other things to do here. You can unwind in the sauna, steam room and spa, take advantage of the four-court sports hall and have a game of badminton or table tennis and enjoy a huge range of different group fitness classes.

Noak Hill Sports Complex

Has fantastic facilities to offer. Football fans can take advantage of the full-size 3G artificial pitch or two grass football pitches, all of which are available to be hired throughout the week. Meanwhile, tennis players can book one of the four outdoor courts while the centre also have you covered for a game of netball. Inside, there's a group fitness studio that offers a full programme of classes to choose from, while the sports hall hosts a number of activities.

The Havering School Sport Collective

The Havering Sports Collective is a network of primary and secondary schools in the London Borough of Havering, hosted by the School Games Organisers to provide opportunities for young people to take part in competitive sport and physical activity.

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The Havering Sports Collective aims to keep all schools in the London Borough of Havering joined together through PE and Sport. To create opportunities for developing relationships between primary and secondary schools through sports competition and leadership as well as providing CPD, Health and Safety advice and the most up to date information on how PE and School Sport can impact on learning and achievement. Before and after school clubs can also be made available as part of the Collective through various funding streams.

Outdoor Sports

Havering Council is proud to manage a variety of parks and open spaces, from small village greens to vast country parks, including a wide range of sports pitches, tennis courts, bowling greens, golf courses, multi-use games areas and outdoor gyms. Havering also hosts outdoor events and festivals of which are key to increasing community cohesion through cultural methods.

Sixteen of the sites have been awarded Green Flag status. A Green Flag Award means the parks boast the highest possible standards, are well maintained and have excellent facilities. The wide variety of parks and open spaces Havering has to offer means that there is something for everyone. The parks and open spaces are welcoming, safe and inclusive for everyone.

Hornchurch Stadium

Is the host facility for Havering Athletics Club and AFC Hornchurch. The facility also caters for school sports days, district events and school holiday activities including disability athletics and athletics masterclasses. The stadium is also available for hire to local clubs such as Havering Tri Club.

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School and College Sports facilities

A wide range of sports facilities are based on school premises. Facilities based on school premises range from grass football, rugby and cricket pitches to sports halls, gyms and swimming pools. The majority are open for community use and extensively used by sports clubs.

YMCA Romford

Hots a newly refurbished 65 station gym and studios, which deliver over 100 classes a week. Fitness instructors are on hand to offer advice and guidance as well as motivate you to achieve your fitness goals.

The YMCA works with a number of local schools to provide fitness activities, specialising in working with those with additional needs, older people and families.

Havering Sports Council

Havering Sports Council is the collective voice for sport in the borough and is the body with which Havering Council consults on issues relating to sport.

As the umbrella organisation for voluntary sports clubs within the borough, a strong network of clubs provides a wealth of opportunities for all ages across a wide range of sports. The majority of member clubs are affiliated to their National Governing Body, giving the club access to support, and giving members access to development pathways.

The objectives of the Sports Council:

- to assess the sporting needs of the London Borough of Havering
- to examine the need for improving existing facilities and the provision of new facilities
- to assist with information of available sporting facilities throughout the borough
- to assist Havering Council or any other authority requiring assistance by advising on the collective opinions of local sports interests for the future planning for sports facilities
- to encourage schools, school leavers and young adults to participate in sport
- to consider and take action as deemed necessary on reports and recommendations from other organisations concerning the interest of sport.

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- to assist where necessary in organising events to further sporting interests in the borough

In addition, Havering Sports Council organises and promotes the annual Havering Sports Awards, publishes a handbook listing and promoting affiliated clubs, publishes a newsletter and, when funds are available, can provide limited financial assistance to individuals. The Sports Council can also be called on by Sport England to comment on any Lottery grant applications made by clubs based in the borough.

Voluntary Sports Clubs & National Governing Bodies of Sport (NGBs)

A strong network of voluntary sports clubs caters for all levels of player, from coaching for beginners to providing opportunities to enjoy sport at either a social or competitive level. Many of the Havering teams competing in the London Youth Games are supported by local clubs. Club members regularly take part successfully in regional and national competitions, and go on to represent Essex, England and Great Britain. Havering club members are currently national champions or national squad members in a wide range of sports as diverse as athletics, swimming, ice hockey, judo, karate and shooting.

Continuous and ongoing engagement with NGBs on agreed and identified local priorities of both Havering and the NGB. Working collaboratively to pool resources in order to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes across a wide variety of agendas including club and coach development, reducing inactivity levels, facility development and ensuring pathways are in place across all areas of the sports development continuum.

Havering Disabled Sports Association & Havering Disability Steering Group

Havering Disabled Sports Association occupies fully adapted premises at the Noak Hill Sports Centre and provides a range of opportunities for disabled people including archery, table tennis and multi sports.

The Havering Disability Steering group has a wide range of varying partners who meet regularly to develop, increase and implement opportunities for disabled residents of the Borough. By broadening the opportunities available, collaboratively as part of the group, the offer is becoming more sustainable with less barriers to participation.

