



Hartpury Active Essex Systems Evaluation: Final Report - January 2023



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Guidance for navigating this report

This report reflects a significant volume of work that incorporates the three key phases of realist evaluation, namely the processes of **programme theory development, testing and refinement**. Readers of this report and those interested in this work are advised to also read our **Bitesize report** submitted in July 2022 that identifies our phase 1 findings of this work, and the '**Headlines report**' (January 2022) that acts as an executive summary to this overall work. In navigating this report, we have presented our work across four key sections:

- **Section 1:** Introduces the evaluation, outlines the key evaluation approach and outlines the key areas of focus under exploration which were: Essex Pedal Power, Find Your Active, ActivAte/Holiday Activity and Food programme and Asset Based Community Development.
- **Section 2:** Introduces phase 1 of our realist evaluation presenting the system and impact theories that were developed for the four deep dives areas of focus. (This phase is also supported by our '**Bitesize report**' published in July, 2022).
- **Section 3:** Introduces the key headlines from the initial testing and refinements of the programme theories and the 'deep dives' and social return on investment outline across the areas of focus (Please also see our '**Headlines**' report published in January 2023). We suggest that the audience may wish to navigate to the deep dive areas of focus relevant to them (**3.1: EPP, 3.2: ABCD 3.3: FYA, 3.4: ActivAte/HAF, 3.5: SROI**).
- **Section 4:** Introduces the key learnings and refinements from this work.

Report sections

- **Section 1:** Introduction, aims and context for 'Deep Dives' (Pg. 4)
- **Section 2:** Phase 1 – Developing programme theories for the four 'Deep Dive' areas of focus (Pg.17)
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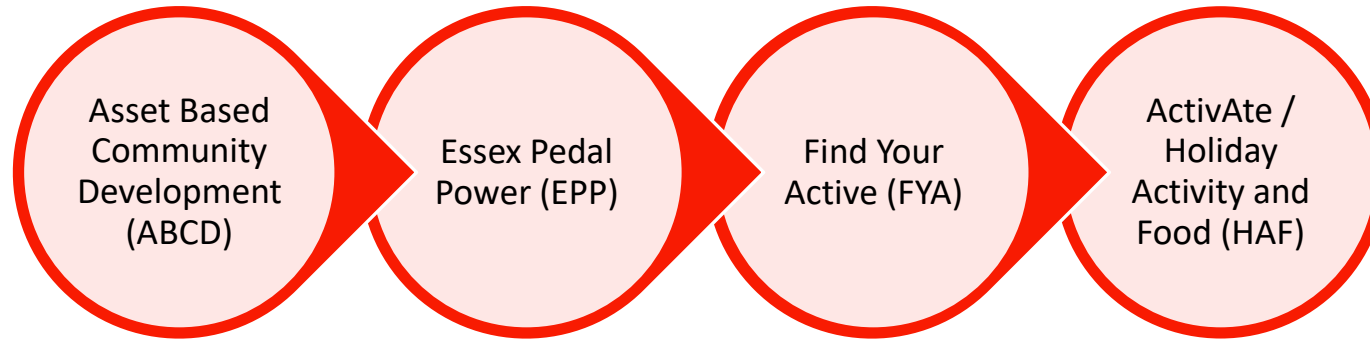


Section 1

Introduction, aims and context for 'Deep Dives'

Introductory comment

In January 2022, the Sports Business Hub at Hartpury University was commissioned by Active Essex to carry out a 'deep dive' evaluation of four areas of central focus to the work of Active Essex. These were:



These are targeted towards areas of deprivation and link with some of the activities associated with the Essex LDP and wider Active Essex landscape. Our evaluation had a strong interest in capturing how 'physical activity' (PA) can be hardwired into the system. We are also aware that system change is complex. Three questions were central to the evaluation:

- How and why do these areas of focus contribute to system change?
- How and why do these areas of focus bring about individual behaviour change outcomes for those involved?
- How and why do these areas of focus create a social return on investment for Active Essex?

Active Essex and our four areas of focus



Asset Based Community Development (ABCD)

- Works to find assets in the areas that already exist in communities. A BCD encourages people to use their gifts and talents alongside the local resources that are available. ABCD facilitates connections between people with the same interests.



Essex Pedal Power (EPP)

- Gives residents over the age of 12 the opportunity to gain access to a free bicycle. The ambition is to increase a person's access to opportunities (such as employment, education, training or volunteering), as well as increasing physical activity as part of the process.



Find Your Active (FYA)

- Works to help residents within the community find activities that suit their physical and mental needs. An online database is one of the key resources used to achieve this as it shows what is happening locally or online, so that people have the best chance of being able to join in.



ActivAte/HAF

- Provides food and activities such as sports or arts and crafts during school holidays for primary and secondary school aged children. Those children who are entitled to free school meals are eligible to take part in ActivAte/HAF.

Evaluation aims

1. Conduct a detailed exploration or *deep dive* into the four areas of focus to understand how and why they influence physical activity within communities and decision making by stakeholders within key systems in Essex.
2. Conduct a social return on investment (SROI) exploration, which will seek to place a forecasted social value on the contribution of the four programmes within Active Essex.

Evaluation questions

01

How and why do these four areas of focus contribute to system change?

02

How and why do these areas of focus bring about individual behaviour change outcomes for those involved?

03

How and why do these areas of focus create a social return on investment for Active Essex?

What follows is an overview of each area of focus which are included in the 'deep dives' before outlining our evaluation approach.



Deep Dive 1

Active Essex: Asset Based Community Development

Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) is an approach being utilised by Active Essex to put the community and its citizens at the forefront of building a healthier and inclusive community. Also referred to as 'Place Based Working' this is a key priority for Active Essex where 'inside out' approaches (communities take control and lead based on their connection and knowledge of place) are taken opposed to outside in approaches (where communities are not involved in decision making in their place).

The approach focuses on communities being best placed to understand their own needs and the ways in which they can support those needs. This is by focusing on the assets in the community to help ensure sustainable community development. An ABCD approach can help to surface assets in the areas that already exist in communities encouraging community members to use their gifts and talents alongside the local resources that are available. ABCD facilitates connections between people with the same interests.

Active Essex are committed to ABCD as reflected by 'Nurture Development' training for staff to embody ABCD ways of working. ABCD is also central to Sport England's (2022) Uniting the movement strategy. This is a 10-year vision to transform lives and communities through sport and physical activity. This includes mobilisation within communities to reimagine how movement, sport and activity can be central within people's lives.

Deep Dive 2

Active Essex: Find Your Active

Find You Active (FYA) is a behaviour change approach that identifies opportunities to find physically active provision within communities that suit the interests and needs of community members or residents. The focus is on promoting the benefits of physical activity and movement with the aim of increasing the level of physical activity, whilst not being prescriptive about engaging in "sports" or "exercise" in the traditional sense. People who are inactive currently may not identify with historical conceptualisations of being "sporty" for example.

Active Essex uses a website with an integrated activity finder tool that highlights opportunities across Essex as well as the provision of online resources. This means that community members can engage with activities or groups that are local to them. It is also promoted through Community Connectors who are staff that seek to connect community members to physical activities that are suitable for them. The programme promotes the stories of FYA ambassadors to hopefully inspire others to be more physically active. This enables people to identify with the concept that "anyone can take part in this activity". There is an FYA Fund that will fund people or groups to start new activities or increase participation amongst (previously) inactive target groups.

