

LDP Review of Community Hubs and Community Infrastructure

Guidelines for future investment

Context

LDP partners from across the tier two pilot areas, alongside Core Team representatives, have been discussing the existing Community Hubs (also known as 'Community Spaces') and Community Infrastructure budget lines.

In the LDP budget reprofile which has taken place in 2020, the remaining budget allocation available for these two headings up to 2025 is:

Community Spaces – £840,000 (£280,000 each for Basildon, Colchester, Tendring).

Community Infrastructure – £810,000 (£270,000 each for Basildon, Colchester, Tendring).

Community Hubs/Spaces – What do we mean?

- Spaces set within a priority geographical locality that could be used to enable local communities and partners to deliver against the aims and objectives of the ELDP.
- Spaces can be indoor or outdoor or a mixture of both. Spaces can be a building or a park.
- Spaces may be accessible already, but will likely not be or are under-utilised, especially by the local community.
- Community spaces can be used in any myriad of ways, but must have a clear line of sight for physical activity.
- Play and outdoor leisure amenities including play areas, outdoor gyms, skate parks, ball courts and pump tracks.
- Unlocking the potential of local assets, including streets for play and PA. This needs to be done where there is energy for this in communities-
- Under-utilised facilities and amenities in the heart of priority geographical communities such as schools, community centres and faith buildings.

Community Spaces - Learnt Knowledge

- There are clear opportunities for utilising schools in priority geographical areas to open them for community use before, during, after, at weekends and holiday periods. This is an important model that is scalable.
- Priority LDP geographical areas can often be underserved by accessible community facilities.
- These areas are often at the periphery of main town centres and the like, where many core support services are delivered from and health, wellbeing and leisure opportunities are more readily available.
- Access to one's own transport is often lower in these communities with public transport being infrequent and often deemed expensive as well as difficult to navigate with young children or caring responsibilities. Public transport often requires the need to use more than one bus to make relatively short journeys.

- Such areas are traditionally served by schools and faith venues which are traditionally under-utilised for local community led activities. Where community facilities are for hire, they are often booked by more affluent groups from outside the community.
- Existing community halls are traditionally booked on long term arrangements for the same times each week, meaning that they are very often not accessible to the local community.
- There is real scope for building on the appetite of local communities for 'local solutions to local problems'.
- Spaces / localities need to be identified as assets for what is strong and can be built on. Data and insight need to ensure that it is a priority area however in terms of being a community challenged by high levels of deprivation, disadvantage, and inequalities.

Community Infrastructure - What do we mean?

- Citizen and community led – giving permission to local people to identify the physical improvements they want to their streets, buildings and open spaces – and giving them the power and finances to make it happen easily and quickly
- Small or medium changes and additions to community spaces (indoor or outdoor) that help unlock potential to PA and behaviour change e.g. street lighting / strategically placed street furniture / foliage reduction or planting / bike storage, fixing leaky roofs etc.
- Community infrastructure could also be digital if it leads to the same changes set above. For example, Street Tag is being tested in disadvantaged areas of Basildon and is providing the digital infrastructure to encourage people to be active and collect digital points for incentives and prizes.
- Signage and wayfinding that influence and make easier, PA behaviours.
- Building capability and capacity in our whole system workforce to ensure that effective community infrastructure is advocated for and planned in relevant schemes.

Community Infrastructure - Learnt Knowledge

- Understanding the lived experience of local people is crucial to understanding what is needed locally to make a difference to people becoming more active. Gathering regular insight from local people in a trusted two-way conversation is important to ensure that any investment is community led rather than top-down led.
- Evidence from other LDPs and other Active Partnerships and Sport England funded programmes tells us that the best way to invest in community infrastructure is through ensuring effective co-design with local communities who know an area best and what will unlock health, wellbeing and physical activity opportunities in a locality.
- The environment ones lives in can be a limiter to PA. This can be linked to accessibility (within it or traveling to it), crime or the fear of crime or other similar reasons.
- Often small adaptations to a space can unlock its potential to be used by for PA.
- Currently we do not hold the level of knowledge that we would like on what small changes would unlock this behaviour and support with data and insight is important in allowing this.

Recommendations

- The opportunities for unleashing the potential for community use and PA through usage of school facilities and amenities in priority geographical communities should be prioritised as these are real high quality community assets in areas often lacking such spaces at a local level. We know that people identify more often with their local 'natural neighbourhood' and

focussing on the power of 'local' through these spaces is an excellent opportunity for allowing local solutions and movements.

- These two budget lines should align with the budget line for 'community development' and the budget line for 'community chest' to make a cohesive approach to a 'Strengthening Communities' work stream. This LDP approach should align where possible to the significant Strengthening Communities work being undertaken by key stakeholders such as ECC, district local authorities, CCGs, and CVS's.
- That we should look to 'double-down' on areas with the greatest inequalities, greatest deprivation, and greatest inactivity, focussing on the IMD localities in the bottom 20% nationally.
- That a research piece is commissioned to better understand community level insight and 'expertise by experience' as to what community spaces and infrastructure needs to change / be added to unlock community PA and social movements. This should be a mixture of behavioural insight and community engagement.
- All investments should be run through an 'infrastructure lens' whereby we seek to take a proactive view of what community infrastructure projects may enhance a scheme e.g. a community cycling project would be strengthened by a review of the cycle path networks, fixing pot holes, improving lighting, signage and wayfinding etc.
- That alongside this investment pot, we also look to take the learning and recommendations into our promotion and review of micro-grants.
- Funding for play and leisure amenities should not be fully funded by the LDP, but should look to enhance planned schemes with significant investment attributed to it already. The funding should look to enhance schemes from the usual "mundane" amenities to those that enhance play value and drive greater PA and family participation.

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