Hartlepool Borough Council

Hartlepool – a coastal town in the North East of England – is one of the most deprived communities in England and as a result has a range of significant health challenges and key health inequalities, compared to other places and within Hartlepool itself, as demonstrated by the infographic below.

Activity levels are behind England averages as Sport England Active Lives data shows, with less than 50% of the adult population are reaching recommended activity levels each week.

Hartlepool Health And Physical Activity Profile

- **23.7%** of year 6 children are classified as obese, worse than the average for England (20.2%)
- **27.5%** of adults are classified obese above the England average (24.1%)
- **28.6%** of children live in poverty, worse than the England average 17%
- **45** out of every 100 live in the ‘most deprived quintile’

Life expectancy at birth is 76.8 years for men and 81.3 years for women compared to 79.6 years and 83.2 years respectively for England.

Men and women living in the most deprived areas of Hartlepool live 12.5 and 10.4 years respectively less than those in the least deprived areas.
The leisure service in Hartlepool is working to help improve health and wellbeing particularly among the most deprived communities.

The Council operates a range of wet and dry leisure centres, parks, open spaces, and outdoor pitches. Mill House Leisure Centre is the Council’s main swimming facility and is in the town centre. The centre is ageing – almost 50 years old – and the Council has well developed plans to replace it with a new, wet and dry centre on the “Waterfront” site, as part of a wider town centre regeneration project.

The Council has been using Moving Communities data to identify the importance of leisure centres in supporting their ambitions to encourage people from areas of deprivation to be more active but to also assess how well the centres are recovering from the impact of Covid.

Usage Recovery

Overall participation levels are still lower than pre-Covid levels. Total participation between April – November 2021 is 47% of the same period in 2019, which is lower than national levels of approximately 70% return rate. However, it aligns with Moving Communities data which shows that older centres with no recent refurbishment are recovering slower than recently refurbished centres.

The graphs below show the profile of known participants preCovid (April 2019 to November 2019) compared to the comparable period April 2021 to November 2021.

Participants Breakdown by Deprivation

The Council is pleased to see that the profile of users by area of deprivation has not changed significantly. Hartlepool leisure centres are attracting a significantly higher proportion of people from deprived areas, 44.6% of participants are from the most deprived quintile. Importantly, this compares directly to the overall proportion of people living in areas of deprivation in Hartlepool as shown in the rst infographic. The proportion of participants from areas of deprivation is higher in 2021 compared to 2019.

The age profile of participants has changed though. In the 2021, there was a lower proportion of 1-15 year olds attending, due principally to the reduction of swimming lessons available. The proportion of people over 45-year-olds has also dropped. There is a higher proportion of people aged 25 – 44 years old attending. The drop, particularly in over 65 year olds participating is typical across the country.
Lower participation levels are impacting financial recovery. Moving Communities data shows the % cost recovery (the extent which income covers expenditure) of the three main centres as per the infographic below. The centres are achieving 30% cost recovery, lower than the pre-Covid position of 48%.

The level of financial recovery has been impacted by a number of wider factors:

- The slow and limited re-opening of facilities or elements of facilities due to inadequate ventilation and the required installation of CO2 monitors etc.
- The ongoing role of Mill House Leisure Centre in supporting Covid recovery, acting as a testing and vaccination site.
- The application of reduced activity capacities, linked to the ongoing management of Covid risk.
- The redeployment of staff to support the Covid recovery programmes.
Mill House Leisure Centre Recovery

Reviewing the data per site, Mill House Leisure Centre is in fact recovering the best, with a cost recovery nearing 35% and income for the 9-month period at 59% of the comparable period in April – November 2019.

In the period April – November 2019, the swimming pool had the highest throughput compared to other facilities and it has recovered the most achieving 67% of visits compared to the pre-covid period. The gym and dry side are not recovering as well. This is likely to be due to the limited capacities of the areas due to social distancing requirements, the relatively small gym at the centre (30 stations) and competition from budget gym facilities within the town centre.

Activity Breakdown (Actuals) | Apr 19 – Nov 19

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Count</th>
<th>FITNESS (GYM) ACTIVITIES</th>
<th>GROUP WORKOUT</th>
<th>OTHER</th>
<th>OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES</th>
<th>SPORTS HALL ACTIVITIES</th>
<th>SWIMMING LESSONS</th>
<th>SWIMMING ACTIVITIES</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>60K</td>
<td>28,082</td>
<td>3,462</td>
<td>25,710</td>
<td>1,886</td>
<td>5,317</td>
<td>226</td>
<td>53,383</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
As part of the ‘Strategic Outcomes Planning Model’ the Council has undertaken with support from Sport England, resident engagement highlighted that 91% of those interviewed wanted to undertake more physical activity. They cited the following encouragement factors in using the leisure centres; improved facilities, better range of the activities, improved cleanliness levels, and lower costs.

The Council is looking to address each of these barriers, both within existing facilities and in relation to the replacement centre for Mill House.

At Brierton Sports Centre and Headland Sports Hall, significant investment is proposed to increase and improve the offer available – from new reception lay-outs to extended fitness facilities and refurbished studio spaces.

“Highlight”, the replacement for Mill House Leisure Centre will include a comprehensive wet side offer including a main pool, training
Our involvement in Moving Communities and use of the data, forms part of our service strategy, to develop knowledge and utilise customer and service insight to inform better service decisions. The data has reminded us of the importance of local leisure centres to our community, however, we recognise that there is so much more we could achieve with a greater focus on key operating metrics alongside the development of new and improved facilities, to enable people to lead more active lives and help to address the stark health inequalities across Hartlepool.

New, more efficient facilities will reduce our overall running costs and increase both footfall and revenue, enabling us to divert resources into ensuring we can provide that extra support some people need to be more physically active.”

Ian Gardiner, Head of Leisure, Recreation & Participation

Ongoing Funding

The quality of existing facilities alongside the high levels of deprivation means that they are not recovering as fast as other centres in England, creating additional financial pressure for the Council in 2021-22. But with continued ongoing financial support the facilities are still meeting the needs of some of the most deprived communities.

The Council believes it’s leisure offer is important to addressing the local health inequalities and by undertaking a strategic outcomes approach to prioritise residents’ needs and identify barriers to being active, the Council is addressing these longer-term problems by investing in “Highlight” the new strategic leisure facility, which will better meet local needs, expectations and aspirations.

In June 2021, the Council submitted a bid to the Government’s LUF as part of its ambitious plans to transform the town centre, including enhanced carbon saving measures to make ‘Highlight’ more energy efficient and sustainable. Whilst this round of funding was not successful, the Council is committed to re-submitting a bid in spring 2022. Insight from the Moving Communities platform will be utilised to support the re-submission to the LUF.

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Moving Communities Partners: