



## Physical Activity and Community Engagement (PACE) Network

**Case study:  
Withernsea's PACE  
Network**

# Withernsea's Physical Activity and Community Engagement (PACE) Network

## The challenge

At the outset, Withernsea faced a significant challenge: a community hesitant to engage due to mistrust and a lack of understanding of the long-term benefits of collaboration.

The community's reluctance was compounded by a historical lack of involvement in local decision-making processes, a feeling of being done 'to', not 'with'. The residents had seen little return on past promises, which led to initial resistance.

## The solution

### Building trust and stakeholder engagement

The early work focused on creating an inclusive environment where both community organisations and residents could come together around a shared vision: to build a healthier, more active Withernsea.

The partnership began with a small, committed group of local health practitioners, community leaders and residents who worked together to articulate clear, achievable goals. We focused on creating tangible, visible changes to demonstrate that this was not just another initiative but a sustainable community-led movement.

This forward-thinking approach to the future governance of Active Withernsea led to the establishment of the Physical Activity and Community Engagement (PACE) Network.

Central to PACE's success was the creation of 'action spaces' – informal yet focused networks where community members could explore, share ideas and co-design solutions to the barriers preventing physical activity.

These action spaces acted as incubators for innovation, allowing residents to propose activities, identify challenges and collaborate on the resources needed to make these actions a reality.



## Stakeholders involved

The PACE group gradually expanded to include local businesses, schools, the health sector, and even local council representatives. What began as a small circle of dedicated residents and stakeholders quickly grew into a broader, more diverse network, each with a unique contribution to make.

By having local people at the core, we ensured the ideas and solutions were reflective of lived experiences and relevant to the community's specific challenges.





## Impacts and benefits as a result of these interventions and new ways of working

This has created an opportunity to use this moving forward to create a more integrated approach to community health across the region.

What started as a grassroots effort in Withernsea can be part of a wider movement that encourages other communities to think beyond and focus on systemic, community-led solutions that make physical activity an integral part of everyday life.

Furthermore, the PACE initiative has influenced local policy. Through continuous dialogue with local council and health professionals, PACE has demonstrated the effectiveness of a community-driven approach, encouraging more funding and support for local health initiatives, and enabling more tailored, local solutions to emerge.

PACE members highlighted that in previous years Withernsea has been overlooked for funding opportunities. However, PACE's influence has helped to secure one third of the Do It for East Yorkshire funds, which equates to nearly £93,000. These funds give an opportunity for local people to lead the way in creating a positive impact towards physical activity.

The influence of PACE is not confined to Withernsea. The model has created a ripple effect across the wider East Riding area.

As local leaders in Withernsea became recognised as experts in community health and activity, they were invited to share their experiences with other communities. These leaders now serve as mentors, advising within East Riding on key topic areas.

**For example:** PACE – AID, are developing an East Riding model of insight capture to inform the culture and leisure sector, which incorporates more insight from people living with disabilities.



## The learning

- The action spaces helped to develop a new generation of **local leaders**. Residents – who might have once been overlooked – emerged as community leaders and experts. These individuals, who brought invaluable knowledge from their own lived experiences, were given the opportunity to shape and drive local initiatives. Their involvement in PACE helped to build local ownership, ensuring that changes were sustained over time.
- By providing a **platform for collective action**, PACE has made it easier for organisations to connect with residents, tap into local knowledge, and deliver more effective, place-based programmes.
- PACE has facilitated a model of **collaborative impact**, where no single group is responsible for all the work, but each has a role to play in advancing the shared goal of a more active community.

## What's next?

As PACE continues to grow, we've worked to ensure that this model is not just a passing trend but a sustainable way of operating.

The partnership we've established is grounded in a shared vision. The leadership that has emerged from Withernsea is now embedded in the local infrastructure, ensuring that the work of PACE continues well into the future.

In summary, PACE is not just an initiative; it is a new way of thinking about how communities can come together to solve health and activity challenges.

By starting small, building trust, and fostering leadership from within, PACE has transformed Withernsea into a model of community-led change.

The integrated approach it fosters – where physical activity is woven into the very fabric of daily life – offers valuable lessons for other communities looking to tackle inactivity in sustainable, meaningful ways.

Take a look at [East Riding Place Partners' top 10 takeaways from their journey to date](#).

November 2025

Sport England  
SportPark  
Oakwood Drive  
Loughborough LE11 3QF  
[sportengland.org](https://sportengland.org)