Private Sector Organisations

Within Havering there are a number of private organisations providing health and wellbeing programmes for residents. These include gyms and clubs that provide a range of activity classes for adults and young people.

Active Travel Plan

Working in partnership with the Active Travel team to encourage a mode of transport that involves a level of physical activity. Examples include walking, wheeling or cycling. It can form part of a larger journey (e.g. cycling to or from the tube station). This type of travel is more environmentally friendly and can have health benefit. The action plan that our partners have created will ensure that there is a clear rationale for promoting these modes of transport throughout Havering.

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Links to other Strategies

Our strategy has been developed in line with the following local, regional and national strategies and policies. We have aligned our aims and objectives to the key themes and priorities held within these important documents.

Local

Havering's Culture Strategy

“A GOOD LIFE 2025-2028” - is a framework that will inform a future direction for culture, and cultural activities in Havering. Culture is at the heart of improving lives health and well-being, helping people having a greater understanding of themselves and increased empathy with respect to others.

The Strategy focuses on four principles for a good life:

Developing a Creative Health Borough - Intricately weaving the concept of long-term wellbeing throughout cultural strategy

Transforming the Cultural Ecology - Capacity building to benefit from growth and seeking a levelling up in investment.

Redefining Heritage for the 21st Century - Rebalancing the widest definition of heritage, to better include the borough's new population

Every Child & Young Person Engaging in Culture -Uniting education and arts partners to empower young people and make them feel proud.

Active Travel Strategy 2024 - 2041

This document presents the vision for active travel in Havering over the next decade, including comprehensive goals, current initiatives, thematic areas of action, and delivery approach. To achieve our vision by 2041, Havering have identified measures in three key areas:

Physical measures – Creating an active travel network, mobility hubs, and upgraded travel information.

Supporting measures – Traffic management, data collection, and policy and design guidance.

Soft measures – Encouraging behaviour change, engagement, and facilitating access to cycles and micro-mobility.

Vision Statement

By 2041, Havering's diverse communities, businesses and organisations will be less dependent on motor vehicle use and will be able to choose active travel more often for their everyday journeys. Improved active travel facilities and related projects will have had a clear positive impact on the borough's climate resilience, economic health, community wellbeing and local character. [Go to the Vision Statement here](#)

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Havering Healthy Weight Strategy 2024-2029

Everybody's Business: A whole systems approach to reducing overweight and obesity

This document sets out the local strategic approach for addressing high levels of overweight and obesity in the Borough, through a “whole systems place-based approach”. This will support the longer-term vision for the Borough; within 20 years' childhood obesity will have been eradicated, and that the Borough will have become a healthy place to live work and play, and a place where communities have come together to make the healthier choice the easier choice

This strategy's aims will be delivered through eight objectives, grouped into three themes:

- **Theme one** is concerned with ensuring that the whole system is engaged and works together on the many drivers of obesity
- **Theme two** is concerned with the Borough becoming a place that promotes healthy weight; recognising that the places where people live, work and play shape the type of foods they eat and how physically active they are.
- **Theme three** recognises the importance of a life-course approach, and ensuring that individuals are supported to achieve a healthy weight.

Regional

London Sport Strategy 2021 – LDN MOVING

“Becoming the most active city in the world isn't simply an ambition to build London's reputation, but a call-to-arms to improve the lives of all Londoners through physical activity and sport.”

Tove Okunniwa, Chief Executive London Sport

Key themes:

- Increase physical activity levels among less active adults, reducing inequalities and inactivity
- Give all young Londoners the best opportunity to form a positive physical activity habit for life
- Improve policy, systems and investment to support active lives
- Use tech, data and digital communications to support Londoners to get and stay active
- Lead the way in bringing organisations together to create, develop, test, champion and scale innovative ways of supporting active lives
- Ensure evidence, data and high-quality insight inform the development of policy and practice of supporting active lives.

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National

Sport England – Uniting the Movement – 10 year vision

Recover and reinvent

Recovering from the biggest crisis in a generation and reinventing as a vibrant, relevant and sustainable network of organisations providing sport and physical activity opportunities that meet the needs of different people.

Connecting communities

Focusing on sport and physical activity's ability to make better places to live and bring people together.

Positive experiences for children and young people

Unrelenting focus on positive experiences for all children and young people as the foundations for a long and healthy life.

Connecting with health and wellbeing

Strengthening the connections between sport, physical activity, health and wellbeing, so more people can feel the benefits of, and advocate for, an active life.

Active environments

Creating and protecting the places and spaces that make it easier for people to be active.

