Understand your community and your place

Stage 2

Strategic outcomes planning guidance
### Stage 2  Understand your community and your place

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Stage 2
Understand your community and your place

Identifying current barriers to participation and opportunities for behaviour change in a place will inform where future interventions will make the biggest sustainable impact.

Covid-19 has led to significant changes in behaviour with restrictions in place and through the recovery period and beyond, understanding the opportunities to build on and maintain positive behaviour change should be considered.

Taking time to understand what contribution the wider physical environment and infrastructure in a place can make is important and has been recently highlighted through the pandemic. Investment in infrastructure such as recent government investment in cycle lanes can enable even more people to get active through active design.

Bringing all the elements developed to date together to identify a ‘current state position’ for a place is a valuable exercise particularly in light of Covid-19. This supports a needs analysis that can be used by a local authority and its partners to identify where they want to be in the future – possibly as part of a ‘reset’ or to build back better in their place.

This will enable tangible objectives to be identified that contribute towards wider local strategic outcomes in a place and provide the foundation to support the development of asset-based interventions – physical and social.
Step 2A
Gather insight from the local community and stakeholders to identify barriers and opportunities for behaviour change

Why is this step important?

Using the initial research and consultation from Stage 1, further work may be required to better understand specific barriers and issues in a local place. It can define the underlying causes of lower levels of physical activity within particular communities, areas or target groups. This could include the particular impact Covid-19 has had on activity levels in communities.

Considering the wider whole system with partners such as education, health, adult social care and youth offending can enable a more joined up response to tackling longstanding barriers and inequalities faced by specific groups in the community.
What are the key elements that could be considered for this step?

i) Research specific local barriers experienced by identified target groups and communities

Following the research and consultation in Step 1B, further engagement will be necessary to understand in detail particular issues and barriers to participation impacting on behaviours. The approach to how further consultation is undertaken should depend on the audience. The size of the sample needs to be sufficient to ensure it is representative of the local community.

Target group representatives could be invited to attend a focus group or a consultation meeting, ideally where these communities would regularly attend other activities or sessions.

Working with community workers, housing officers and third sector community leaders can facilitate bringing groups together and establish the context for the consultation. Exploring issues which were cited and highlighted through Stage 1 will develop greater understanding of what impacts on their lives and participation. This will present a chance to explore potential solutions that are developed ‘bottom up’. For example:

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<th>Potential issues and barriers</th>
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<td>Confidence</td>
<td>Young single parents</td>
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Questionnaires or surveys could be completed by target group representatives to provide an alternative cost-effective means of engagement. Suggestion boxes in community settings can also work to provide anonymous feedback and may drive alternative comments. Web pages with comment boxes can also provide a useful source of feedback to a wider audience.

ii) Identify possible opportunities to support behaviour change

Working with cross sector partners who have a real interest in supporting particular target groups within a local community is ideal. It can provide insight and create opportunities to identify a more joined up approach to tackling longstanding barriers to participation. This may be through leveraging existing local networks but may also be creating new relationships and partnerships.

There are also a number of published research guides that will provide evidence that supports behaviour change in relation to levels of physical activity, sport and wellbeing. This will help gain an understanding of the wider barriers and motivators that impact on participation. This evidence can provide a useful context in which to examine specific issues and share common themes. Creating a long list of potential opportunities for behaviour change can be beneficial as an output from the consultation and research. The refinement of this takes place in Stage 3 - Interventions.

What are the key enablers to support this step of the process?

- High quality data and analysis from Stage 1
- Continued engagement with community groups and stakeholders in regular contact with target groups and communities
- Working closely with cross sector partners
- Building trust and showing commitment to those parties engaged in this step
What are the key outputs from this step of the process?

- Key findings from further research
- Prioritised ideas, opportunities and potential long list solutions to support behaviour change
- Regular communications showing progress and how target group and stakeholder input is shaping future policy decisions and programming

Further guidance, materials and case studies

- Sport England Research Guide
- Sport England Understanding Audiences
- Tackling Inactivity – What we know: Key insights from our Get Healthy Get Active pilots
- Applying Behaviour Change Theories – Real World Examples from the Get Healthy Get Active Projects
- Measuring Impact – Social and Economic Value of Community Sport and Physical Activity
- Coronavirus – Research into how the coronavirus crisis has affected people’s activity levels and attitudes towards exercise
- Sport England – Data (Active Lives)
Step 2B
Consider the contribution from the wider physical and social environment

Why is this step important?

