Local offer focus groups
Summary 2020
Background

In July 2019, we conducted a formal consultation through an online survey to help us increase our understanding of the situation facing our local partners.

The information from the consultation was to help us shape our local offer*.

We asked local authorities and other local partners about the current challenges they face, what the most useful elements of our existing programme of support are, what we could change and improve and what support local places might need in the future.

*Our existing local offer was developed over time to support local leaders with this shared commitment and challenge, and includes:

- online tools and resources on the Sport England website
- leadership development programmes
- commissioning support through working with CLOA (Chief Cultural and Leisure Officers Association)
- a community of learning that shares the learning from the local delivery pilots and Active Partnerships

NB: This information was collected pre-coronavirus and we recognise that some responses may be different in the current climate, however we feel many of the findings are still relevant.
Steps we’ve taken

- Gathering baseline information on our local offer (what our existing offer currently entails).
- Engaging with internal colleagues on the content of the consultation.
- Building an online consultation with internal guidance.
- Circulating the consultation with key local and national partners.
- Sharing the consultation results.
- Running locally-based focus groups.
Purpose of the focus groups

1. To delve deeper into the local offer survey results.
2. To find out what partners wanted from a local offer.
Demographics

3 geographical locations (Tees Valley, Gloucester, Eastleigh)
31 participants LA staff, leisure providers, local delivery pilots.
14 roles planning, community workers, facilities, health and wellbeing, recreation, parks, colleges, green space, sports development, leisure trust, health, policy, public health, physical activity
13 Sport England colleagues from across the organisation and the Active Partnership extended workforce
9 Active Partnership colleagues
3 events cancelled due to coronavirus lockdown
Summary of findings
The survey results resonated with participants

Whilst discussing the consultation results for the situation and challenges people are facing locally, these were the views of the groups:

- They’re representative results
- It’s reassuring to know others are experiencing the same challenges
- Leisure facility ageing stock was raised as a particular issue

A focus group participant told us that they needed to decide what was and wasn’t within their control and focus on the things that they’re able to control.
People need support with building collaborative relationships

Building relationships was seen as the most crucial element of working with local partners. The key points raised were:

• Active Partnerships are seen as key moving forwards, as they’re situated locally and hold local knowledge.

• Physical activity can work locally as an enabler to allow partnerships to develop with a focus on a shared purpose.

• Internal relationships are sometimes the most difficult to forge.

• Funding can encourage transactional relationships that impede progress (financial transactions can get in the way).

• Local authorities are seeing an increase in voluntary and charitable organisations contacting them for investment (money) and connections.

A focus group participant told us that planning departments are crucial to work with but one of the most difficult to engage, as they’re balancing statutory duty with providing support.
Local offer
Purpose:

Questions from focus group participants

Is the local offer to help partners do the things they already do better?

Or

Is it about helping partners change how and with whom they do things?
Evaluation

What we heard:

- What do we mean by evaluation?
- The whole sector is challenged by how we evaluate and what to measure.
- What role does digital innovation have here?
- What support can Sport England provide around evaluation?

Participants suggest we need to:

- Talk more with local partners about evaluation and their digital needs
- Improve communication to places about what support is available.

What we’re doing:

- Looking into the best way to communicate in the future
- Undertaking regular consultation on forthcoming tools and support.
Tools

What we’re doing:

• Working with local partners to develop a version of the social and economic value of sport tool that can be used in place. This is to help make the case for investment in sport in your area.

• Quest has been delivering online clinics to help use their tool. We’ll continue to publish news of these events in our local partner newsletter.

What partners want from our tools:

• a tool directory

• clear user guides, including webinars and videos

• user-friendly tools – at the moment some are very complex

• examples of what scenarios our tools would be beneficial for.
What roles do we and the Active Partnerships play when local partners are taking a systems based approach to tackling inactivity?

What we’re doing:

• Working with Active Partnerships across the country to help deliver our Tackling Inequalities Fund.

• We’re also exploring, in more detail, how we continue to work effectively with Active Partnerships.
Communication

What we heard:

• Sport England needs to make better use of social media channels, audiences and outputs.

• Communications channels need to be more targeted so that they reach the right people.

• Allow more time for partners to react to communications, for example have longer lead-in times for campaigns and funding programmes.

What the local delivery team is doing:

• A comprehensive review of our communications channels and output.

• Publishing the experiences and learning of the LDPs through up-to-date pen portraits and the LDP narrative document.

• Sharing stories from the communities we work with, through our publications Local voices 1 and 2.
Sharing good practice

What partners want:

• An easy way to find out what other people across the country are doing

• For this to be a two-way exchange of information and learning

What we’re doing:

• Investigating types of online platform where sharing good practice is effective.

• Talking to partners across the system to ask where they share their good practice.
In summary

We need to:

• work with internal colleagues and Active Partnerships to support local places and improve communication
• improve our communication channels to make them more targeted
• utilise the information we’ve gained through the focus groups to reposition the ‘offer’ and align with the Uniting the Movement strategy to better support local places.
Local partners are looking to us to help them to connect, share knowledge and skills and find out what each other are doing, so learning is facilitated.
Thank you