

Putting it into practice
**Tools to support tackling inactivity
through system change**

Understanding the system you're trying to shape

Update published July 2022

Understand the system you're trying to shape

This understanding the system you're trying to shape resource will help to guide you through the tools, models and approaches being used by places to tackle inactivity through implementing a place-based approach. This is one of nine sections of our collective resource 'Putting It Into Practice' which is organised by what we've found to be some of the practicalities of system change. The full resource can be found [on our website](#).

There are many ways to understand systems. You can look at them in economic, political or social terms, but it's the impact they have on local people that's important. Working with the pilots has helped us understand local systems, and we've gained invaluable, practical insight into the effects they have on people's daily lives.



Questions you might be asking:

- How can I align physical activity throughout the layers of the system, across system settings, and against organisational priorities?
- How can I talk about the system in a way that engages people?
- How can I better understand the relationships that connect communities as a network and how these evolve and change over time?

System setting diagram
(hot air balloon)



Social network analysis



Whole system approach,
Socio-ecological Model



Actor mapping

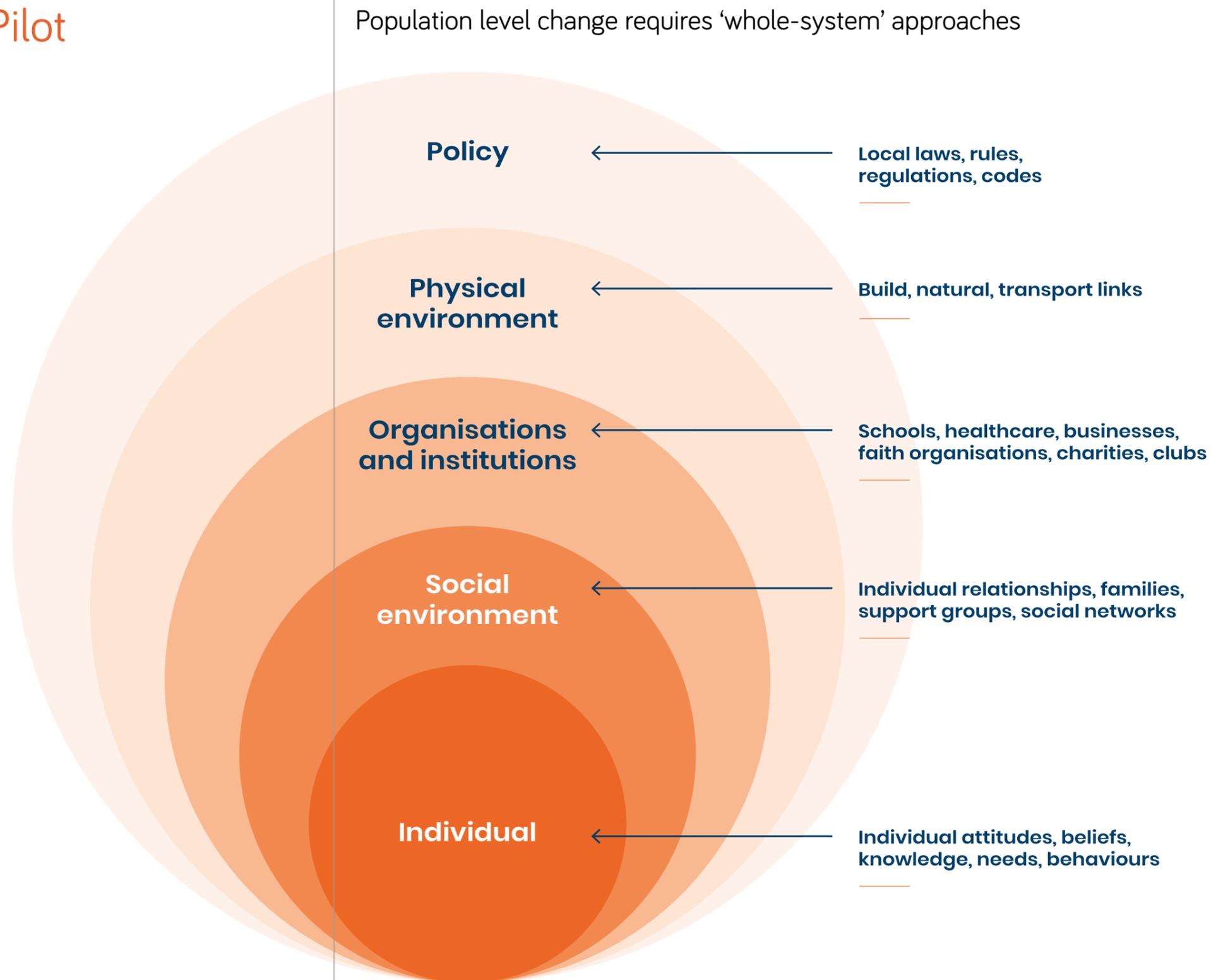
YOU'VE GOT THIS.

System Setting Diagram (Hot air balloon)