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Action plan - Implementation and monitoring

Year 1 (2026–2027): Foundations and Engagement

Strategic Priority	Key Actions	Outputs	Success Measures
Increase awareness and access to physical activity opportunities	• Map existing sport, physical activity, leisure and cultural offers • Deliver a borough-wide communications campaign • Engage frontline professionals to promote physical activity	• Published directory of opportunities • Awareness campaign delivered • Professional briefings and training sessions	• Increased enquiries and signposting • Directory usage data • Number of professionals actively promoting activity
Promote non-clinical pathways to improve health and wellbeing	• Strengthen partnerships with leisure, culture and VCSE sector • Pilot social prescribing routes into physical activity • Develop clear referral pathways	• Referral pathways agreed • Pilot programmes delivered • Partnership agreements in place	• Number of non-clinical referrals • Participant wellbeing feedback • Partner engagement levels
Develop digital foundations for access and booking	• Scope and design an online physical activity platform • Review existing systems and accessibility standards • Undertake resident user testing	• Platform specification and business case • Accessibility standards agreed	• Platform readiness for delivery • Positive user testing feedback

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Year 2 (2027–2028): Delivery and Integration

Strategic Priority	Key Actions	Outputs	Success Measures
Embed physical activity in social regeneration and place shaping	• Integrate physical activity into regeneration and planning processes • Work with housing, planning and parks teams • Deliver programmes in regeneration areas	• Physical activity embedded in regeneration plans • New or enhanced active spaces • Targeted community programmes	• Number of regeneration projects with PA outcomes • Increased participation in regeneration areas
Encourage engagement with the local environment	• Promote walking, cycling and outdoor initiatives • Improve signage, routes and accessibility in parks • Support community-led outdoor activity	• Outdoor activity programmes delivered • Improved wayfinding and promotional materials	• Increased park usage and footfall • Participation levels in outdoor programmes
Launch and embed the digital physical activity platform	• Implement online platform and booking system • Promote platform to residents and partners • Train providers to manage content	• Live digital platform • Providers onboarded and trained	• Number of registered users • Bookings made through the platform

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Year 3 (2028–2029): Sustainability and Impact

Strategic Priority	Key Actions	Outputs	Success Measures
Ensure inclusive, equitable and joined-up services	• Review services for inclusivity and accessibility • Strengthen cross-service working • Target underrepresented and inactive groups	• Inclusive service standards implemented • Joint working protocols in place • Targeted programmes delivered	• Increased participation from underrepresented groups • Reduction in inactivity gaps
Measure impact and secure long-term sustainability	• Evaluate health, wellbeing and participation outcomes • Identify long-term funding and commissioning opportunities • Embed physical activity into core services	• Annual impact evaluation report • Sustainable delivery models agreed	• Sustained participation rates • Demonstrable improvements in health and wellbeing



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Monitoring outcomes and performance – evaluation & review

The action plan will be delivered over the lifetime of this strategy where there will be ongoing engagement with partners and other stakeholders. Regular meetings and partnership working will ensure adequate monitoring of the outcomes will be continuous. The achievement of the outcomes identified will be supported through communication and promotion which will be aimed at ensuring:

- Residents understand and appreciate the benefits of being active
- Opportunities to be active and participate in leisure activities are widely promoted and information is easily accessible to all.
- Participants will be able to easily find the activity they are wishing to take part in, and an adequate booking/payment process is in place for them.

We are committed to work to ensure a more co-ordinated and joined up approach and will work closely with our various partners to take advantage of opportunities for cross-promotion of messages and activities.

Delivering an Active Havering

This strategy sets out a clear commitment to increasing participation in sport and physical activity for residents of all ages and abilities. Through strong partnership working and a focus on reducing the barriers that limit participation, Havering will create inclusive and accessible opportunities that support improved health, wellbeing and quality of life. Progress will be monitored over the coming years to ensure the strategy delivers meaningful, sustainable and lasting benefits for communities across the borough.

