

Scrutiny Call for Evidence: Health of the Borough

Themes:

The environmental health of the borough

- The use of our parks and open spaces

The physical health of the borough

- Cycle paths, safe walking routes, indoor & outdoor exercise space

1. Introduction

There is good evidence for how physical activity improves health (Appendix 1) including:

- Reducing the risks and improving the management of common health conditions (eg hypertension, heart disease, strokes, diabetes)
- Improving mental wellbeing
- Helping older people stay independent and reducing the risk of falls.

Parks, green and open spaces and places to be physically active in, and active travel and active recreation such as cycling and walking are all important to enable a population to be healthy and to stay healthy.

Public Health with Southwark Council colleagues and others, work together to support the development of the physical environment to promote health and to support healthier choices. This includes work with planning policy, public realm, community sport and leisure services, transport planning, road safety and community projects.

2. What is the local picture?

Physical 'inactivity' is equivalent to smoking in its damaging effect on health. Physical inactivity currently accounts for nearly one-fifth of premature deaths in the UK and is due to increase by a further 15 per cent by 2030. The scale of the issue is not insignificant. The estimated annual cost of inactivity to society in Southwark including health care costs and losses in economic productivity is £17M per 100,000 population.

To optimise the health benefits of exercise it is recommended that adults achieve 150 mins of moderate physical activity a week in bursts of 10 mins or more. Children and young people require 60 mins a day. Under fives requires 180 mins.

The Active People Survey (PHE dataset) suggests approximately 26% of adults in Southwark are inactive (doing less than 30 mins moderate physical activity a week). It also suggests that walking and cycling for leisure and active travel amount to 40% of the total time that Londoners are spending being active.

School travel survey shows that 44.32% of Southwark pupils were walking to school last year. There is potential for many short journeys currently made by

car or public transport to be walked or cycled, in which case 60% of Londoners would meet their physical activity needs via everyday travel.

3. Need for a whole system approach

It is important to recognise the contribution of everyday activities like play, active travel, gardening, and leisure activities like dance, walking and cycling as well as sport in supporting communities to be active. Supporting greater engagement with these activities goes beyond the responsibility of the individual and extends to the ability of our built and natural environment to be active by design, providing conducive spaces for these activities that are safe, accessible and attractive. Services of all kinds can also take a role in encouraging their users to move more including public transport, health and social care, residential and educational services.

Taking a long term view, the design of our physical environment including residential areas, leisure and recreation facilities, town centres and transport infrastructure will ultimately create the legacy for enabling people to be more physically active in their everyday lives.

Southwark's Sport and Physical Activity Strategy includes a work stream on Tackling Inactivity which aims to support a 1% reduction in 'inactivity' year on year and brings wider partners together in actioning four key objectives:

- 1) Improving the 'physical activity for health' offer and relevant referral pathways.
- 2) Supporting walking and cycling programme/plans to target and engage the inactive population.
- 3) Promoting active design principles in the development of our built environment.
- 4) Developing a physical activity plan for early years inc play and active travel.

4. What can we do about it (evidence)?

Internationally, evidence suggests that tackling population inactivity requires a whole system approach as there is no single intervention that will tackle inactivity on its own.

Evidence supports encouraging physical activity amongst children and young people as good habits established when young can last a lifetime. Taking a whole school approach to promoting physical activity has been shown to be more effective than stand alone interventions.

There is also evidence to suggest that increases in activity can be supported by designing environments that promote physical activity (including buildings, streets, and open spaces) e.g. provision for cyclists, walking routes between

residential areas and essential public services and retail areas, accessible leisure amenities etc.

Behaviour change interventions such as motivational interviewing and brief advice from primary care have a strong evidence base and have been shown to be particularly cost effective.

Promoting walking as a particular intervention has been shown to be a particularly good activity to promote as it is very accessible, and is shown to be an effective gateway into other physical activities.

5. What's currently happening in Southwark?

Council leisure facilities and parks in Southwark have seen significant capital investment in recent years, supporting the improved access to good quality leisure options including green open spaces and playgrounds. Southwark council have recently committed to a free leisure offer for all residents, options for which are currently being worked out. A GP Exercise referral programme also operates through Fusion leisure centres offering 12 week supported exercise programmes, and a growing number of walks are being developed as part of a multi-agency walking offer for the borough.