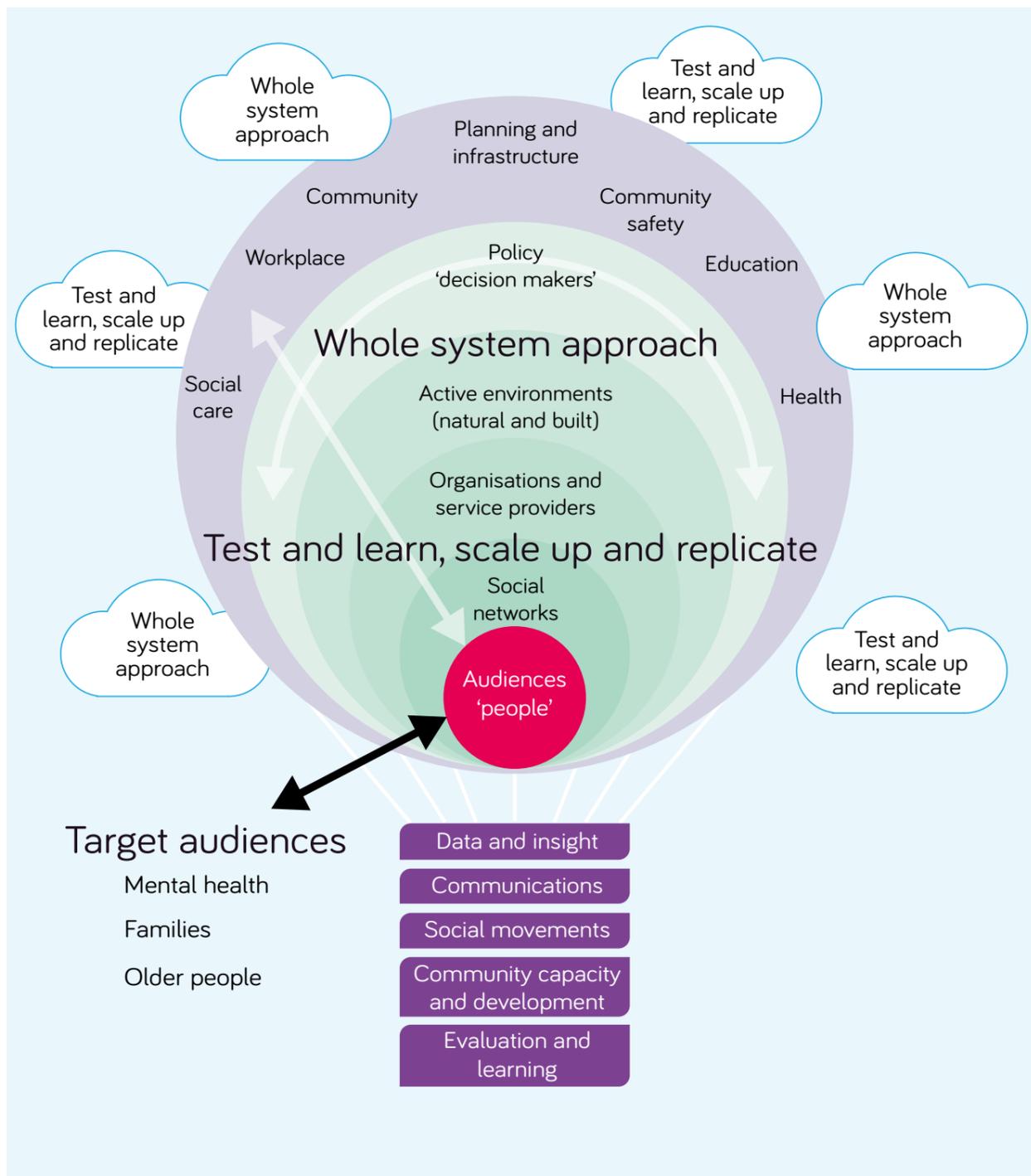
Active Essex Local Delivery Pilot



The Essex LDP System setting diagram was driven by the Socio-ecological Model (Onion Diagram) which shows how a Whole System Approach to physical activity is driven by a wide range of influences at multiple levels. A whole systems approach succeeds when it operates on a number of levels—individual, social environment, organisations/institutions, physical environment, and policy levels. Change is needed at all levels to deliver sustainable increases. Our LDP is not about delivering a large number of individual projects and interventions at a local level. We understand that we need to drive change at all of these levels.



Our system setting diagram evolved from the Socio-ecological Model to create Essex LDP's 'Hot Air Balloon'. The balloon incorporates the Socio-ecological model but extends to incorporate Essex's system settings, underpinning themes, and target audiences.



The balloon systems settings Education, Workplace, Community, Health, Community Safety, Social Care, and Planning and Infrastructure led us to start building relationships with systems leads within Essex. Working with Collaborate CIC we met with the system setting leads to enable us to better understand their system and how physical activity could be embedded within them. By acknowledging the system

setting priorities for the County we were able to see how physical activity could play a part of achieving their desired outcome. The basket of the system setting diagram (hot air balloon) indicates the underpinning themes which support and navigate the balloon through the whole system using Data and Insight; Communications; Community Capacity and Development and Evaluation and Learning.

The Essex LDP Core Team used the system setting diagram at an initial project scoping workshop to discover who our stakeholders were across our target areas Basildon, Colchester, Tendring and Essex-Wide. The core team was divided into groups with a handful of post-its and a system setting diagram (Hot Air Balloon) to pinpoint by writing down key stakeholders

(organisations, partners, individuals etc.) and sticking them on the balloon in the most appropriate place. This exercise provided each area with a starting point to reach out to these stakeholders, understanding which areas of the balloon required more work and collaboration.

Name:	Essex LDP System Setting Diagram 'Hot Air Balloon'
Why would I use it?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use it to navigate through the whole system to ensure physical activity is hardwired across all aspects of the LDP programme.
Who would I use it with?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To be used with any individuals, organisations, system leads to understand the breadth of possibilities for physical activity to be embedded with across the system.
How can it be used?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can be agile to meet requirements of systems settings, underpinning themes, and target audiences. A tool to use when presenting/engaging with audiences to explain the whole system approach that the LDP Programme seeks to hardwire physical activity into.
Advice to others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be flexible with the tool, adapt often, use to support strategic priorities and support LDP structure throughout the pilot. We printed the balloon up to A0 size to have on show at events, meetings and conferences to create a discussion with partners, officers and members to demonstrate the whole-system approach the LDP is taking and how the system can be infiltrated at different levels.

Putting it into practice - How the tool has been used

Who was involved?

Essex LDP team in collaboration with Collaborate CIC, University of Essex, Sport England.

Why was this tool used?

To have a model that would fit to page to present the whole system incorporating our strategic priorities and system settings and the resources which would be required to support and meet the target audience representation. The challenge was to have a clear and concise model which we could share and explain to our stakeholders and show them how they fitted in and how physical activity could fit across the whole system.

How was it done?

The system setting diagram evolved from the Socio-ecological model, moving to adding the key priorities for the project and the supporting resources. The model was tested with the Essex LDP Core Team and shared with the wider group to ensure all aspects of the pilot were accounted for. The model was initially used at a Core Team workshop with the LDP Core Team, then used for collaboration across the whole system.

What was the impact?

The system setting Diagram was always one of our main slides when presenting to organisations, partners, system leads, Officers, Members and paper A0 copies where used at community events and for discussion with individuals. The diagram was a good tool to be able to speak with and explain how the LDP was looking to impact and embed physical activity across the whole system, particularly in target groups.

What did we learn?