The environment where people choose to be active can be any place or space. Covid-19 has highlighted the full value of parks and open spaces in supporting recovery. How the whole physical environment is described and designed can have a significant impact on behaviour. This is in terms of how the environment is used but also how it is perceived by the community so it is important to explore your local place and its neighbourhoods in detail.

This place-based thinking around the strategically planned physical environment is termed active environment and it can in itself encourage physical activity and drive impact on local strategic outcomes.

A Gather insight from the local community and stakeholders to identify barriers and opportunities for behaviour change

B Consider the contribution from the wider physical and social environment

C Establish where you are now and where you want to be in the future

D Agree the objectives needed to contribute to shared local strategic outcomes
What are the key elements that could be considered for this step?

i) Understanding the local area

Often different parts of a local area, such as parks, streets, leisure facilities, civic space and schools, deliver in silos and are not ‘joined up’ as a neighbourhood offer.

An active environment can be anywhere in the local area; homes, streets, parks, leisure and community centres and schools are all integral elements.

It should explore these aspects:

- **Physical** – the actual environment, its characteristics, design and how it may have positive or negative impacts on how people use that space (including perceptions)
- **Social/activation** – the activity that takes place in that environment including events and campaigns.

Mapping particular needs and priorities of a local place against the active environment can identify opportunities to contribute to increased participation in sport and physical activity as well as wider local outcomes.

For example, physical design principles like co-location, walkable neighbourhoods and integrated cycle networks can be implemented to drive community cohesion and social development. Activation such as parkrun or community run programmes can further boost physical activity in a space, particularly when targeting certain groups. Covid-19 has highlighted the seasonal opportunities to maximise participation.

Finally, understanding how these environments work together collectively to provide a seamless journey for the user through active travel will ensure the active environment is more than the sum of its parts.

ii) Existing stakeholders who have an interest in the active environment

Working with existing stakeholders who have an interest in the active environment could provide you with the resources needed to explore particular opportunities further.

They could work in planning, regeneration, placemaking, parks and open spaces or street scene etc.
What are the key enablers that could be considered for this step?

Support from the stakeholders with an interest in the active environment

What are the key outputs from this step of the process?

Map of existing and future environments with associated physical activity, sport and wellbeing activation opportunities

Further guidance, materials and case studies

Active Design Guide
Step 2C
Establish where you are now and where you want to be in the future

Why is this step important?

It is now possible to identify a ‘current state position’ for a place using the work completed to date. This will then enable your organisation to identify where it wants to be in the future and what interventions can be developed to contribute to local strategic outcomes.

This process can be very powerful in communicating the current strengths as well as where opportunities for improvement lie. Covid-19 has highlighted for many local authorities and their partners the need to consider a review of their strategic approach and this step can play a key role in shaping the future.

This paves the way in the next stage for what interventions can enable achievement of the strategic objectives and contribute to local strategic outcomes.

This is often summarized in a user-friendly needs analysis document at the end of this step.
What are the key elements that could be considered for this step?

i) Consolidate your research and analysis

Bringing all the elements developed to date together into a succinct, easy-to-read document can support the communication of the developing strategic approach and present needs-based evidence to shape future policy decisions, funding applications and investment.

Some local authorities and their partners have called this document a ‘needs analysis’. The detailed analysis and supporting information can be provided in a supporting document or appendices. There is a risk that too much information is provided and the target audience is overwhelmed by data, so key core content must be presented to make the biggest impact.