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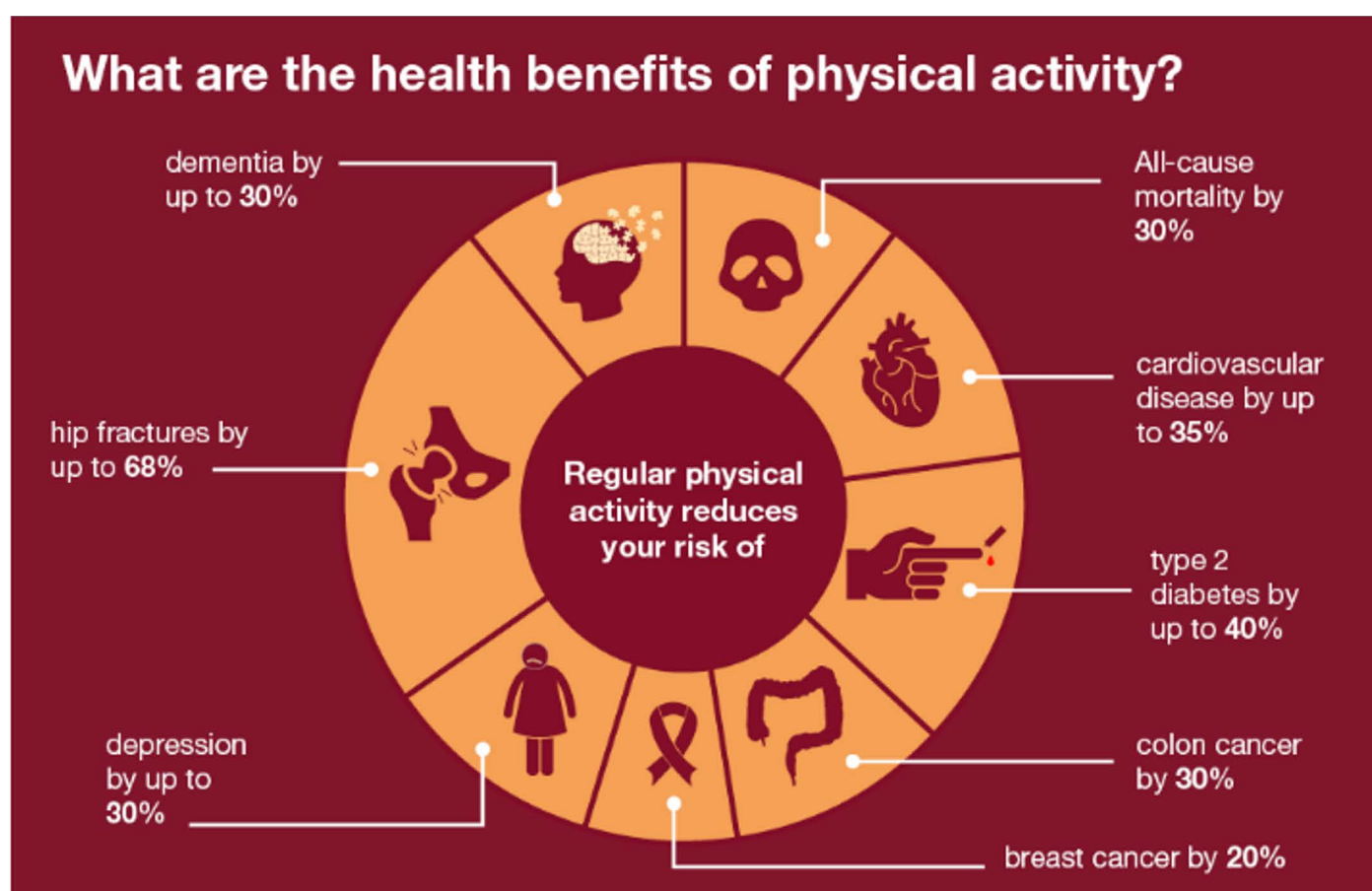
Appendix A

Health and wellbeing impacts of physical activity – data insight and strategic context

Physical inactivity is one of the leading risk factors for mortality, being associated with 1 in 6 deaths in the UK and costing £7.4 billion per year (including £0.9 billion to the NHS alone)¹.

Being physical active has a clear protective effect in preventing or delaying the onset of many chronic conditions; Over 20 chronic conditions, including some cancers, heart disease and type 2 diabetes can be prevented or managed through participation in regular physical activity².

Figure 1: Estimated risk reduction for key chronic conditions achieved through meeting the Chief Medical Officer's minimum recommended levels of physical activity³



¹ Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (2015) Physical activity: applying All Our Health www.gov.uk/government/publications/physical-activity-applying-all-our-health

² Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (2015) Physical activity: applying All Our Health www.gov.uk/government/publications/physical-activity-applying-all-our-health

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Whole systems approach to physical activity and healthy weight

Addressing the growing rates of childhood and adult overweight and obesity is a corporate priority for the London Borough of Havering. Latest data suggests that 22% of 4- to 5-year-olds and 40% of 10- to 11-year-olds in Havering are overweight or obese, with nearly two of every three adults thought to be overweight or obese .

Physical activity represents the most effective way of increasing daily energy expenditure which can help to balance energy intake from food and drink. In combination with dietary change, physical activity can play an important role in preventing weight gain and reducing body fat .

However, people's diet and levels of physical activity are strongly influenced by the circumstances in which they live, work and play , and the conditions of modern day living often aren't conducive to good health. Addressing diet, exercise and healthy weight therefore requires a 'whole-system' approach, which acknowledges the broad range of factors that influence these health behaviours, and which involve all of the individuals and organisations that have a role to play in helping to make healthy choices easier.

For more information about Havering's whole-systems approach to promoting healthy weight, please see the **Havering Healthy Weight Strategy 2024-2029**.

As well as the physical health benefits, greater levels of physical activity are associated with positive mental wellbeing, and vice versa. Physical activity has been linked with reduced symptoms of anxiety and depression, improved cognitive health and better sleep . Mental health conditions have been found to be less common among those who are physically active, and physical activity can also be used to help manage diagnosed mental health conditions .

The 2021-22 Active Lives Survey for England also found that those who reported being active or fairly active were less likely to report frequent loneliness, compared to those who were inactive.