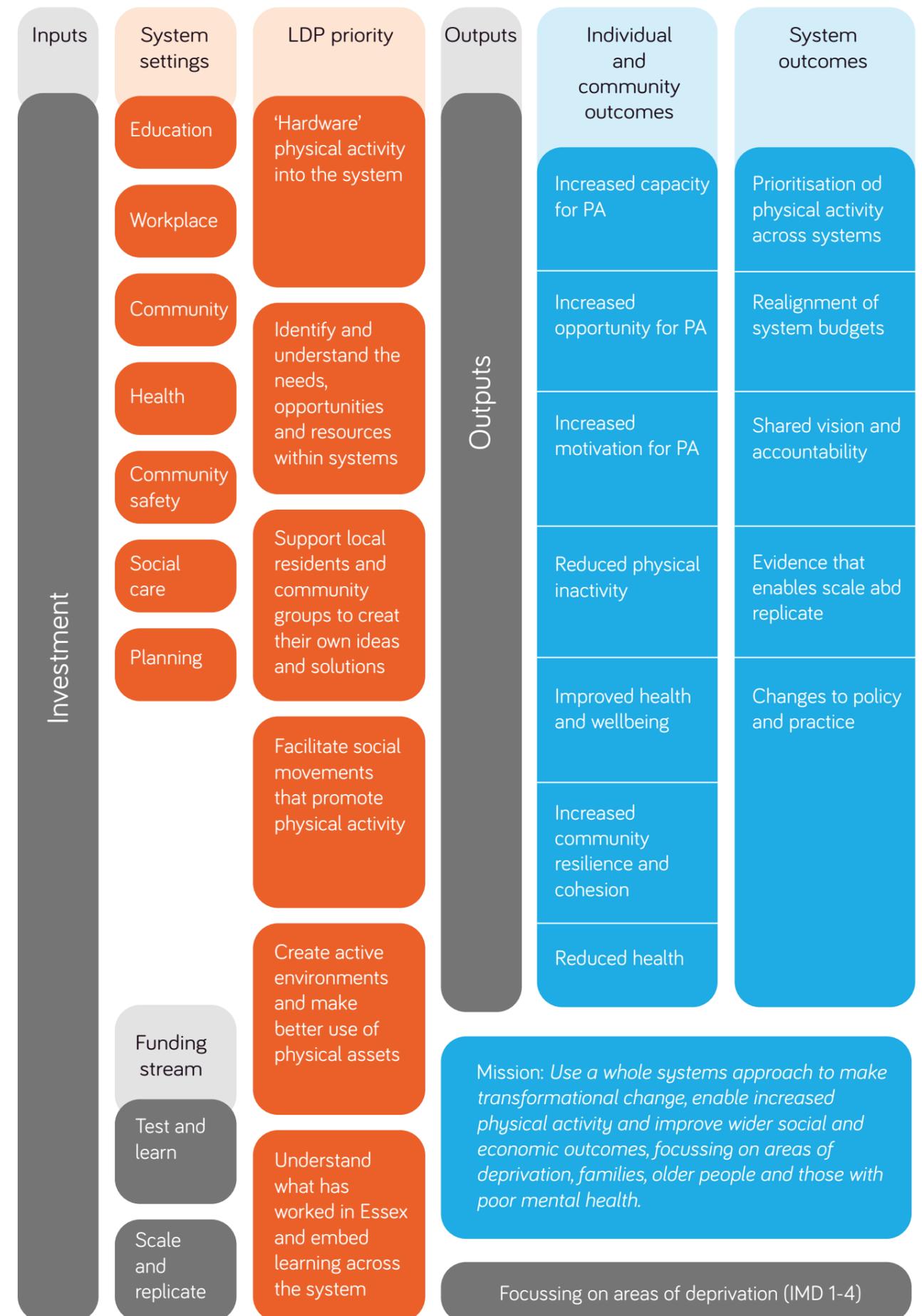
We learnt who our key stakeholders were across the whole system and that we needed to work alongside them to embed physical activity into their service.

We have continued to evolve with a new tool 'LDP on a page' which has a mission:

'Use a whole systems approach to make transformational change, enable increased physical activity and improve wider social and economic outcomes, focusing on areas of deprivation, families, older people and those with poor mental health'.

This helps support our investment proposal as a form of check list to understand that the projects meet our system settings, priorities, outputs and outcomes.

LDP investments on a page



The 'LDP on a page' has been widely welcomed by all stakeholders of the LDP and Evaluation consortium. Our evaluation has evolved to prioritise how we are influencing the system rather than evaluate individual projects and investments.

However, Essex LDP continues to be agile:

- Various system settings have evolved to become more holistic. For example, education now encompasses all of children and young people, and active travel is now part of the transport setting.
- A decision was made to remove Social

Movements from the LDP.

- Essex LDP aren't strongly focused on the target areas of older people, mental health and children and families. Instead, we're focussing on areas of deprivation, IMD areas 1-4.

As a result of system thinking, it's had a direct influence on the Essex Strategy for Physical Activity and Sport. This can be clearly seen below:

Strategy 10-year vision: an active Essex to improve everyone's health and wellbeing

	Strategy 5 priorities	Strategy 5 foundations
1	Health and wellbeing	Tackling inequalities
2	Active environments	System change
3	Children and young people	Place-based working
4	Strengthening communities	Measurement of impact
5	Community sport	Proportionate universalism

Reflections from those involved:



I would use the balloon diagram with stakeholders, including those looking for investment. I have also used it when presenting to the patient participation group at the CCG to help explain.



Sarah Stokes
Colchester Local Coordinator

Summary of opportunities:

Opportunities to start a conversation with system leads to community groups and show how physical activity can be embedded in the whole system and the benefits what we can achieve for both parties by collaborating.

Things to consider:

Be agile with the tool, use it to start conversations, it helps to understand stakeholders across the whole system. Don't make the tool too complex as it needs to be understood by all levels of stakeholders.

Where can I find further information?

[Active Essex - LDP](#)

Email: administration@activessex.org

Whole System Approach - Socio-ecological Model Greater Manchester Local Delivery Pilot

Greater Manchester (GM) Local Pilot (LP) covers 11 localities across the city-region and within a whole system approach, the LP focuses on getting more people active whilst addressing health and social inequalities. GM have adapted the Social-ecological Model to incorporate a layer relating to the ideology, ideas and beliefs in wider society that run through all the layers presented in the model.



Name: Whole System Approach - Socio-ecological Model

Why would I use it?

- To help you describe the basis of a whole system approach, and potentially explore what that means to the person you are presenting/talking to.