Deep Dive 3

Active Essex: Essex Pedal Power

Essex Pedal Power is a scheme that provides free bikes and equipment to residents in disadvantaged wards within Essex. While the scheme is expanding across Essex, the deep dive evaluation focuses on the areas of Clacton and Jaywick as this is where the programme was launched in 2021.

Essex Pedal Power is a multi-agency programme which seeks to use cycling as a way to increase physical activity levels, provide access to employment, education or key local services, and to improve the overall wellbeing of those that live in these targeted disadvantaged communities. As part of its approach, Essex Pedal Power also provides free opportunities for residents to learn how to ride a bike, go on a ride led by qualified instructors, and access help to maintain their bike.

Deep Dive 4

Active Essex: ActivAte/Holiday Activity and Food

Essex Activate is the Holiday Activity and Food approach that is delivered across Essex during the school holidays. It is funded by the Department for Education, with the aim of supporting children who are entitled to free school meals during the holidays. This approach also involves enrichment activities that are fun and involve movement and being physically active. The programme seeks to provide each child with a nutritious meal and healthy drink options.

In Essex, there is additional funding provided by Essex County Council so that families that are low income and not entitled to free school meals can still sign their children up to participate. This inclusive approach means that parents and carers can also benefit from the additional support they may need through the school holidays.

Our approach to realist evaluation

Realist evaluations explain how and why programmes work to produce certain outcomes. This is different from outcome-focused evaluations that provide insight into programme outcome and impact, though may not be able to explain how or why they work. Realist evaluation also takes into consideration the importance of 'context'. This refers to the social, environmental and personal circumstances that may lead and influence people to make certain decisions. This is crucial in social change programmes, which will involve the interaction of human decisions with programme resources (called 'mechanisms' of change).

With our approach, we have worked collaboratively with Active Essex, following specific principles called 'collaborative approaches to evaluation or CAE' to get to the bottom of how people involved in the design and leadership of systems and communities respond to the resources provided in a programme to establish 'what works for whom, in what circumstances and why'.

The understanding that realist evaluations generate is important because it can support learning, improvement and strategic direction towards sustainability. These insights are also important because they can help to identify or forecast how and why outcomes may come about that represent the social value of a programme or approach. In this evaluation, we have built an initial attempt to forecast the social value across the four focus areas, where outcomes may be similar.



**Evaluation
method**

Collaborative approaches to evaluation (CAE)

Our evaluation approach involved significant collaborative efforts with stakeholders, which embraced the following principles.

CAE Principle

Summary of principle

Clarify motivation for collaboration

The principle encourages the development of a thorough understanding of the justification for collaboration.

Foster meaningful inter-professional relationships

The principle inspires the development of quality working relationships between evaluators and programme stakeholders, with open communication.

Develop shared programme understanding

Is the programme commonly understood in terms of its processes and outcomes? This principle promotes the explication of the programme logic situated within context.

Promote appropriate participatory processes

This principle encourages deliberate reflection on the form that the collaborative process will take in practice with regard to specific roles, and responsibilities of the stakeholders.

Monitor and respond to resource availability

Participating stakeholders are a significant resource and consideration of their capacity to engage, accounting for competing demands of their role is an important factor to consider.

Monitor evaluation progress and quality

The principle underscores the critical importance of data quality assurance and professional standards.

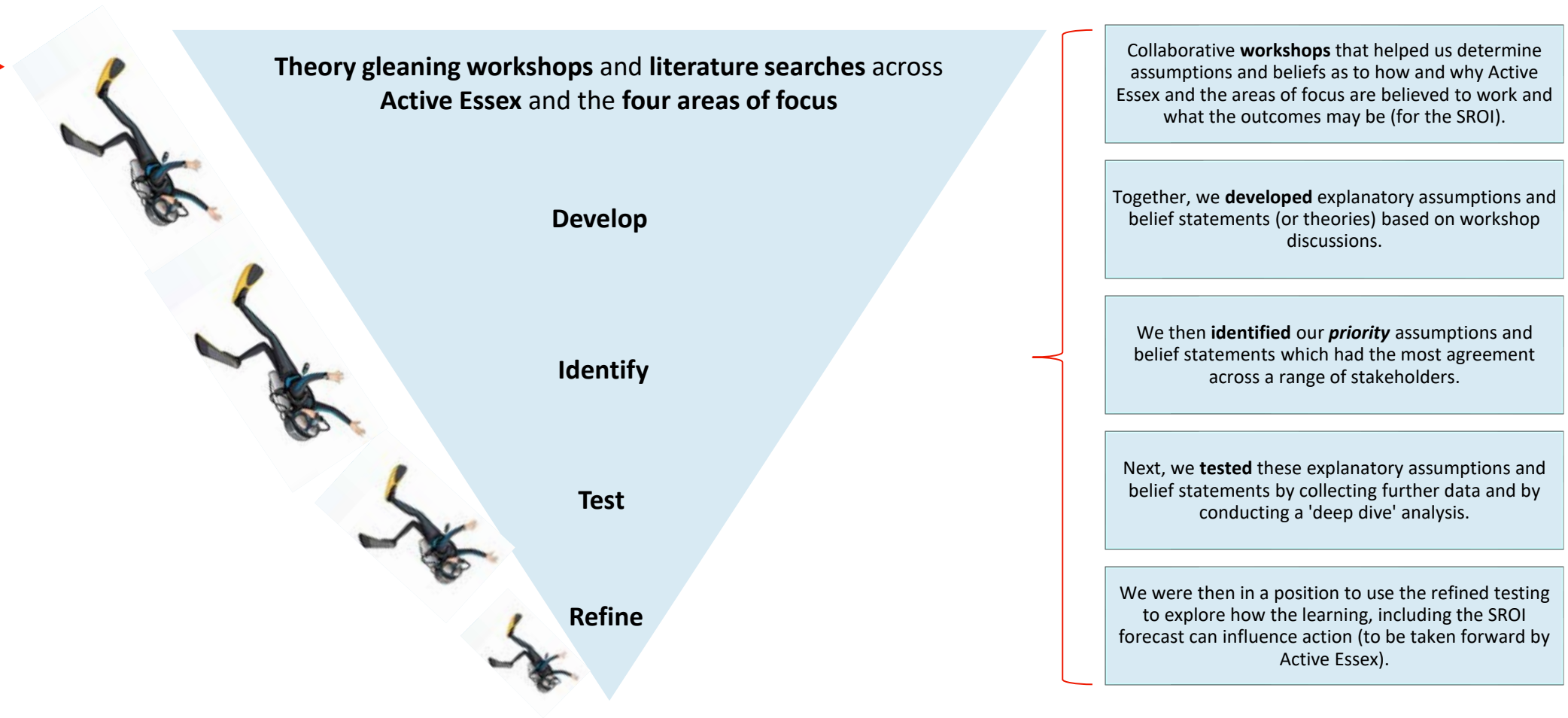
Promote evaluative thinking

The principle inspires the active and conscious development of an organizational cultural appreciation for evaluation and its power to leverage social change.

Follow through to realise use

This principle promotes the conscious process of sense-making and the consideration of the potential for learning, capacity building and other practical and transformative consequences of the evaluation.

What is a realist evaluation 'deep dive' process and what did we do?



As the diagram illustrates, the deep dive process is a collaborative venture that involves 3 phases:

1. Developing key explanatory assumptions and beliefs and identifying priorities of focus across ABCD, EPP, FYA and ActivAte/HAF.
2. Using methods to test and explore these explanatory assumptions and beliefs.
3. Refining with the ambition to learn, improve practice and develop strategic direction within and between the organisations involved with Active Essex.