³ Office for Health Improvement and Disparities Obesity profile. Available at: <https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/profile/national-child-measurement-programme>

⁴ UK Chief Medical Officers' Physical Activity Guidelines (2019). Available at: www.gov.uk/government/publications/physical-activity-guidelines-uk-chief-medical-officers-report

⁵ Butland, B., Jebb, S., Kopelman, P., McPherson, K., Thomas, S., Mardell, J. and Parry, V., 2007. Tackling obesity: future choices-project report (Vol. 10, p. 17). London: Department of Innovation, Universities and Skills

⁶ Henry Dimbelby. 2022. The National Food Strategy

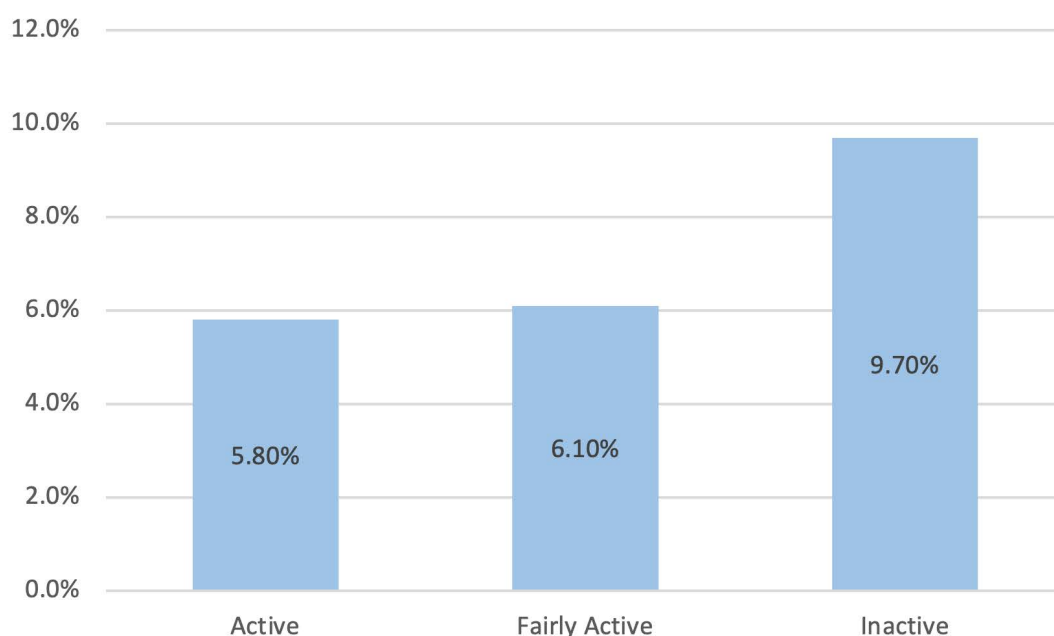
⁷ World Health Organisation (2022) Physical activity factsheet. Available at: <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/physical-activity>

⁸ NICE guidance, 2022. Depression in Adults: Treatment and Management. Available: www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng222/chapter/Recommendations

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Figure 2: Percentage of adults in England responding to the Active Lives Survey 2021-22 reporting feeling often or always lonely, by physical activity level⁹.