Who would I use it with?

- Any partners or stakeholders who aren't familiar with a whole systems approach, or you want to understand it in the context of your locality.

How can it be used?

- As an infographic, or as a reflection tool i.e. think about/consider/plot all of the influences on an individual in terms of whether they're active or not.

Advice to others

- We use the diagram regularly as a simple and visual way to explain our approach.
- If you have 10-20 minutes you could ask people to complete a simple self-reflection task, to gauge their understanding. They can also reflect on the model by thinking of the clients/individuals they meet as part of their job, and consider the things in the whole system that might help or hinder them being active.

Putting it into practice - how the tool has been used

Who was involved?

Key Workers Forum – a group of front-line staff from a variety of employability services, who we're working with to embed physical activity into their services and interactions with people on a daily basis.

Why was this tool used?

To be able to succinctly and simply describe a whole systems approach and relate it to the context in which they work.

How was it done?

The infographic was used as part of a presentation, and was described with examples from their work.

What was the impact?

It helped those involved to understand the work of the Pilot within a whole systems approach, and prompted them to think about how they could be encouraging the people they work with to be more active. This was evident in the discussion we had after the presentation, and interestingly, it also prompted them to think about their personal situations/context in terms of physical activity too.

What did we learn?

The power of focusing on the individual in the centre of the diagram, and the factors that influence whether they're active. It really does get people thinking about the opportunities/challenges that a whole system approach provides, in terms of improving an individuals relationship with sport and physical activity. There are a number of practical actions that members of the group have gone away to start exploring within their own services.

Reflections from those involved:



It prompts individual thinking; in terms of themselves, their job and role, the people they support professionally, the organisation they work for, and more broadly all the other 'things' in a system that contribute to someone being active or not.



Kate Ahmadi-Khattir, Greater Manchester Pilot Manger

Things to consider:

If you use a diagram like this, make sure that you explain it simply with relevant examples. Often a personal example is much more powerful and helpful (if you're prepared to share) in bringing it to life, but also examples that are relevant to those you are talking to often land better and create more opportunity for discussion.

Where can I find further information?

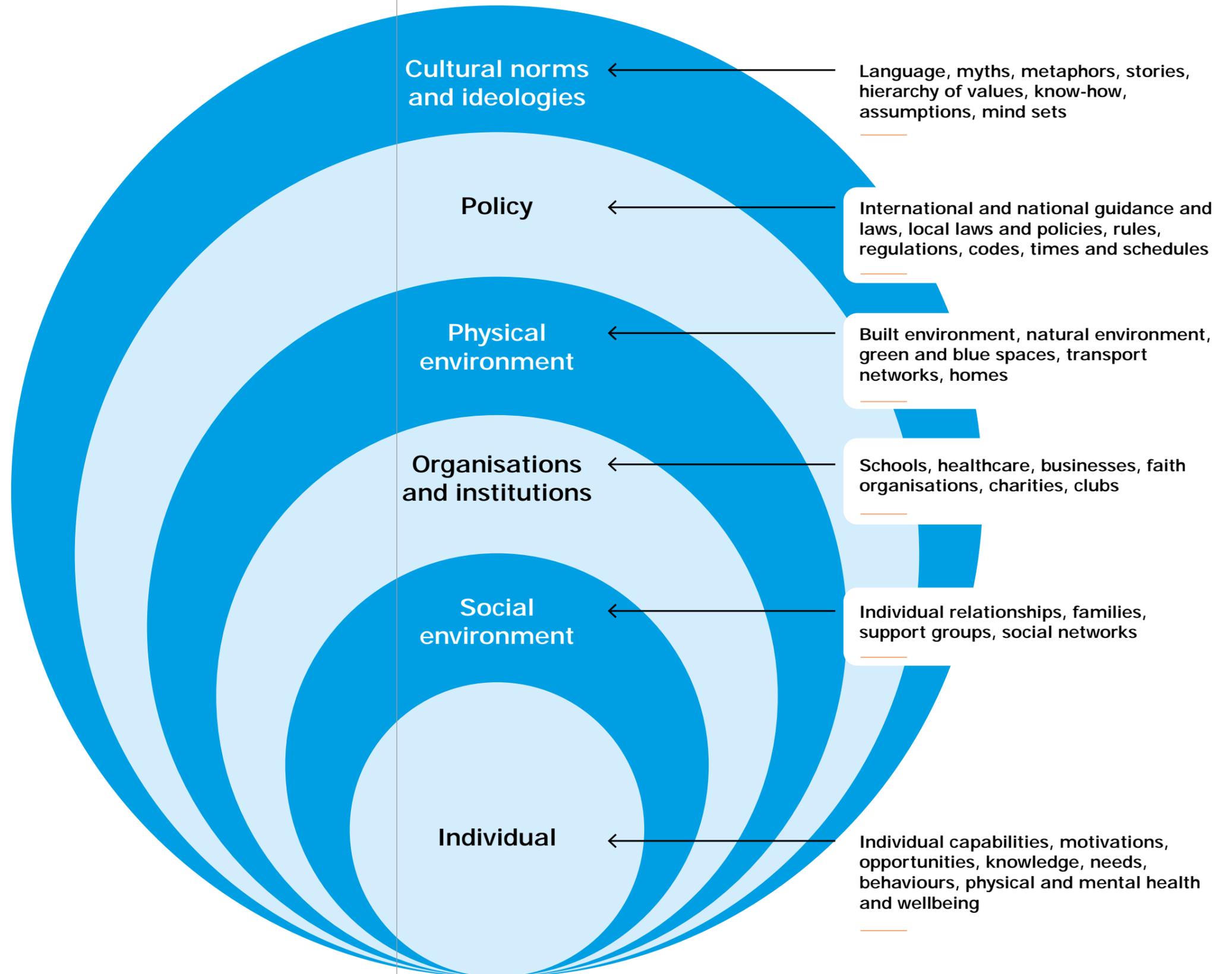
Visit [GM Local Pilot website](#)

Email: info@gmmoving.co.uk

Summary of opportunities:

It has opened up a much broader conversation about what they can see in their part of the system in terms of blockers or challenges that stop people being active. There are already a number of actions that they have committed to do themselves, but also the intelligence that we have gathered which will be incredibly useful in our conversations with broader partners and commissioners of those services.

What influences how much we move?