What do we mean by the term 'system' and what does this mean for Active Essex?

- A 'System' describes the entire physical and working environment, including the people in power such as those who influence policies and make decisions on behalf of the community; as well as those who live, work, or study in the community, such as residents and leaders, managers, the workforce, and volunteers who are connected to organisations.
- When thinking about a systems approach to physical activity, we refer to a definition provided by the Sport England's National Evaluation and Learning Partnership. This proposes that a systems approach to physical activity may be seen as what leaders, managers, the workforce, volunteers, and individuals in the community might do to build on strengths and remove barriers to enable people to move more in everyday life. This also recognises the connections between these actions too.
- Here, we are keen to understand and explore how these programmes / areas of focus contribute to and influence the formation of new structures, beliefs and goals of decision makers (who we also call system architects).

What do we mean by the term 'impact' in relation to Active Essex?

- 'Impact' can be understood as the events and actions that lead from the initial engagement with an approach to the short, medium and long-term outcomes which may be achieved.
- Contexts and resources may influence these outcomes. Similarly, there are many other reasons (or mechanisms) that may exert an influence too. For example, this includes the level of engagement a person commits to physical activity within an approach, their personal beliefs and assumptions and their own actions within the local environment and system that they live within.
- Here, we are keen to understand how these areas of focus contribute to physical activity and other social and behavioural outcomes for people in Essex. We are also interested in the financial cost of programme delivery and the social returns (or outcomes/impact) that may be achieved through these investments.

Clarifying terminology

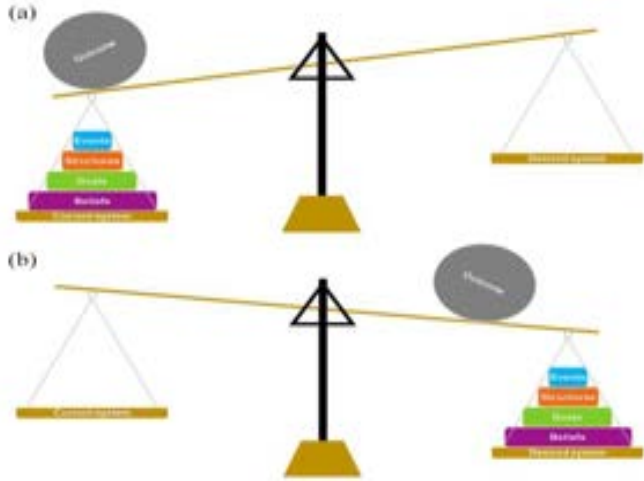
References:

Shearn, Vincent, Haines, Harris and Broom (2022). Sport England National Evaluation and Learning Partnership: Evaluation, Learning and Communications Framework.

Nobles JD, Radley D, Mytton OT. The Action Scales Model: A conceptual tool to identify key points for action within complex adaptive systems. *Perspectives in Public Health*. 2022;142(6):328-337.

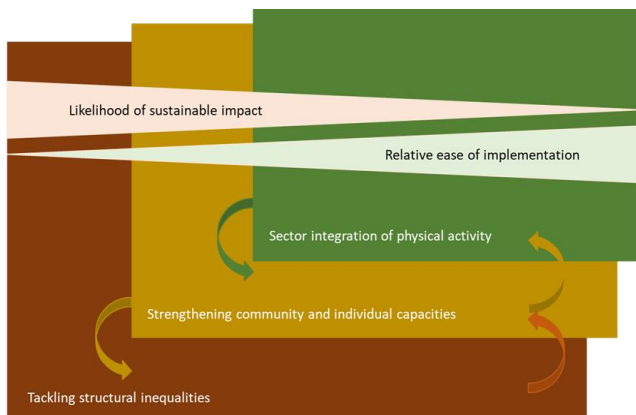
Understanding and interpreting the system

In building our understanding of system change in Essex we have drawn upon two conceptual models to help us test and explore the theories of focus in each deep dive process.



We have been guided by the Action Scales Model (ASM) developed by Nobles et al (2021). The ASM helped us to think about how and to what extent events, structures, goals and beliefs were being influenced through the four areas of focus. The ASM enabled us to examine any changes in structures, goals and beliefs that were emerging in approaches to physical activity. In essence, we explored any plausible contributions that Active Essex were making towards hardwiring physical activity.

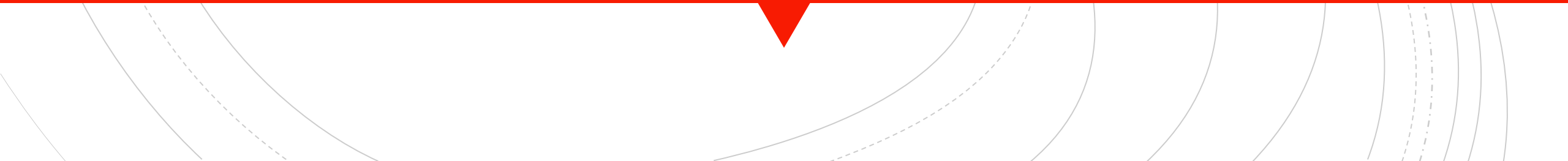
The NELP (National Evaluation and Learning Partnership) conceptual model has been an important tool to inform our understanding of hardwiring physical activity (Shearn et al, 2022). This model was informed by close examination of Local Delivery Pilots (LDPs) to aid understanding of how system change occurs across three key levels of **sector integration, strengthening community and individual capabilities** and **tackling structural inequalities**. This helped us to reflect upon the levels at which these areas of focus operated and influenced system maturity.





Section 2

Phase 1 – Developing programme theories for the four 'Deep Dive' areas of focus



Phase 1 Programme theory development

- This phase was a comprehensive process which involved our team collaborating with key Active Essex stakeholders. We co-produced explanatory assumptions and beliefs (programme theories) about how the four areas of focus contributing towards system change through the hardwiring of physical activity. We also considered how these areas of focus may impact on communities. A comprehensive outline of all explanatory statements can be located in the **Phase 1 Bitesize report (July 2022)**.
- This was a crucial stage of a realist evaluation because:
 - It helped us to focus on what is important for the evaluation.
 - It helped us to stand back and collectively reflect upon how and why we see things working and for whom these areas of focus are for. This was also useful for the social return on investment forecast.
 - It helped us to engage a wide variety of stakeholders who are empowered and invested in the evaluation to be in a stronger position to learn, inform and improve programme design and delivery within the local system upon which they operate.
- The following infographic illustrates the process we engaged with in this first phase of programme theory development.

Phase 1 - Theory gleaning
Who in the system are we influencing and how is this contributing to system change?



Deep dive of programmes and areas of focus

Why is this phase important?

- So we could collaboratively identify areas of importance across the 4 deep dive areas.
- To stand back and reflect on how and why we see things working.

WHY?



What will we achieve from this phase?

Explain how and why Active Essex see these programmes impacting on communities and system stakeholders.
Identify important explanatory areas to focus the evaluation on through the formation of how and statements.

What does this involve?

This helps to go beneath the surface of each programme to collaboratively identify:

- What is it about these programmes that make them work or not?
- How and why do we think these programmes and initiatives impact communities?
- How and why do they influence the goals and structures within the Essex system?
- Phase two is to then **test** assumptions and beliefs around explanatory areas of focus.