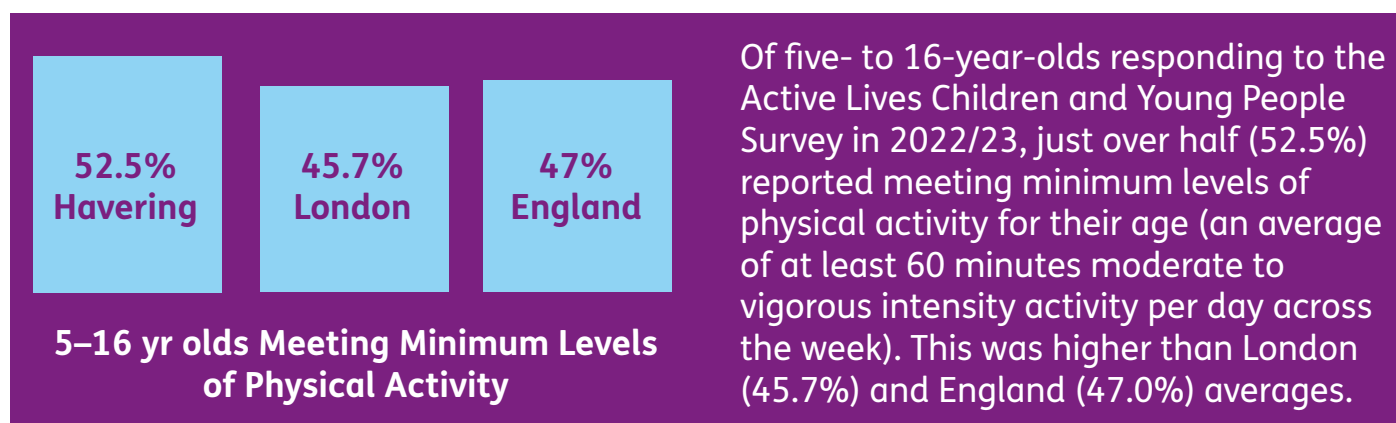
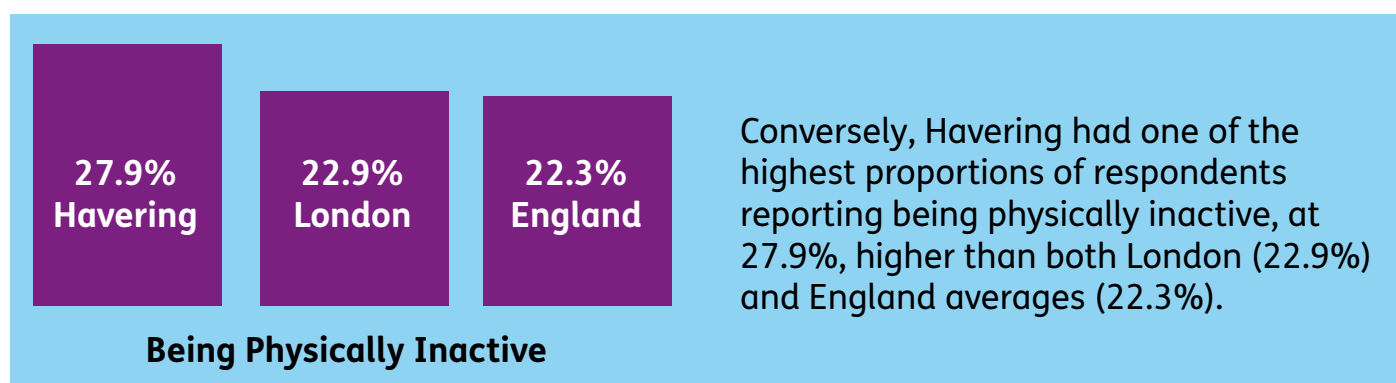
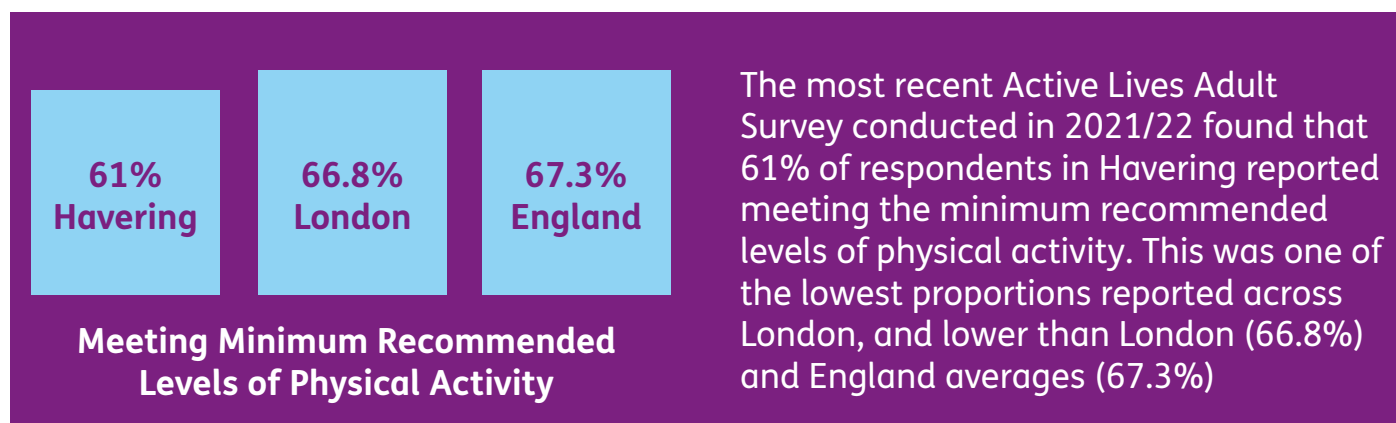
Active = an average of 60 minutes or more a day; Fairly active = an average of 30-59 minutes a day; Inactive = less than an average of 30 minutes or more a day.

⁹ Sport England Active Lives data tables. Available at: www.sportengland.org/research-and-data/data/active-lives/active-lives-data-tables#november-2021-22-30770

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Participation in physical activity in Havering



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Evidence also shows that generally, there are differences in the levels of physical activity reported by different groups within the population. The examples below use data for England taken from the 2021/22 Active Lives Survey for adults:



Similar differences in levels of physical activity will exist across Havering and will be directly contributing to existing inequalities in health and wellbeing outcomes experienced by our residents. As such, acknowledging these differences and the reasons behind them is an important element of developing a comprehensive approach to supporting increases in physical activity for all.