Social network analysis

Get Doncaster Moving Local Delivery Pilot

Social network analysis is used to understand a 'community' by mapping the relationships that connect them as a network and understanding how these interact and change over time. CFE Research developed and implemented tools to support Get Doncaster Moving to explore the physical activity network in Doncaster. The use of the tool has helped to better understand where relationships are held, identify gaps and visualise collective impact.



Name: Social network analysis

Why would I use it?

- To identify the connections (i.e. social network) between people, groups, organisations and its partners in relation to addressing physical inactivity and how these evolve.

Who would I use it with?

- The organisation, partners with which it works, and people with whom those partners collaborate with to tackle physical inactivity.

How can it be used?

- To identify and illustrate the number and nature of connections between the LDP and its partners.
- This data is collected through an online partner survey.

Advice to others

- Having a pre-existing list of contacts, from which respondents can select people they work with, can speed up the SNA survey process. However, it is good to be aware that respondents' inferences about the organisations those people work for e.g. the council, could unintentionally lead them to think the network is led by a particular organisation. This could undermine efforts to increase distributed leadership.
- People with many contacts will require quite a bit of time to complete the SNA, particularly if prefilled lists aren't used.
- It's important to note that the SNA is limited by who does and doesn't fill out the partner survey. A network for addressing physical activity is likely to be larger and denser than reported by the SNA, but this is just one potential tool to try and understand the network dynamics.
- If individuals enter contacts in open-response boxes, time will be needed to clean this data and someone with knowledge of who individuals are will be needed to support this process, if shortened names are used.
- To ensure the data is useful, consent is needed for non-anonymised data to be shared.

Putting it into practice - How the tool has been used

Who was involved?

Partners in the physical activity system in Doncaster and contacts they work with to tackle physical inactivity.

Why was this tool used?

SNA enables the identification and illustration of the physical activity system in Doncaster and how it adapts over the lifetime of the approach. It can also identify where connections are based on only one individual – therefore identifying areas of weakness if an individual left their post.

How was it done?

The director of public health distributed an online survey across members of the

Get Doncaster Moving partnership three times - July 2019, January 2020 and March 2021 - and each time partners were asked to forward it on to their own contacts. The SNA is based on questions in the partner survey which relate to:

- People with whom respondents currently collaborate with to tackle physical inactivity in Doncaster, and the organisations they work for
- Whether these professional relationships were developed before or after the commencement of the approach in 2018. The nature of the collaboration to tackle physical inactivity in Doncaster, ranging from informal working to making collective decisions
- The frequency they collaborate with the individuals identified to increase physical activity levels in Doncaster.

What it shows:

The data collected has been used to create visualisations of the social network and how it's evolved. The key elements of the visualisations are:

- Each circle represents one person who's a member of the network
- For any data which is published, the names of the people indicated by each circle have been removed to ensure both the anonymity of the survey respondents as the people they've got connections with who haven't completed the survey themselves. The Get Doncaster Moving team receive data which has named individuals so they can see who's connected to who
- The organisation an individual works for has been categorised and is represented by the colour of their circle
- The lines indicate that one person has collaborated with another
- If two people in their survey responses indicate that they've collaborated with each other, that they're 'a collaborative pair', this is shown by two lines in the network.

What was the impact?

The SNA has helped the Get Doncaster Moving team understand the influence of their work on the network of partners seeking to address physical inactivity in Doncaster. It's also illustrated potential gaps in partnership working and where relationships can be strengthened.

"It's proving to be a useful tool to demonstrate the impact of our Pilot on connecting a network of stakeholders who are contributing to our shared vision. It's also helping us to identify where the opportunities are developing for stronger collaboration."

The Get Doncaster Moving team are using the SNA findings to advance its ambitions by:

- Exploring new ways to engage individuals not already present in the social network to broaden the range of partners
- Developing more collaborative relationships between individuals in the network to reduce reliance on the LDP programme team and reduce the relationships that are based only on knowledge exchange
- Engaging with current partners, including the Get Doncaster Moving network, to increase the number of individuals championing physical activity in Doncaster
- Connecting with the outliers in the social network and grow their influence across their networks in order to enable the distribution of leadership across the system to think and act differently
- Increasing the strength of relationships in the social network so that more organisations can collaborate to tackle physical inactivity with less reliance on the Get Doncaster Moving team.

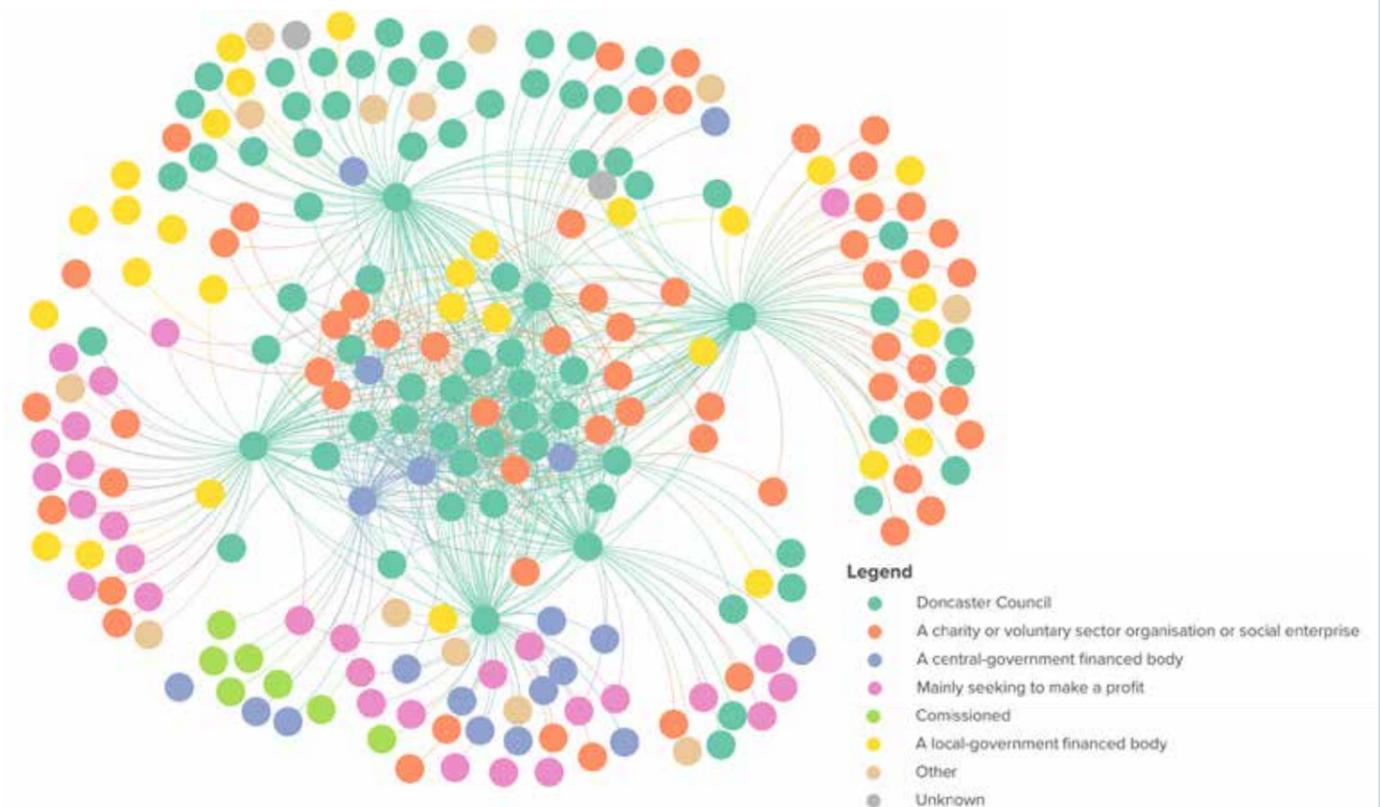
What did we learn?