Pedal Power



Literature review
3 Theory gleaning workshops

Verification
20 how and why statements produced and sent back to each team

Focus
10 theories selected

Find Your Active



Literature review
2 Theory gleaning workshops

Verification
19 how and why statements produced and sent back to each team

Focus
10 theories selected

Asset Based Community Development



Literature review
3 Theory gleaning workshops

Verification
20 how and why statements produced and sent back to each team

Focus
10 theories selected

ActivAte



Literature review
2 Theory gleaning workshops

Verification
20 how and why statements produced and sent back to each team

Focus
10 theories selected

Taking a collaborative approach to developing explanatory statements in the four deep dives

Theory gleaning workshops: The evaluation team held discussions with key stakeholders. They also collated observations and experiences and conducted a literature search that related to each of the four areas of focus. The workshops aided the understanding of how, why and for whom the areas of focus worked. They also contributed significantly to understanding the intended outcomes and impact of the areas of focus for the social return on investment (SROI) forecasted value for Active Essex.

Statement creation: From the approach above, explanatory assumptions and belief statements were developed. These aimed to capture the perceptions as to how the areas of focus were thought to be working, alongside the information about the resources and contexts for each of the four areas of focus.

Identifying the prioritized statements: The explanatory statements were circulated to those stakeholders who were involved in the workshops and to wider teams as well. First, people were invited to discuss whether the statements authentically captured and represented the areas of focus. Second, people were able to ask questions, edit and add to the statements in a way that everyone could see responses transparently. Finally, the feedback was analysed collectively to identify and prioritize the statements, where there was collective agreement. These prioritized statements were of central focus for phase 2 of the evaluation.



Section 3

Phase 2– Testing and refining programme theories, and positioning our methods for the four 'Deep Dives' areas of focus

Phase 2 Programme theory testing

- Having carried out the comprehensive collaborative process from phase 1, this phase consisted of the evaluation testing the wide range of explanatory assumptions and beliefs underpinning the areas of focus.
- Here, we utilised a range of qualitative and quantitative research methods to test these assumptions and beliefs, and then offer insights and reflections for refinement to inform overall learning to action.
- These methods were tested with a wide range of stakeholders in the active Essex system ranging from beneficiaries to senior decision makers and influencers.
- This phase was also supported by the embedded SROI approach.
- It is important to state that during this testing phase we were conscious of existing evaluation work and data collection taking place across Active Essex. As a result, we made every effort to collaborate and avoid duplication (for example supporting and working with the LDP realist evaluation framework in progress).

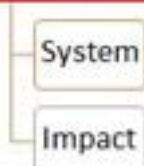
ABCD



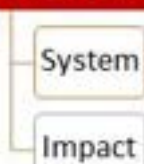
Pedal Power



ActiveAte



Find Your Active



Provisionally Chosen Programme Theories

Hartpury Suite Essex LDP Evaluation Plan

Broad Realist Questions

1. What is it about ABCD that influences decision making of stakeholders?
2. What impact does ABCD have on the community and the people within it?

Methods

- Survey to staff
- Survey to beneficiaries
- Realist focus groups
- In depth realist 1:1 interviews
- How and Why conversations

Sample

- Beneficiaries of ABCD
- Community members that received project grants or alternative support
- Those who have been through the training
- System decision makers

Timeline

Summer 2022

1. How and why does Pedal Power influence changes in system decision making from partners that help to improve cycling infrastructure within the community?
2. What is it about Pedal Power that encourages people to go cycling?

- Ride-a-long realist discussion
- Attending sessions or groups
- Realist Focus groups for observation
- In depth realist interviews

- Those that are actively utilising the bike and getting involved with activities
- Those that are struggling to utilise the bike
- Those who are not engaging with the intervention
- Organisers and facilitators of group activities
- System decision makers

Summer 2022

1. How is ActiveAte influencing wider system decision making within local authorities and healthcare providers?
2. How does ActiveAte influence children's attitudes toward healthier habits?

- Attending sessions or groups for observation
- Realist focus groups
- In depth realist interviews 1:1

- Parents that are actively engaging their children
- The children who attend the programme
- Partners and LTOs that help to facilitate sessions
- Parents eligible but not engaged
- System decision makers

Summer 2022

1. How does FYA contribute to and influence physical activity decision making?
2. How and why might strategic partners begin to align their goals with FYA to benefit the community and widen the scale of the programme?

- Survey for ambassadors
- Survey for participants
- Attending sessions or groups for observation
- Realist focus groups

- Programme Ambassadors
- Participants
- System decision makers

Summer 2022

Our methods

Over the course of the evaluation, we implemented a range of qualitative and quantitative methods to facilitate the deep dive process. These are outlined below.

Interviews

Semi-structured interviews captured the impact and illustrated which changes were observable across the four areas of focus. We explored how and why engagement across the four areas of focus contributed to change in individuals, communities, and the system.

Focus groups

Focus groups were implemented to capture deeper insights collectively about the changes people experienced. Focus groups were an invaluable aid to facilitate conversations amongst community members, groups and organisational staff.

Reflective logs

Reflective logs were a personal way for young people participants to reflect on their experiences of being involved in the ActiveAte/HAF area of focus.

Stories of change

Capturing stories of change is a rich qualitative approach that involves individuals and communities describing the most significant changes that take place through their experiences of something. Hearing the stories of beneficiaries of free bikes within EPP helped to unearth the true meaning underpinning their journeys.

Surveys

Surveys were co-produced as a mixed method to gather quantitative and qualitative data across the four areas of focus from participants and strategic stakeholders. These informed the programme theory testing, deep dives and the social return on investment forecast. The four ONS Wellby questions were built into each survey.

Phase 2: Programme Theory Testing and 'Deep Dive' data outputs

Asset Based Community Development

- 16 Interviews with community member and locally trusted organisation stakeholders
- 5 Interviews with system influencing stakeholders
- 25 Surveys with Nurture Development training recipients
- 28 Surveys with community member stakeholders

Essex Pedal Power

- 11 Stories of change with EPP cyclists – community member stakeholders
- 5 How and why conversations with staff and volunteers – organisation stakeholders
- 7 Interviews with system influencing stakeholders
- 719 Surveys with EPP bike applicants and recipients

Find Your Active

- 9 Interviews with community connectors and ambassadors
- 7 How and why conversations with community member stakeholders
- 4 Interviews with system influencing stakeholders
- 41 Surveys with community member stakeholders

ActivAte/Holiday Activity and Food

- 5 Focus groups with observations with children and young people
- 5 Reflective logs with observations with children and young people
- 4 How and why conversations with parents and carers – community member stakeholders
- 5 How and why conversations with operational staff and locally trusted organisation stakeholders
- 2 Interviews with system influencing stakeholders
- 105 Surveys with families

Reflections

- We have felt supported by Active Essex and partners in this evaluation who have connected us with an array of stakeholders, all of whom have been willing to engage with the evaluation. That data that we have been able to capture has been directly useful for the programme theory development, testing and refinement; as well as informing completely the social return on investment forecast. The stakeholder connections were representative of Active Essex's landscape in terms of communities, practice and provision, place, partnerships and systems.
- All Active Essex stakeholders have embraced the collaborative approaches to evaluation principles as demonstrated through their motivations, the relationships we have all built and maintained, our collective understanding about the evaluation, the evaluation's participatory processes and evaluative thinking through the embedded researchers. We are now in the process of sense-making and identifying the opportunities to realise use of the evaluation through action.
- More than 50 stakeholders participated in interviews and focus groups; and 918 people completed surveys, some of which were co-produced between the Active Essex stakeholders and the evaluation team.