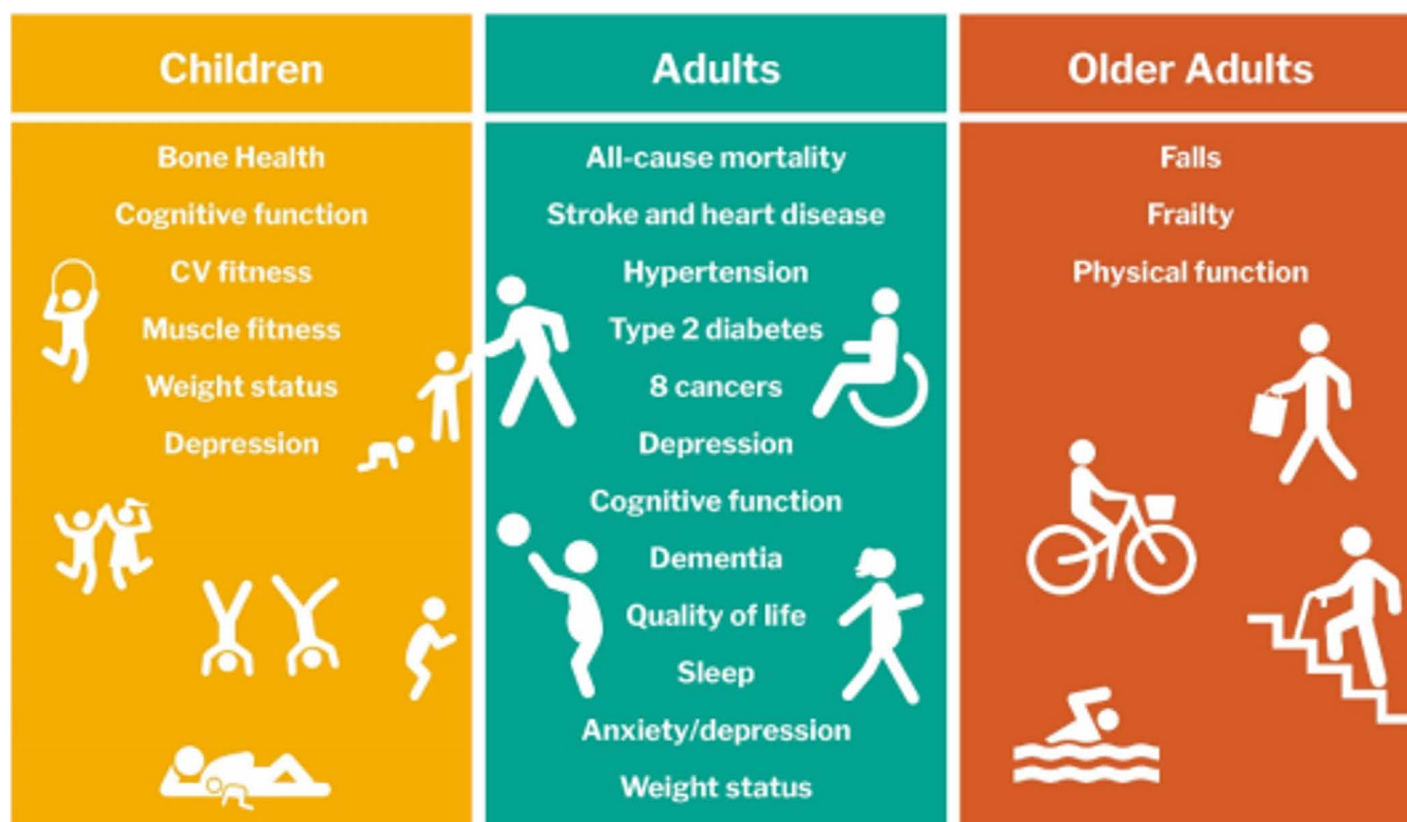
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Supporting physical activity across the life course

Physical activity is important at every stage of life. From supporting the development of key cognitive skills amongst children, to reducing the risk of falls amongst older adults, there is good evidence for the health benefits of physical activity, and how these vary across the life course.

Moderate or strong evidence for health benefit

Figure 3: Benefits of physical activity across the life course¹⁰



*CV Fitness = cardiovascular fitness

The benefits of physical activity build up over time, so being physically active from an early age is an important part of maximising the long-term impact on physical and mental wellbeing. However, it is never too late to gain health benefits from taking up physical activity, so there should be opportunities available to support people to increase their activity levels across the life course¹¹.

With the aim of supporting the achievement of these and other health benefits, the UK Chief Medical Officer's (CMO's) physical activity guidelines lay out the recommended levels of activity for people of different ages:

¹⁰ UK Chief Medical Officers' Physical Activity Guidelines (2019). Available at: www.gov.uk/government/publications/physical-activity-guidelines-uk-chief-medical-officers-report

¹¹ UK Chief Medical Officers' Physical Activity Guidelines (2019). Available at: www.gov.uk/government/publications/physical-activity-guidelines-uk-chief-medical-officers-report

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Chief Medical Officer guidelines for physical activity ¹²	
Everyone	Should aim to be physically active every day and minimise time spent sedentary
Under 5s	Under 1 year - should be physically active several times every day in a variety of ways, including interactive floor-based activity, e.g. crawling. For infants not yet mobile, this includes at least 30 minutes of tummy time spread throughout the day while awake. 1-4 year olds: at least 180 minutes per day in a variety of physical activities at any intensity, including active and outdoor play, spread throughout the day
Children & Young People (5-18 years)	Moderate-to-vigorous intensity physical activity for an average of at least 60 minutes per day across the week. E.g. physical education, active travel, after-school activities, play and sports.
Adults (19 to 64)	Engage in at least 150 minutes of moderate intensity activity (e.g. brisk walking or cycling) per week; or 75 minutes of vigorous intensity activity (e.g. running); or even shorter durations of very vigorous activity.
Older Adults (65 years +)	Aim for 150 minutes of moderate intensity aerobic activity per week.

