

# **Active Communities Partnership – Birmingham & Solihull**

## **Local Delivery Pilot – Organisation Responsible**

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## **Brief background about the place**

The local delivery pilot brings together two local authorities; Solihull & Birmingham working collaboratively to share knowledge and develop best practice across their administrative boundaries.

The pilot is looking to be able to demonstrate a significant shift in physical activity and community activism, so that people become more physically and socially active. The approach is a whole systems approach that ultimately shifts power to communities, making them more resilient and better connected.

The project focuses on six pilot areas covering deprived wards across both local authorities – (1) Handsworth, Lozells, Aston, (2) Sparkbrook, Nechells, Edgbaston, (3) Kingstanding, Stockland Green, Erdington, (4) Bordesley Green, Washwood Heath, South Yardley, (5) Shard End, Smiths Wood, Kingshurst & Fordbridge, Chelmsley Wood, (6) Brandwood, Solihull Lodge

Key to the success of the pilot work will be the shared vision, leadership and collaboration across Birmingham and Solihull. The challenge is around working across two administrative boundaries, recognising that local communities use and access services seamlessly between Birmingham & Solihull (particularly in bordering areas). The principles of the pilot will be to put communities at the heart of the decision-making process, so that delivery is based on their needs and that they are part of sustaining activities and interventions. The wards targeted have the highest levels of deprivation and with this comes challenges around low levels of physical activity, high levels of obesity, social isolation and significant health inequalities.

## **What is the Birmingham and Solihull Pilot trying to achieve?**

It is a community asset based development model aiming to achieve the following outcomes:

- The “unusual suspects” living in seldom heard communities and places, become more physically and civically active, reporting improved health and quality of life.
- Through activity, co-creation and facilitation, citizens will have a sense of place and belonging, participation and engagement, resulting in invigorated, strong and resilient communities.
- Sport England and our stakeholders have clearer insight into the impact and effectiveness of a whole system approach to tackling inactivity with citizens, community and place, through integrated data collection and analysis of past, current and future programmes.

## **Who is the target audience and why?**

- **Later Life: Aged 60+**, social isolation, fear of crime and less active, resulting in greater demand for adult social care, mental health services and acute healthcare.

- **Women and Young Families**, sedentary lifestyle, time and cost constraints, resulting in a need for mental health and social support networks, associated health risks with lack of activity.
- **Under 15 years of age**, sedentary lifestyle, obesity issues and lack of active participation, resulting in health risks and self-esteem.
- **BAME communities**, cultural barriers and language skills, resulting in issues around community cohesion, exclusion and discrimination.

## **What has been happening in the Birmingham and Solihull Local Delivery Pilot?**

The pilot area seeks to create sustained behaviour change through an ‘active citizen model’. This involves establishing a ‘Local Collaborative Action Network’ in each pilot area. The role of this network will be to consult / engage with communities, map what is currently out there, support, co-create, share intelligence, identify and remove barriers, implement a programme that shifts the norm to healthier behaviour. They also refer to this phase as ‘prototyping’ – an experimental way of exploring and getting feedback from stakeholders allowing you to evolve and iterate your idea; fail and learn quickly; scale up what works. This could include scaling up existing programmes such as Active Parks, Active Streets, Big Birmingham Bikes, BeActive, Run Birmingham.

The first ‘prototyping’ event was held in Handsworth (Birmingham) on the 18<sup>th</sup> April for pilot area 1 (which covers Handsworth, Lozells & Aston). Over 30 stakeholders attended ranging from the emergency services, faith groups, charities, healthcare trust, arts organisations, local residents. The event certainly engaged with the ‘unusual suspects’. This event was a follow up to a consultation event held as part of the LDP bid process. It played back to stakeholders what they had originally said they needed in order to become an ‘Active Community’:

- Connectivity.
- Library of Things (physical space which offers opportunity to borrow/offer items like lawnmower, tools, play equipment etc ... and a virtual space where you can borrow/offer skills, capacity etc ...).
- Knowledge Transfer & Skill Sharing (includes workforce development / volunteering).

An Active Street event in Handsworth was delivered and was well attended. A further update on what has been happening in Handsworth can be found [here](#).

A stakeholder engagement event took place in North Solihull on 9<sup>th</sup> July, which is beginning to inform delivery.

## **Emerging thoughts and learning so far**

- Residents / stakeholders agree that funding is a distraction and doesn’t actually address the root cause of physical inactivity.
- People may live in poverty, but they are rich in so many other ways – sense of community and belonging is still strong – this needs empowering. As one resident put it “We need to put life back in to our communities”.
- Reinforces the notion of asset based development – communities are more than just bricks and mortar – people need to feel connected and have a voice.

- Throughout consultation, money or timescale was never mentioned by any stakeholders – sense of feeling that they are part of this programme and not being ‘done to’ for a specific period of time, and then being forgotten about.
- Issues with ‘the system’ were already emerging – lack of community access to schools and religious facilities at weekends / out of hours; boating lake on Handsworth park too expensive to use; cost of meeting safeguarding / data protection requirements for volunteers; communication (not knowing what is happening or where).
- Dedicated capacity in communities is needed if we are to meaningfully engage with these communities. Experience has shown that this capacity takes time to be trusted and needs to come from within these communities.

### **What is happening over the next 6 months**

- Recruitment of programme capacity has now been completed with the following posts being appointed to: 2 x Operations Managers; Insight Manager; Programme Administrator. Individuals should be in post by September. A further post of ‘Community Practice Lead’ is also being recruited to.
- Work will continue to bring Solihull up to same level in terms of data collection and insight platforms.
- Active Communities will finalise their evaluation framework and seek to procure an evaluation partner/s to support this and continued data collection / evaluation and monitoring progress.
- The Governance structure will also be finalised with the creation of a Member led ‘Sponsors Board’ to provide strategic direction and leadership across the LDP work and wider ‘system’.

### **Further links to find out more information:**

For further information on Active Parks, Active Streets, Run Birmingham, Big Birmingham Bikes programmes visit:

<https://theaws.co.uk/activities/active-communities/>

<http://www.solihullactive.co.uk/>

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