Presentation of findings

- The findings illustrate how the theories developed in phase 1 were analysed through testing and refinement in phase 2. Within each 'deep dive' section we open with the 'headline' findings and learnings that have been generated from our testing. After this, we then go deeper into the 'dive' to illustrate how and why impact and system findings are emerging with reflections for refinements. The data we collected have supported these processes. After the 'deep dive' sections we then present our SROI findings.



Section 3.1

Deep Dive 1: Pedal Power findings

Initial assumption

EPP provides opportunities for recipients to access more opportunities for a better quality of life.

EPP through the issuing of a bike helps to breakdown travel barriers for those impacted by the cost of travel to work and other aspects of their lives.

EPP offers the opportunity for social and professional networking, to build capacity for employment.

How is this playing out?

The bike gives recipients in communities the opportunity to connect, link and develop relationships because they use the bike in a way that suits their needs. Utility cycling, family and friends cycling and mental and physical wellbeing are key drivers of this.

For many the provision of a bike is seen as a lifeline because it gives them access to work, shops, healthcare and other important aspects of their lives (without incurring the cost of a quality bike).

Recipients, that engage in led rides and EPP, in Clacton and Jaywick are able to socialise together, bridge and build relationships through the medium of cycling.

Recipients of bikes in EPP, who have engaged in led rides have gone on to develop employability skills through volunteering and additional qualifications because of the support they have received from EPP staff.

Pedal Power impact headlines

Going Deeper into findings - Essex Pedal Power stories of change

Julie is 51 years old and lives in Clacton. She was saving up for an electric bike to travel around locally to see friends and visit clients for work when she applied and received an EPP bike. She hasn't ridden a bike for 4 years but feels with the cost of driving and parking increasing that cycling is a good option to save money.

Julie is well connected socially, regularly visiting her friends and family.

Since cycling I would say I feel more positive and optimistic... I am getting more fresh air and I'm more physically active [since receiving the bike].

I've recommended it to my friends and five of them have now applied for a bike!

Julie receives a free EPP bike



Julie uses the bike regularly to travel for work, go to the shops, visit friends, and to blow off steam after a stressful day.



Julie plans to go cycling with her mum as well as joining led rides when Julie can find time in her work schedule.

Julie is saving money on fuel costs and parking. It also saves time by not needing to queue in traffic. It has helped to strengthen her **social connections** as Julie can visit friends easily as she can visit her friends for free by cycling.

I do feel closer to Clacton since cycling. It is easier to look around because I'm not driving and only looking at the road.

Going Deeper into findings - Essex Pedal Power stories of change

Chris is 47 years old and lives in Jaywick. He lives with his wife, who has health issues, and his daughter that has higher needs. Chris has social anxiety which makes it almost impossible for him to engage in group activity. He does not work and due to his social anxiety, he will not enter work anytime soon. Chris owns a bike he received as a gift from his mother-in-law and does not own a car or have a driving license because he sees cars having a negative impact on the environment. Chris couldn't afford a bike to the same quality as an EPP bike.

I can travel quickly [on the EPP bike] because it is lighter and easier to ride than the bike I already had. This means I can go out in the morning and get home in time to help my wife.

Chris does not drive and is very reluctant to use public transport due to his social anxiety. The new bike has allowed him to access the hospital and Clacton via the seafront cycle route.

I am more active with the bike. I feel fitter, my legs feel stronger.

Chris receives a free EPP bike

Chris uses the bike for journeys into Clacton, to access the hospital, go cycling alone or with his child, and to play Beat the Street

Chris already felt a connection with Jaywick as he regularly litter picks and greets others. Chris has met more people when greeting others playing Beat the Street or on an EPP bike, but he still doesn't feel ready to socialise with new people or join led rides.

Bike riding helps to relieve anxiety for Chris, but he is still not confident enough to do anything new. Being outside also makes Chris feel happier. Chris has **increased mental health and reduced mental health issues**, albeit still has social anxiety.

I can quickly chat with people at the Beat Boxes (Beat The Street), but I don't socialise with them.

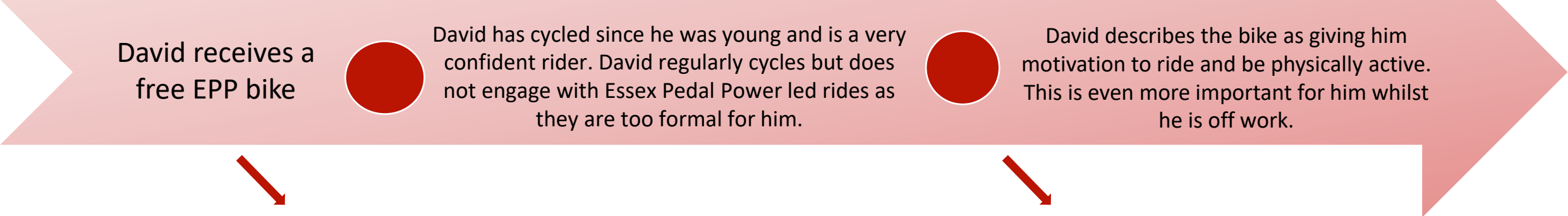
Going Deeper into findings - Essex Pedal Power stories of change

David is 32 and lives in Jaywick with his partner and 2 children. He is currently off work due to injury and would previously use the EPP bike to cycle to work. He doesn't own a car and describes the bike as a "lifeline" to access shops in Clacton, and to get outside through cycling to maintain his mental and physical wellbeing. David does not feel he could afford to buy a bike, especially one to the same quality as an EPP bike.

I've cycled my whole life, so I don't need the lessons or going out with the group. I go out with mates, or I go out myself. Sometimes I'll go out at 11 in the evening if I feel like going out.

When David's mental health is playing up, he uses cycling to exercise to clear his head whilst being able to explore Clacton and Jaywick.

The bike is wicked... you can cycle in the wind, and you actually go forward. The tyres mean I can go off road and exploring more. I've got an app on my phone that identifies different rocks... last week we found a WW2 bunker in Clacton.



David doesn't use the helmet or hi vis provided because he finds this too formal for him. He is thankful for the lock to keep his bike safe as well as being provided with a pump. He worries that once he owns the bike and it needs new tyres, he won't be able to afford the same level of quality to replace them.

David found the bike to be helpful in maintaining his physical and mental wellbeing whilst off work. When he was feeling low, he was able to get out and cycle further and to different places without being too far to get back to his partner and children quickly.

Going Deeper into findings - Essex Pedal Power

What we Explored:

With 34% of residents in a locality not owning or having access to vehicles, their ability to travel for work and other opportunities is stifled. With Essex Pedal Power providing bikes and the equipment necessary for travel and maintenance, it may open the opportunity to increase the ability to travel, not only for work, but to enable access to cheaper food shops without the need to use a bus system that has been described as inaccessible and difficult.

What we found:

For some residents in Jaywick, like David (bike recipient), ***"The bike means I can get into Clacton quickly and get home to my family, especially where my [partner] looks after the little ones"***. Before the bike, these journeys would have taken up more time due to not having access to a car or having a bike that was heavier or slower than an EPP bike and discouraged use. A quicker journey on an EPP bike encouraged some residents to travel further because ***"I know I can go out for miles and still get back to my family quickly"*** (Chris, bike recipient).