The social infrastructure for activities has been supported by information sites such as the Get Active London portal connecting hundreds of wider physical activity opportunities through to a central searchable site. There are also excellent examples of volunteer and community led initiatives such as Parkrun.

Southwark council is committed to improving active travel infrastructure within comprehensive transport plans including progressing plans for 20mph boroughs. It is recognised that further work needs take place to improve access to cycling and walking, and this would require the joining up of partners and departments to support both the physical and social infrastructure. Briefing notes are available on active transport, cycling and walking if further information is required. A walking demand study has been also carried out to provide an initial understanding of the current levels of walking and the potential barriers. Further work will look at the potential for improvement. Living Streets have also supported the Tackling Inactivity group with a scoping of required action to support active travel.

A briefing note on gardening and food growing in the borough was prepared recently to support an understanding of current activity and potential gaps in supporting physical activity and wellbeing through gardening and food growing activity.

Parks have many health-promoting benefits – ecologically (air pollution/water/biodiversity) as well as including access to physical activity opportunities and green space/nature for mental wellbeing, spaces for social, community and cultural activities. The open space strategy supports development of the public health role of parks, and the parks play a central

role in supporting the success of the physical activity and sport strategy – through sports playing spaces, play grounds, community growing spaces, walking and cycling routes, outdoor gyms and educational and social activities for mental wellbeing. Further details are in the open space strategy.

For more information, please contact Rosie Dalton Lucas

Appendix 1: Benefits of physical activity

Relevant documents (on request)

Active for Life: Physical Activity and Sport Strategy (contact Paul Stokes)

Active for Life Update July (contact Paul Stokes)

Terms of Reference Physical Inactivity Group (contact Rosie Dalton Lucas)

Transport briefing (contact Louisa Tan)

Cycling briefing (contact Louisa Tan)

Walking briefing (contact Rosie Dalton Lucas)

Walking demand study (contact Louisa Tan)

Active travel scoping (contact Louisa Tan)

Gardening and growing briefing (contact Rosie Dalton Lucas)

Open space strategy (contact Kate Johnson / Rebecca Towers)

Appendix 1 Benefits of physical activity

<p>Summary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Few lifestyle choices have as large an impact on health as physical activity (others being smoking and healthy eating) . • Approximately a fifth of Southwark’s adult population are moderately active 3 times 30 minutes a week (Active Survey). • Everyone – of all ages – should minimise their amount of time being sedentary <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Early years</i> - physically active daily for at least 180 minutes (3 hours), spread throughout the day • <i>Children & young people</i> - moderate to vigorous intensity physical activity (inc strengthening bone & muscle) for at least 60 minutes and up to several hours every day • <i>Adults</i> - Over a week, 150 minutes of moderate intensity activity in bouts of 10 minutes or more or 75 minutes vigorous intensity activity • <i>Older people</i> – 150 minutes of moderate intensity or if already active, 75 minutes vigorous intensity activity. To include muscle strengthening, balance and coordination. • Physical activity can be free or low cost. • The spatial environment (town planning) plays a major part in encouraging people to be physically activity. 	
<p>Physical activity and some common health problems</p> <p>Coronary heart disease (CHD) - Approximately 40% of CHD deaths are associated with inadequate physical activity, through obesity, stress and raised blood pressure. Other risk factors (smoking, hypertension and high cholesterol) are also known to increase risk of CHD. Overall, physically inactive people have nearly twice the risk of developing CHD than active people; persuading sedentary people to take regular light exercise (e.g. walking) could reduce deaths from CHD by 14%.</p> <p>Diabetes - Physical activity helps lower the risk of developing type 2 diabetes. Eg it increases insulin sensitivity by as much as 25% so that circulating concentrations of insulin and adrenaline are much lower in a physically active person. There is evidence that physical activity can improve control of blood glucose levels and thus lowers the risk of developing type 2 diabetes.</p> <p>Stroke - Physical activity reduces the risk of stroke, mainly through beneficial effects on hypertension and blood clotting. Inactivity may be responsible for the observed increase in stroke among middle-aged men in the UK. Increasing levels of physical activity could reduce the number of strokes by around one quarter.</p> <p>Hypertension/blood lipid levels - Regular physical activity can prevent or delay the development of high blood pressure. Physical training programmes can reduce blood pressure in 75% of existing cases of hypertension. Physical activity can also increase levels of beneficial high-density lipoprotein and decrease levels of harmful low-density lipoprotein.</p> <p>Osteoporosis - Weight-bearing physical activity is essential for normal skeletal development during childhood and adolescence and for achieving and maintaining peak bone mass in young adults. Among older people, it has been suggested that up to half of all hip fractures from falls could be avoided with</p>	<p>▶ Reduces risks for heart disease, strokes, diabetes, hypertension and osteoporosis.</p> <p>▶ Can help the management of blood glucose and blood lipids</p> <p>▶ Can reduce risk of falls amongst older people</p>