Figure 1 shows the physical activity network as of January/February 2020. Key-defining features of the network are:

- There are a range of different organisation types included in the network, reflecting the wide range of partners involved in the network

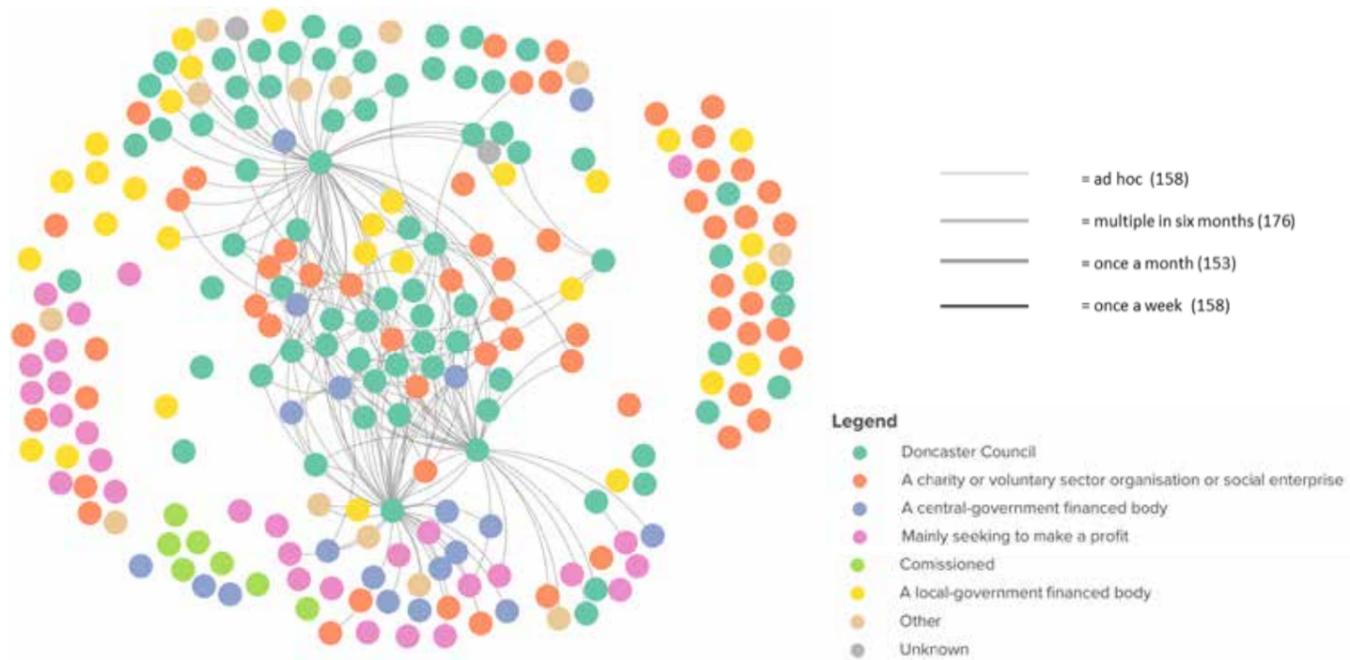
- Doncaster Council are represented in the network by the darker green circles. This highlights their influence on the network based on the large number of circles and their position close to the centre of the network
- Those individuals with the highest number of connections in the network are key members of the Get Doncaster Moving or funded LDP positions, highlighting there's still a reliance on these within the network
- There are some key individuals who are part of Doncaster Council who have a large number of connections positioned at the centre of the network who form a 'bridge' between others
- Only a small number of people who responded to the survey didn't consider themselves to be part of the physical activity network in Doncaster (indicated by individuals with no 'lines' connecting them to another person).

Figure 1: The physical activity network in Doncaster – January/February 2020. Partnership survey 2020.