Recipients who own or have access to a car still use their car for journeys as ***"I still need to take the kids to school or to rugby matches"*** (Veronica, bike recipient) but there was modal shift when ***"cycling to a friend's house is easier than having to sit in traffic and try to find a parking space"*** (Julie, bike recipient) and ***"where the journey isn't too long [3 miles or less] I will try to cycle... I rarely use the car now"*** (Ron, bike recipient).

The cycle route along the seafront to Clacton was important for those who had experience anxiety (social and when cycling) because this route is away from traffic and feels safer to travel along. ***"I stick to the seafront because I'm still too nervous on the roads... there is too much traffic, but the seafront is quiet and quite flat too"*** (Veronica, bike recipient).

Going Deeper into findings - Essex Pedal Power

What we Explored:

With Essex Pedal Power training ride leaders and enabling the community to take part in activities, there may be an opportunity for overall increased community connectivity, decreasing loneliness and isolation which has been either caused or exacerbated by the pandemic. By taking the initial cost of the bike and other accessories needed to cycle which is a large barrier to people in the area, there may be greater uptake of the programme because it becomes more affordable and accessible.

What we found:

Many recipients cycle leisurely to spend quality time with their family or friends, with the seafront a popular destination to cycle because it is a local place to cycle where it feels safe from cars. None of the recipients spoken to feel lonely as they either live with family members or they are socially connected through work, volunteering or hobbies although there are many that felt isolated due to their responsibilities in caring for family members with additional needs and feel this may have negative impact on their mental health.

Chris (bike recipient) benefits from having a "quality" EPP bike because *"Having the bike has meant I can go out on a ride in the morning and play Beat the Street but still get home before my wife wakes up and I need to help her"*. Dan (bike recipient) is also able to become more physically active and manage his care responsibilities thanks to receiving a new bike as *"the bike encourages me to get out and cycle, sometimes at 6am, because I've got to get home for my partner to help look after them"*.

For many recipients that own a car, they cannot afford to buy a quality bike with the cost-of-living increase and the car is important for school runs, work travel, shopping and leisure activities for them and their family. They recognise that saving money on driving was beneficial to them, with EPP bikes providing them with free transport for smaller journeys and for leisure opportunities. Sally (bike recipient) loves the fact that *"we can go out as a family on led rides and be active all for free"*.

For those without a car, they already owned a bike however *"the EPP bike is easy to ride... it is much better than the bike I owned"* Sally (bike recipient). The greater quality bike means they can cycle quickly and on different terrains they couldn't previously. The cost of the EPP bike is removed, with equipment provided to safely cycle and lock up the bike so recipients were confident they in safely cycling into Clacton and locking up their bike.

For some, the EPP bike does not remove a barrier to accessing cycling because they already have a bike of similar or better quality compared to the EPP bike or can afford a bike, but they live in a priority ward and were eligible to apply for a free bike.

Going Deeper into findings - Essex Pedal Power

What we Explored:

While Essex Pedal Power provides things such as led rides and group rides, there is no compulsion to participate in these activities. This allows for those who may have beliefs and feelings such as embarrassment surrounding aspects of their life such as physical fitness to get involved without the pressure to engage in group activities, but still gain the benefits of increasing their activity. In an environment where the cost of living is high, some people cannot afford a bike, particularly in deprived areas. By eliminating the cost and providing free bikes to communities, this has the potential to bring more people together through community cycling, fostering greater community cohesion.

What we found:

Where staff have use the EPP office in Jaywick as a 'hub' for residents to engage with EPP socially, some recipients have gone on to set up cycle groups where they connect with other individuals who wish to cycle with as a group. EPP staff can support and provide ride leader training for individuals that engage with EPP staff and demonstrate potential skillsets to be a ride leader. This allows for community led cycle groups where participants meet through EPP and are supported by staff to run independently of EPP led rides.

Some recipients do not wish to join in led rides due to their mental health issues (social anxiety) stopping them from engaging in group activity or because of the formal aspect of led rides where they would be expected to wear a helmet and follow the rules of a led ride.

For Brennan and Dan (bike recipients), engaging with EPP allowed them to experience Jaywick in a way that changed their perceptions of the area. ***"I've definitely seen Jaywick in a different light... I've made friends with residents, and I regularly cycle around there." (Brennan). The potential to bond over cycling has been important where Dale relates to Jaywick residents through EPP because he wouldn't have engaged with before. "We share an enthusiasm for cycling and it's something we connect over"*** (Dan).

Cycling for leisure was popular, with many recipients cycling alone for leisure when they feel stressed or after a long day. They feel it helps them to maintain or strengthen their mental health because they can ***"think things through and get some fresh air"*** (Brennan, bike recipient).

Recipients also cycle to spend quality time with their family, where they go out with their children or partner around their local area because they were comfortable or along the seafront which is safe from cars. Most recipients reported they had increased their physical activity levels through cycling with many recipients not having cycled for years before receiving an EPP bike. Family commitments is cited as a reason for not having time or money to afford a bike to go cycling.

Going Deeper into findings - Essex Pedal Power

What we Explored:

Where Pedal Power offers opportunities for residents to access a bike through the programme, it holds great potential in supporting individuals accessing employment or educational opportunities. Whilst training individuals to maintain and use a bike safely and confidently, Pedal Power also offers an opportunity for social and professional networking with others involved in the programme who may offer support to allow these individuals to access these opportunities.

What we found:

EPP staff foster an open-door policy at the EPP office in Jaywick where recipients can turn up to socialise and volunteer but also to get support and advice on other issues they need. ***"We can pop into the office for a cup of tea and a chat during our cycle ride" (Ron, bike recipient) and "the staff are so welcoming. It's encouraged me to be more involved in volunteering... I was encouraged to get involved through the CVS and last week I helped to remove a bed for a family!"*** (Brian, bike recipient).

There was support provided to the job centre so individuals could loan a bike to attend job interviews with the relationship built between EPP staff and Jobcentre staff. The EPP staff was important in starting this relationship through promoting the mutual benefits in building a relationship but ensuring it was focused on individuals living in the priority wards EPP was targeting.

There open-door policy helps to provide some professional networking where EPP staff can identify cyclists or volunteers that engage with led rides to potentially undertake ride leader training. Those encourage to do the training demonstrate an enthusiasm for cycling, as well as a friendly and welcoming attitude so that led rides are fun, safe and seek to encourage people to continue cycling.

Where recipients have been able to swap their car or public transport for their EPP bike to travel to work they are already in employment or have access to employment without an EPP bike. Julie (Bike recipient) stated ***"I'm using the bike to cycle to work instead of driving so I can save money and get still get around to clients"***.

Further supporting evidence for Essex Pedal Power

Community residents agreed that after receiving a pedal power bike, they

- 91% felt able to be more physically active
- 78% felt they had the opportunity to be physically active
- 78% found that exercise in general was more enjoyable and satisfying
- 77% thought that engaging in community activities could lead to positive changes in the way their local areas are run (e.g. how they function and how they are organised, including approaches like pedal power).

Almost a third of survey participants also said that in addition to increasing their physical activity levels, they engaged with others more often:

- 31% felt that having their pedal power bike enabled them to exercise with others
- 31% felt that having their pedal power bike enabled them to feel included by others
- 31% felt that having their pedal power bike enabled them to socialise with others

What do these findings mean and where do we take them for refinement?

EPP creates a good relationship with the surrounding community where residents can pop in to see a friendly faced staff member or volunteer. This relationship is based on staff providing holistic support that is more than just cycling opportunities but also help with wellbeing and other issues.