<p>regular physical activity.</p> <p>Cancer – Regular physical activity is associated with a decreased risk of certain types of cancer. Risk of colon cancer is up to three times higher for sedentary people than it is among the most active members of the population. Similar relationships between physical activity and other cancers.</p> <p>Mental health - Physical activity helps people <i>feel</i> better through improvement in mood, reduced anxiety and enhanced self-perceptions. Physical activity can also help people to function better through alleviation of stress, and improved sleep, and – in older people – through some aspects of cognitive function.</p> <p>Older people - Helps older people better manage chronic, disabling conditions. Improves their stamina and muscle strength. Helps maintain the ability to live independently and reduces the risk of falling and fracturing bones. Reduces symptoms of anxiety and depression and fosters improvements in mood and feelings of well-being. Helps control joint swelling and pain associated with arthritis.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Can decrease risk for some cancers ▶ Improves mental health and well being ▶ Promotes independence and wellbeing for older people
Evidence based action	
<p>Children & young people</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide quality physical education classes • Create opportunities for physical activities that are enjoyable, that promote CYP confidence in their ability to be physically active, and that involve friends, peers, and parents. • Promote and provide appropriate physically active role models for youths. • Provide access to school buildings, community facilities and open play / green spaces that enable safe participation in physical activity • Promoting active travel (walking and cycling) and quality pavements and safe routes • Provide a range of extracurricular programs in schools and community • Promote provision by leisure centres to meet the needs and interests of specific adolescent and young adult populations, such as minority ethnic groups, females, persons with disabilities, and low-income groups. • Encourage primary & health care providers to talk routinely to adolescents and young adults about the importance of incorporating physical activity into their lives. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ School based Involves friends and family ▶ Good spatial planning taking into account play and active travel ▶ Ensure leisure centres meets special needs ▶ Brief advice through primary care
<p>Adults</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide environmental inducements to physical activity, such as safe, accessible, and attractive trails for walking and bicycling, and good pavements. • Encourage the use of schools for community recreation, form neighbourhood watch groups to increase safety, and encourage use of indoor or sheltered locations to provide safe places for walking in any weather. • Provide community-based programs to meet the needs of specific populations, such as minority ethnic groups, women, older adults, persons with disabilities, and low-income groups. • Encourage primary care and other health care providers to talk routinely to their patients about incorporating physical activity into their lives. • Encourage employers to provide supportive worksite environments and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Good spatial planning promoting active travel ▶ Accessibility of community venues & to meet special needs ▶ Brief advice through primary care

<p>policies that offer opportunities for employees to incorporate moderate physical activity into their daily lives.</p>	<p>▶ Promote opportunities through workplace</p>
<p>Older people</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide community-based physical activity programs that offer aerobic, strengthening, and flexibility components specifically designed for older adults. • Encourage malls and other indoor or protected locations to provide safe places for walking in any weather. • Ensure that leisure facilities for physical activity accommodate and encourage participation by older adults. • Ensure accessible transportation for older adults to parks or facilities that provide physical activity programs. • Encourage health care providers to talk routinely to their older adult patients about incorporating physical activity into their lives. • Plan community activities and support social capital initiatives that include opportunities for older adults to be physically active. 	<p>▶ Access to in-door locations</p> <p>▶ Ensure leisure facilities provide accessible & appropriate programmes</p> <p>▶ Accessible & convenient transportation</p> <p>▶ Brief advice through primary care</p>

Sources

Parliamentary bulletin Physical activity & health

<http://www.parliament.uk/documents/post/pn162.pdf>

NICE Pathways – physical activity

<http://pathways.nice.org.uk/pathways/physical-activity>

Department of Health, Start Active, stay active

Department of Health, At least 5 a week

CDC – physical activity for everyone

<http://www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/everyone/health/index.html>