As a guide the needs analysis document may be structured as:

1. Introduction
   - Strategic vision
   - Scope of the study

2. Background
   - Introduction
   - Physical activity and its benefits
   - Campaigns to increase participation in physical activity, sport and wellbeing
   - Physical activity rates
   - Demographics
   - Priority groups for the needs analysis
   - Existing physical activity landscape
   - The purpose of the needs analysis research
   - What enables behaviour change?
   - Known attitudes towards physical activity

3. Consultation
   - Methodology
   - Online survey findings
   - Street interviews findings
   - Stakeholder consultation findings
   - Focus group findings
   - Summary findings and analysis
4. **Barriers to participation**
   - Target groups
   - Physical environment
   - Social environment

5. **Opportunities**
   - Introduction
   - Confidence
   - Motivation
   - Age, injury and illness
   - Awareness
   - Families and childcare
   - Time
   - Affordability
   - Physical environment

6. **Summary**

7. **Considerations for a strategy**
   - Introduction
   - Potential solutions to meet physical activity needs
   - How will the changing population impact future provision?
   - Areas for further exploration

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**Appendix A**: Participation rates

**Appendix B**: Demographic profile

**Appendix C**: Sport and physical activity provision

**Appendix D**: Consultee list

It is important to remember that this step of the process focuses on identifying the priority areas that need to be addressed linked to the wider local strategic outcomes which physical activity and sport can contribute to.

Many local authorities are using this opportunity to redefine their focus from 'leisure' to 'wellbeing' to support the future re-prioritisation of resources.

This step does not explore solutions on how to address these gaps. This will be developed in Stage 3 – interventions.

**ii) Identifying a long list of priority areas to address in the future**

The potential opportunities highlighted in the needs analysis can be developed into a long list of draft priority areas to support addressing the barriers, issues or gaps. This step should cross reference the areas mapped in Step 1C as well as using insight from Steps 2A, 2B and 2C to help shape the long list of priority areas.
What are the key enablers to support this step of the process?

- Establishing a project team to complete the needs analysis
- Securing support, time and resources for this process from the steering group

What are the key outputs from this step of the process?

- Needs analysis report
- Long list of priority areas to address gaps and inequalities, issues and opportunities
Step 2D
Agree the objectives needed to contribute to shared local strategic outcomes

Why is this step important?

Developing a clear set of evidence-based strategic objectives, will help articulate a clear policy position for the local authority. It will help shape the local authority and its partners’ approach to the active environment, exploring and selecting asset-based interventions – both physical and social in the next stage.

By taking senior stakeholders on this journey, there will be a growing enthusiasm and understanding of the potential impact physical activity and sport can have on a place and its wellbeing.
What are the key elements that could be considered for this step?

i) Undertake an exercise to identify strategic objectives

The steering group should now consider the relative importance of a long list of potential strategic objectives which have emerged through the previous stages. This prioritisation exercise can be supported using agreed evaluation criteria, which is often based around the extent to which:

- the objective is addressing an evidenced need in a community that is experiencing inequalities and barriers preventing regular physical activity
- the objective can be delivered sustainably
- the objective supports wider local strategic outcomes in a place
- the objective can be measured, monitored and evaluated in a cost-effective way.

Covid-19 has placed significant pressures on local authority budgets and this will inevitably result in some difficult decisions having to be made.

It may well be that some current priorities are no longer affordable, important or relevant and thus will not be taken forward. This could result in decommissioning those interventions and reallocating resources to greater priorities as part of Stage 3. This is normal and should not be avoided. The evidence developed will be able to provide strategic leaders with the reason why they wish to stop supporting a particular intervention.
What are the key enablers to support this step of the process?

- Needs analysis as an evidence base
- Clear and consistent evaluation criteria

What are the key outputs from this step of the process?

- List of clear objectives with supporting evidence available as required
- Sign off from the steering group

Further guidance, materials and case studies

- A Sport and Physical Activity Strategy for Bristol City 2020-2025
- Active Westminster - Physical Activity, Leisure and Sport Strategy 2018-2022
- Manchester’s Sport and Physical Activity Strategy 2019-2028 (MCRactive)

Stage 2 Case Studies

1. Bristol City Council Sport and Physical Activity Strategy
2. Waltham Forest Council - Mini Hollands
Bristol City Council (BCC)

SOPG Diagnostic, Sport and Physical Activity Strategy and Business Case

Description of SOPG-related work
A diagnostic exercise was undertaken using Sport England’s Strategic Outcomes Planning Guidance (SOPG) to identify how BCC could secure a sustainable future for its leisure services and align them to the City’s overall One City Plan.