EPP has contributed to employment within EPP but there is scope to understand how EPP is impacting on employment opportunities outside of EPP.

For some recipients, the EPP office is a hub of socialisation with EPP staff as well as other bike recipients. People are exposed to opportunities for socialisation whether it is a led ride, cycling group or opportunities to volunteer (for EPP or Community Voluntary Service).

EPP helps people develop more of a positive perception of neighboring towns (for example Clacton's perception of Jaywick) through the bonding and relationships being built through cycling.

EPP staff have an excellent relationship with residents who engage with cycling which provides an sound platform to further engage these communities and give them some control in the sustainability of the programme – a hallmark of place-based approaches.

EPP, and the opportunity to cycle, as well as connect with others is good for people's overall wellbeing and mental health.

For some recipients that are isolated or at risk of isolation because of family care requirements, the EPP bike provides an opportunity for active leisure opportunities that they would not initially pursue.

EPP helps recipients who do not own or have access to a car use their bike to access shops and healthcare in (e.g. Clacton) without the financial cost of public transport, or the time spent walking.

EPP helps recipients that own or have access to a car still make use of the bike because they see the benefits gained from cycling to increase their physical activity levels, and help with their mental health.

EPP helps people to think differently about how they travel because they realise the benefit of swapping their longer journey in a car to work for the much shorter bike journey.



Initial
assumption

How is this
playing out?

Pedal Power System headlines

If there is a coordinated approach across various sectors and stakeholders that values cycling programmes like EPP, there is potential for collaborative policy driven resourcing.

EPP contributes to bringing strategic stakeholders together for a common purpose of active travel and physical activity, because it helps to align the values, goals and beliefs that people have. This helps with leveraging funding. Having something 'concrete' like EPP is a conduit and mediator for getting people around the table for a shared vision.

Partners are at the heart of a shared approach moving beyond pure transactional and siloed approaches to physical activity. This shared approach embodies place based ways of working through distributing leadership to wider stakeholders who can take control.

EPP has the potential to increase the number of people cycling if it is able to reduce, address and better understand the structural inequalities that surround these communities.

The use of GPS trackers is providing greater insight around the number of people cycling and where they are cycling. This insight is helping EPP to inform and improve cycling infrastructure which may boost cycling participation.

The mixture of behaviour change and infrastructure as a focus through EPP open up greater funding opportunities which is supported by the shared goals and beliefs amongst partners. A shared vision created through EPP helps to bring to the fore important issues about funding and key challenges surrounding sustainability

EPP is giving opportunities for stakeholders across the system to access and develop better relationships with communities. This is driven by a place based approach that acknowledges and respects the wide diversity of stakeholders in local communities.

Going Deeper into findings - Essex Pedal Power

What we Explored:

EPP has the potential to achieve its outcomes when the system is considered to not just include policy decision making, infrastructure investments and other mid-level actions. In addition to this, if EPP considers the role communities, third sector organisations and other place-based approaches play in influencing goals and beliefs, there is greater scope to provide more of a positive environment in Essex towards cycling, which will then lead to more people cycling.

What we found:

There is system buy in from Essex County Council Transport and Localities that would traditionally work outside the physical activity sector, with 3rd sector organisations also involved where they share beliefs in the benefits of cycling to the wellbeing of individuals and communities. The ability to leverage more funding across sectors is important in helping these sectors reaching their strategic goals which influences their belief in EPP.

Where Active Essex position ABCD and place-based working at the core of its approach to physical activity, EPP operational staff work to collaborate with 3rd sector organisations based in Clacton and Jaywick, where EPP is seen to have the potential to help individuals' wellbeing wider than increasing physical activity levels. For example, "**Community participation is evident with 3rd sector organisations heavily involved in providing resource and support to EPP to help run its operations but also to provide signposting opportunities for volunteering opportunities**" (Gloria, System Stakeholder).

The use of GPS trackers allows the community to provide insight into how they are cycling in the area that is to be inform future networking planning. This is with the intention of providing safe cycling infrastructure with cycle parking to encourage more cyclists to use the routes because they are safe and there is capacity to park.

Going Deeper into findings - Essex Pedal Power

What we Explored:

Within an environment where EPP has grabbed the attention and started to influence goals and beliefs of certain stakeholders (e.g. healthcare, transport, workplaces, third sector orgs, education), we can start to see changes in the way cycling infrastructure is resourced and acknowledged through real actions (e.g. workplaces providing cycling facilities for workers, and wider stakeholders building cycling priorities into their operational plans that put the community first). These actions are contributed to and anchored by AE and its collaborative approach to working across a wide range of stakeholders. This results in a number of outcomes – increased physical activity, more accessibility for cycling and opportunities to attract funding.

What we found:

Essex Pedal Power has aligned stakeholders with mutual interests to work together towards their respective strategic goals through increasing cycling participation where there is potential to leverage funding, hit strategic goals and distribute leadership to respective experts. Active Essex has been a key driver in bringing together and aligning these stakeholders where ***"prior to this project we wouldn't have been able to link or synergise with other areas... Essex Pedal Power has helped us leverage new funding"*** (Neil, Senior System Stakeholder).

We see an influence of Essex Pedal Power on how cycling infrastructure is being planned for because of the GPS tracking data being used to inform stakeholders of the cycle routes recipients are taking. Some control over planning has been distributed to the community where ***"one of the benefits that we are seeing is that GPS data is starting to help us inform our network planning"*** (Andy, Senior System Stakeholder). Where there is trust that recipients will cycle the bikes, it has meant their journeys are helping to inform future network planning and cycle parking.

Essex Pedal Powers approach to behaviour change of cycling – providing free bikes, training and access to led rides – alongside upgrading cycling infrastructure – cycle routes and parking – open opportunities that leverage greater funding. This joint approach happens because of shared goals and beliefs amongst partners in Essex Pedal Power, where they have a mutual interest in increasing cycling participation.

Going Deeper into findings - Essex Pedal Power

What we Explored:

If there is a coordinated approach across various sectors (e.g. AE, Travel, Education etc) who value cycling programmes like EPP, then this has the potential for collaborative policy-driven resourcing that creates a holistic approach to supporting active travel. This approach involves resources being pooled in an appropriate way that serves the best interests for cycling in Essex.

What we found:

EPP stakeholders are committed to and pool resources into infrastructure helping EPP grow. There has been support and resource provided to operational staff to try and maintain provision of opportunities to cycle. This also saw a change in structure in EPP stakeholder organisations where there was commitment of staff to EPP to be involved further than just on a transactional basis. The goals and beliefs of EPP stakeholders are aligned with respect to how it can help them reach their strategic goals with extra resource committed evidenced through their belief in EPP being part of transformational change. This is occurring with system partners that hold a mutual interest in the benefits of increasing cyclists to their strategic goals. Active Essex are key facilitators of this within a place-based approach.

Where sectors have a mutual interest in cycling and an understanding how it can contribute to their strategic goals, there is a coordinated approach towards delivering Essex Pedal Power. **"Partners are at the heart of Essex Pedal Power, moving away from a transactional relationship"** (Neil, Senior System Stakeholder). There is not one sector in control with leadership distributed amongst stakeholders where partners share beliefs and goals that partnership working will help work to achieve common goals.

EPP operates in a context where there are shared beliefs amongst a wide range of stakeholders that cycling, active travel and health are important things to invest resources into. AE are 'captains' of this bringing people together. As a result, an environment of 'opportunity' exists where we see 'action' in the structures and goals of stakeholders which are then seen in local policy. However, this is only the starting point, and more work is required to branch out to other areas of the system. This includes additional third sector organisations and community level stakeholders.