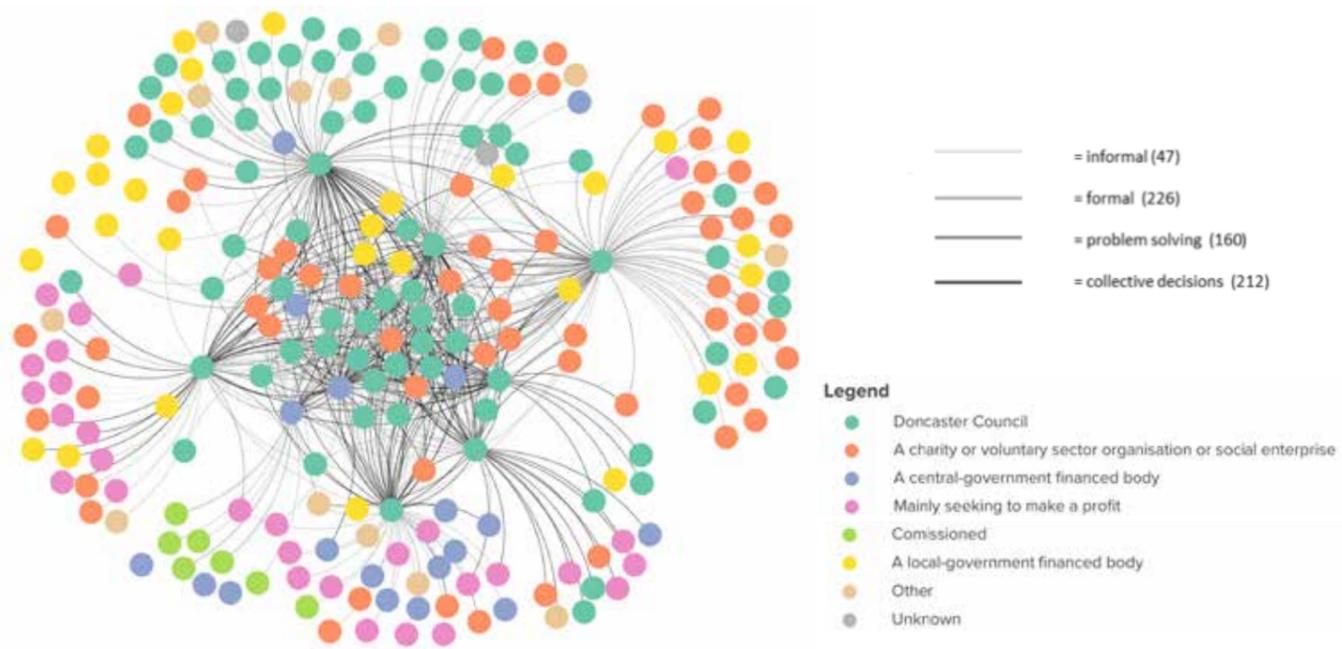
The SNA has enabled an examination of how the relationships of survey respondents have evolved. Figure 2 illustrates the connections for survey respondents who reported that their relationship to increase physical activity in Doncaster was developed prior to the LDP's establishment in July 2018. Many of the circles in the diagram don't have any lines joining them to people operating in the network showing they're new relationships. Those operating near the centre of the network are now also working with each other; with fewer 'lines' joining them in this network map when compared to Figure 1.

Figure 2: The physical activity network in Doncaster – prior to July 2018. Partnership survey 2020.



The SNA has demonstrated the nature of collaborations in terms of strength and frequency. The strength of the relationships between the people in the social network is shown in Figure 3. The darker the line the stronger respondents rated their collaboration with the person to which they're connected.

Figure 3: The physical activity network in Doncaster – January/February 2020, strength of collaboration. Partnership survey 2020.



A comparison of the strength of the connections in the network in January/February 2020 with those in July 2019 highlighted that the network has not only grown but the proportion of connections that are based on problem solving and collective decisions has also increased.

Figure 4: Comparing strength between 2019 and 2020 SNA. Partnership survey 2019 and 2020.

Strength	July 2019 (368)	February 2020 (666)
Informal	15%	8%
Formal	33%	36%
Problem solving	19%	24%
Collective decisions	33%	32%

Frequency	July 2019 (367)	February 2020 (666)
Ad hoc	30%	25%
Multiple in six months	32%	28%
Once a month	21%	23%
Once a week	17%	24%

Reflections from those involved:



- The Get Doncaster Moving team members and network partners find the output valuable for measuring change and providing the evidence that guides our next steps.
- The method for completing the survey does take time and relies on commitment from every individual to provide an extensive list of connections, while also taking the time to reflect about their relationship with each connection.
- 50% response rate does give us the evidence we need to demonstrate value and change, however it would be interesting to see if there are any differences with a response rate closer to 100%.



Summary of opportunities:

Partners can visualise the system that they're part of – fostering greater understanding of collective impact

It provides evidence and an opportunity to visualise incremental change in a number of dynamics.

It's creating opportunities to shape Doncaster's network engagement plan – to create the conditions for collective impact

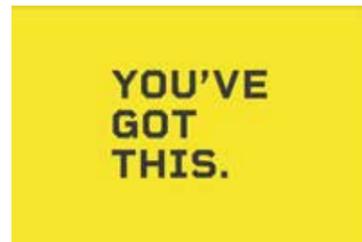
Where can I find further information?

[Get Doncaster Moving website](#)