Relevant stages/steps
A. The SOPG diagnostic exercise was used to identify the additional work the Council needed to undertake, building on work to date, and was followed by a number of additional workstreams including:

B. Stage 1 and 2: Development of a needs assessment and development of a high-level physical activity, sport and wellbeing strategy

C. Stage 3: Development of work to support a future leisure investment strategy and development of a management options appraisal

D. Stage 4: Development of work to support a future outline business case.

Activities and outputs
Key outputs of the initial diagnostic work included the development of a brief advising the Council on future work needed, an idea on a future programme and an indicative budget for future consultancy work.

The Council then selected a consultant to support them through open competition and subsequently, with light touch input from the consultant, developed a needs assessment to support the workstreams. Based on the needs assessment, BCC commissioned a high-level physical activity, sport and wellbeing strategy for Bristol.

The development of the strategy was informed by subsequent workshops with over 30 key stakeholders from across the City.

Following the development of work to help inform a future leisure investment strategy BCC and their consultants undertook work to support the development of an outline business case for the future of the leisure service in the city.

Outcome
The Council developed a clear direction of travel to support its new Sport and Physical Activity Strategy, with a renewed collective focus on partnership working. This led to the development of a proposed four-stage implementation plan for the Council to realise their ideal procurement strategy.

Following the Covid-19 pandemic – this work is being used and further developed.
A methodical process underpinned by needs analysis. Bringing together lots of insight and evidence has enabled Bristol to clearly focus on the contribution that sport and physical activity makes towards achieving the city’s strategic outcomes. The identification of place-based interventions through the development of a Sport and Physical Activity Strategy and understanding our facility investment needs has supported Bristol in building a blueprint for future work. Our leisure consultants have supported us through this process bringing with them a range of disciplines and extensive experience. Engaging multiple stakeholders throughout they have been a pleasure to work with.”

Guy Fishbourne Sport & Physical Activity Development Manager

Stage 2 Key Learning

• Bristol City Council and its partners used an evidenced-based approach to establish a clear understanding of need across the City. This supported a collaborative process to develop a Physical activity, sport and wellbeing Strategy, clearly identifying strategic objectives and how they can contribute to local strategic outcomes.

• Building in time to engage with key stakeholders and explore opportunities for collaboration, shared learning and development of shared objectives strengthens working relationships and optimises long-term use of resources across a place.
Strategic Outcomes Planning Guidance: Stage 2 – Understand your community and your place

Waltham Forest Council

Mini-Hollands

Background
The London Mini-Hollands scheme was developed as part of the Mayor’s Healthy Streets Approach with the aim of making target boroughs as cycle-friendly as Dutch equivalents.

The scheme is specifically aimed at outer boroughs of London, as they are more car-dependent than inner London. The scheme helps to promote active travel, improving residents’ health, and reducing air pollution and risks associated with traffic.

The three participating boroughs, Enfield, Kingston and Waltham Forest were each awarded £30 million of funding to transform their local cycling and walking infrastructure.

Activities/outputs
The Mini-Hollands scheme aims at making cycling safer and more pleasant for residents in the participating boroughs. This is done through improvements of the local cycling infrastructure:

- Segregated cycle lanes
- Measures to calm motor traffic
- Cycle hubs
- Community bike rides
- Re-designed town centres.

The scheme also tries to improve local environments for walking by creating new pedestrian crossings and engaging public spaces with seating and green features, such as flowerbeds and trees.

The scheme is currently ongoing, with all interventions due to be completed by March 2021.

Outcomes
A study undertaken by Aldred et al. in 2019 shows an increase in active travel among those living in areas defined as ‘high-dose’ neighbourhoods. The study defines those areas that have undergone substantial changes to the local walking and cycling infrastructure as ‘high-dose’.

Those living in high-dose areas were 24% more likely to have participated in past-week cycling at follow-up.

Furthermore, positive changes in views on local environments were recorded amongst those living in areas with interventions.

The study concluded that the interventions of the Mini-Holland scheme have a measurable early impact on the active travel behaviour of residents as well as perceptions of their cycling environment.
Stage 2 Key learning

• This active environment initiative linked to capital investment in active travel infrastructure highlights the broad range of opportunities to use insight to enable behaviour change and improved activity levels.

• The wide range of outcomes supported through this investment highlight the importance of the wider system to support physical activity and healthier lifestyles.
This guidance was developed with support from SLC - The Sport, Leisure and Culture Consultancy. Case studies have been provided by a range of local authorities and their consultants.