The CMO's recommendations reflect the amount and type of physical activity that is needed to maximise the benefit to health. However, evidence shows that there is no minimum amount of physical activity required to achieve some health benefits, and as such all increases in physical activity levels should be encouraged¹³.

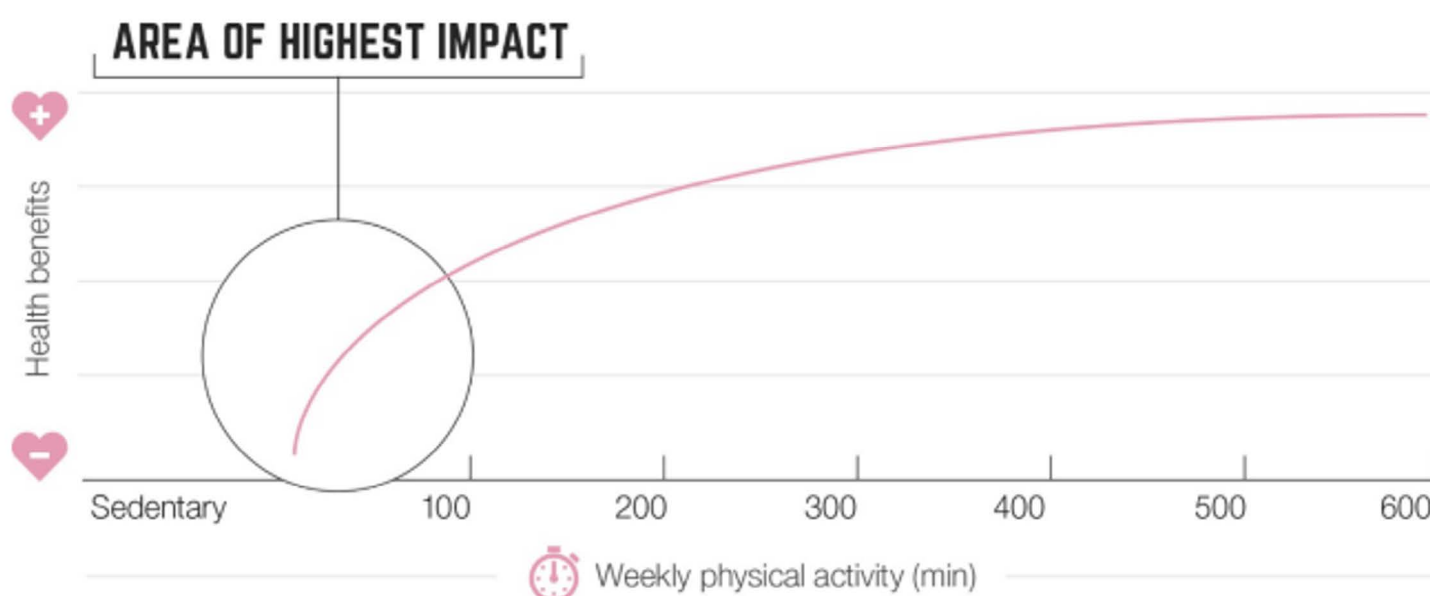
¹² UK Chief Medical Officers' Physical Activity Guidelines (2019). Available at: www.gov.uk/government/publications/physical-activity-guidelines-uk-chief-medical-officers-report

¹³ UK Chief Medical Officers' Physical Activity Guidelines (2019). Available at: www.gov.uk/government/publications/physical-activity-guidelines-uk-chief-medical-officers-report

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While increasing the time spent being physical active leads to greater physical and mental health benefits, as figure 4 below shows, the greatest improvement in population health can be achieved by enabling those that are currently sedentary or inactive to start some level of physically activity¹⁴. This means that to maximise the population health gains, greatest emphasis should be placed on delivering activities or interventions which encourage and enable those with the most sedentary lifestyles to start being physical active, while still offering opportunities for all residents to increase their physical activity levels.

Figure 4: Relative health gains associated with increasing levels of physical activity¹⁵



¹⁴ UK Chief Medical Officers' Physical Activity Guidelines (2019). Available at: www.gov.uk/government/publications/physical-activity-guidelines-uk-chief-medical-officers-report

¹⁵ UK Chief Medical Officers' Physical Activity Guidelines (2019). Available at: www.gov.uk/government/publications/physical-activity-guidelines-uk-chief-medical-officers-report