Actor Mapping

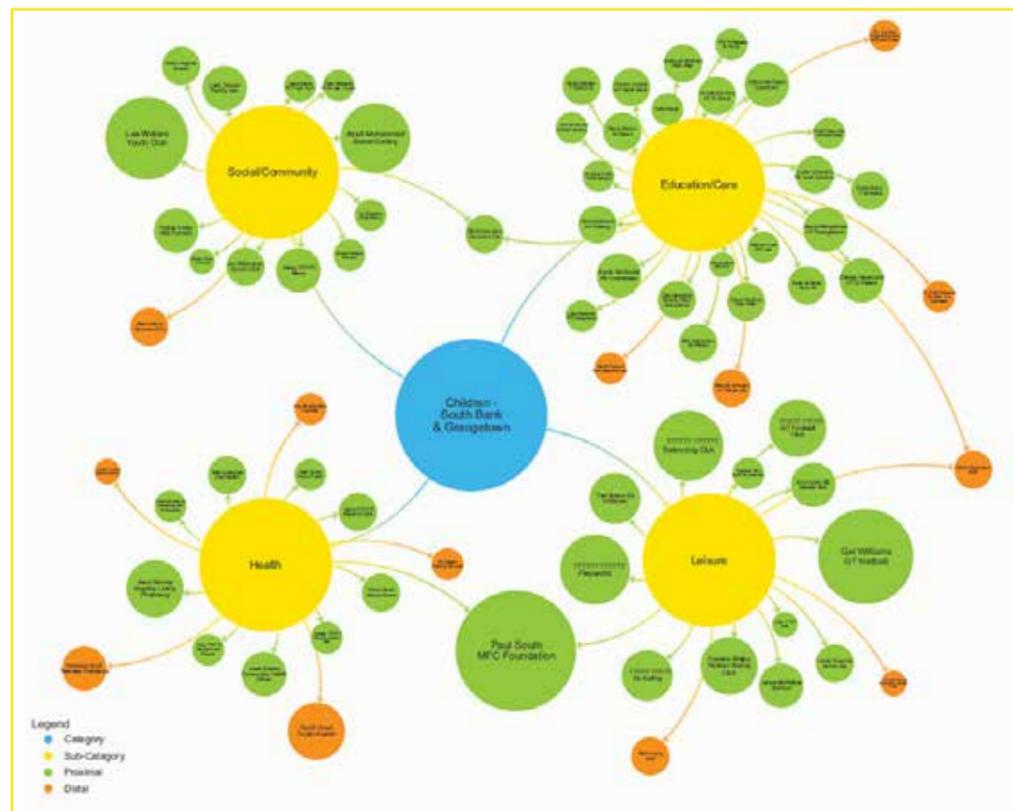
South Tees

Local Delivery Pilot



You've Got This is one of the 12 Sport England Local Delivery Pilots. In the initial phases of the pilot, we wanted to gather information and understand what was already out there, being delivered locally, and who plays a role in leading that. We wanted to know where this was happening and what community assets and buildings were relied upon when engaging with people. We wanted people to talk about their issues and concerns; and what would support them to become healthier and happier. It's impossible to know and reach everyone in a place, but we needed to gain insight into the landscape and relationships within each area. This desire to know as much about our communities as we could led us to the development of actor mapping.

We thought actor mapping could provide us with a 'visual' depiction of the key organisations and individuals that influence a topic, allowing insight into the new and current players within a system'. The purpose of actor mapping is to identify opportunities to improve a system's overall performance by, for example, strengthening weak connections or filling gaps in the system. We took an academic desk exercise <https://www.fsg.org/tools-and-resources/guide-actor-mapping> and from it created an interactive and engaging networking event. Inviting people from volunteers to professionals, inside and outside of our focus wards, enabled valuable cross sector engagement. The way in which the sessions were structured created an even playing field where everyone's contribution was valued.



Name:	Actor Mapping
Why would I use it?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To better understand your 'place and the people within it'. To highlight what's being delivered, who within the community is being supported, where things are happening, etc. To highlight where the replication is and where the gaps are. Challenging your assumptions of who is 'important' to work with in a place, and anyone who falls outside the ward boundary but plays a large roll to support local people.
Who would I use it with?	Anyone that plays a part in the community or supports residents, such as residents, councillors, community hubs staff, local VCS organisations, housing associations, active partnerships, PCSO's, health professionals, social prescribers and more....
How can it be used?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As an engagement exercise to bring people together. To highlight where provision is lacking and where there's replication. To understand who the community influencers are and who's got trust within a place/area. It can be used a number of times to see where the shifts are, where things are changing, etc. You can add an additional layer to then dig into the strength of the relationships between the actors also.
Advice to others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make the session engaging and interactive – sticky notes, big paper, get them to take ownership and add their own thoughts, etc. Allow time for discussion, networking and breaks. This can't be done in just an hour. Mix people up – discourage people sitting with people they already work with, integrate residents with 'professionals'. Make sure there is a mix of organisations, perspectives and different 'levels' of the system as well as residents. Set the scene first as actor mapping is quite an unusual concept, as it isn't about mapping the delivery, it's about mapping the 'people', you'll need to remind throughout to focus on people's names.

Putting it into practice - how the tool has been used

Who was involved?

On the occasions we delivered Actor Mapping, we had up to 30 people in the room. Anyone and everyone that plays a part in our focus wards was invited and encouraged to attend. We made it quite clear that people attending didn't necessarily have to be involved in physical activity, they just needed to support one in any way, shape or form. Having residents there was important, as it gave a completely different perspective as they would be the ones on the other end of a service.

Why was this tool used?

As new programme officers, we wanted to learn who had influence in the wards and what people thought the ward lacked, who they trusted, what they didn't like etc. We also wanted to use it to show that the pilot wanted to listen to the community and be as front facing as possible. It allowed us to build rapport and challenge our assumptions of who was 'important' in an element or place.

How was it done?

Delivered in a community space we displayed a map that covered two adjoining wards and was divided into four themes: Leisure; Education & Care; Social & Community; and Health. Some of these services and themes aren't universal, so one side of the board was for adults and the other side, for children. People were asked to identify individuals located in the wards that delivered any services or support within these themes. We also asked for services and support that may be delivered outside of the ward, but that people travelled to, such as Children's Mental Health Services. We asked how many people in the room knew this person and what they delivered in the community.

This gave us a strong indication of their influence and reach, which was reflected in the final map.

What was the impact?

- The resulting map produced from the workshop highlighted the key stakeholders in the place and their level of influence. The map also highlighted the level of activity within a specific theme within the wards and this can be mapped over a period of time to show changes in the 'system' on the ground.
- By using Actor Mapping we've created new relationships and introduced people to others that they hadn't met before. It's created an awareness of the gaps in community provision or highlighted duplication and potential for greater collaboration.
- It meant people went away and met outside of the room, it informed people that relationships needed to be reviewed, and it also acted as a resource to support people with future projects, funding bids and ways of working differently.
- Created a clearer direction for the YGT Core team to have more conversations with the influencers in the community, or identify who could 'fill the gaps'.
- Highlighted to the health professionals the gaps within the community sector to support people with Type II Diabetes.

What did we learn?

That too many groups/services work in isolation and that people don't look for new working relationships – they just work with the same people and then ultimately get the same outcomes.

The mapping has driven our consultation and relationship building with organisations, and this is something that should be repeated on a regular basis to see how the system is shifting.

As a team, we also learnt that the final map has become a really useful and powerful visual aid, that we've shared and allowed people to use for whatever they need it for.

Things to consider:

- Go with the flow of the session – you'll have it planned to the exact minute, but go where the energy is.
- Expect people to drop out and for people to not understand initially.
- Plan well and advertise early, you're expecting people to come for FREE so make sure you sell it as a great way to learn more about the community and what's going on currently.

Where can I find further information?

Contact the YGT core team – we've got a number of photos and presentations that we can share that highlights how to run a session and how it looks.

[You've Got This website](#)

Email: hello@youvegotthis.org.uk

Reflections from those involved:



This is a different way of doing things and a great way to meet a lot of people all at once. It was visual and a lot more engaging than mapping by yourself and searching for contacts and services online.



Also in this series:



Understanding value

Understand the lived experience

Distributed leadership

Capacity and time to reflect

Test and learn

Power shift

Having the right conversations

**Common purpose/
shared value**

Sport England
21 Bloomsbury Street
London WC1B 3HF

[sportengland.org](https://www.sportengland.org)