What do these findings mean and where do we take them for refinement?

Essex Pedal Power is a conduit that has been able to integrate and bring together stakeholders across sectors that hold mutual interest in increasing participation in cycling. Strategic goals and beliefs have been aligned through the opportunity to leverage funding that can help stakeholders to achieve their outcomes and potential for sustainable approaches to physical activity with funding wider than the physical activity sector.

Where there is mutual interest and a reliance on different partners to deliver on EPP, there is distributed leadership amongst partners to deliver on their "expert area" in a place-based approach. EPP helps stakeholders to value ABCD approaches to achieve shared goals.

EPP's place based vision provides system stakeholders with a lens to understand community assets and strengths through cultural intermediaries who have positive relationships with people in place. This should be enhanced and continued to embed EPP into community ownership.



The background features several stylized hands in various colors (red, teal, yellow, blue, pink, green) reaching upwards. Each hand has a white heart outline on its palm. Above the hands are several solid-colored hearts in red, yellow, pink, and green. The entire scene is set against a white background with faint, concentric dashed circles and a small red triangle pointing downwards at the bottom center.

Section 3.2

Deep Dive 2: ABCD findings

Initial assumption

Cultural intermediaries in Essex form connections with fellow residents to drive physical activity with the support of community builders

Those involved in ABCD implementation are able to bring together communities and organisations to address challenges in the area through physical activity

Training for Active Essex staff and wider stakeholders is a key resource to facilitate place based ways of working

Physical activity programmes that are owned locally by local people take an inside out strengths based approach that gives autonomy back to the community.

How is this playing out?

Cultural intermediaries are in force throughout Essex facilitating opportunities for physical activity through the support of funding and ABCD catalysts.

This is true as sessions are led by place based working staff and volunteers who are trained or have experienced challenges that others are experiencing. Participants engage and take part because of the ABCD leaders who are known and mirror the ABCD leaders

Survey respondents drew favourably upon nurture development training that helped and facilitates place based ways of working. In many cases staff occupy these values but the training facilitates the process in a positive way by taking inside out approaches.

By giving autonomy and control back to the community over physical activity communities build upon their strengths and cultivate physical activity provision. Staff who are trained to facilitate and embody this approach are crucial for this to happen.

ABCD Impact headlines

Going Deeper into findings – ABCD

What we Explored:

Those involved in ABCD implementation within their communities have support to connect with others in the area and organisations and act on things they may want to address. The outcome of this may be that the community becomes more united and involved in the process of creating change. This may prove to improve resilience and connection in communities as their capacity and abilities strengthen and align.

What we found:

Active Essex work with cultural intermediaries and community groups who are placed within communities to try to embed ABCD practices within physical activity provision. This approach embodies the belief that cultural intermediaries and community groups are best placed to understand the issues in their respective communities and then tackle them through a strengths-based approach to the assets in the community. Joan (LTO lead) has the belief that **"we should be looking at the resources we have got before we start knocking things down or rebuilding things when there are assets we can use"**. Joan delivers projects that focus on **"helping people move from A to B and helping them with the tools they need to get there"**. Physical activity is not the primary focus of the projects but there is the understanding how physical activity such as a wellbeing walk, can be an opportunity to help them access further opportunities through staff and volunteer encouragement.

The opportunity to bring communities together is true where sessions are led by place based working staff and volunteers. These staff have a desire to give back with Carol (funding recipient) stating the reasons she runs community projects is because **"I suffered through the same problems as others [in this community] and I want to help them have a better experience"**. Participants engage and take part because of the ABCD leaders as they align with the staff/volunteers values when it comes to community engagement. This is seen with many of the LTO's engaging with Active Essex where there is an emphasis on meeting people where they are on their physical activity journey, recognising that they may need support to overcome barriers before they are able to be physically active.

There is also lots of signposting from AE and LTO's to other ways they can be supported. AE and LTO's would benefit from a formal referral process to identify who has been able to access further opportunities/support to understand how they are supporting individuals/families to further benefit because of their involvement.

Going Deeper into findings – ABCD

What we Explored:

Those cultural intermediaries driving ABCD physical activity approaches in their community form connections with fellow residents and resources within the community, often with the support of the designated community builder or ABCD catalyst who can convey the interests of the community. This may allow and support an emergence of untapped skills, talents and resources that the community may not have been aware of and allow collaboration with assets to establish new groups and activities within a community.

What we found:

AE has been able to support cultural intermediaries to facilitate provision of physical activity where participants feel these activities are delivered in local places, spaces and amenities (97%). Active Essex Staff who are trained to facilitate and embody this approach are crucial for this to happen as they are ABCD catalysts that maintain the relationship between Active Essex and cultural intermediaries. These ABCD catalysts are "**approachable**" (Peter, LTO member) and "**are easy to pick up the phone and talk to**" (Skylar, funding recipient) which encourages the cultural intermediaries being worked with to reach out when they need support.

The cultural intermediaries identified to work with are individuals and organisations that embody the ABCD principles they wish to utilise, where they already have a relationship with community members. This understanding is that this provides an insight into the community assets that can be used to provide physical activity opportunities that is suitable and accessible for community members. The Local Delivery Pilot has contributed to building up these relationships through Local Authorities and some pre-existing relationships with communities.

Cultural intermediaries are known members of the community and are either encouraged to apply for funding by ABCD catalysts or are seeking funding to continue or start provision of physical activity opportunities in their community. They have built up their relationship with community members over longer periods of time, whether the cultural intermediary is an organisation that is trusted by communities, or individuals who are trusted by communities.

Cultural intermediaries are already within the community delivering projects that are aimed at supporting and helping the community to overcome challenges they are facing. They provide more than just physical activity to their community, focusing on the assets (buildings, blue and green spaces, qualified/experienced individuals) in their community to provide access to cooking classes, community fridges (food banks), and opportunities to socialise with others, through organised walks, coffee mornings, and community events.

Going Deeper into findings – ABCD

What we Explored:

Eventually, the funding for the interventions within communities may cease, and the communities will need to be self-sufficient. By giving the responsibility and control of the physical activity to those in the community and educating key stakeholders on the ground within the community system on making the most of their resources, there is potential for physical activity sustainability within an ABCD approach.

What we found:

For many there is a worry about sustaining their project delivery through reliance on core funding, should the funding stop. It is felt there was potential for ABCD deliverers to be supported in how to advertise their project or to set up a website to make their project sustainable by increasing participation, building on the perceived weaknesses of the ABCD deliverers. For Skylar (Funding recipient) she felt **"community builders might not have the skills"** necessary to sustain a project without core funding. Skylar would like more support in business management and admin management because **"if they want me to be sustainable, I need support, chucking money at me doesn't help"**. Jane (funding recipient) was provided with funding that allowed her to cover costs of training, licensing and insurance however there was a fear that the communities she is targeting don't have the money to sustain her provision. **"Without knowing about the funding pot, I wouldn't have been able to run the project and the children wouldn't have been able to take part"**.

Skylar does feel supported to deliver an ABCD approach where staff she speaks to feel like **"normal people [without the]bureaucracy"** that may limit community led projects that rely on external funding. **"Active Essex have listened to my ideas about creativity, that [physical activity] doesn't have to be about tracksuits, it can be about music"**. Jane also felt supported to collaborate with other community leaders to wider provision across the locality however this was in the early days of planning.

What do these findings mean and where do we take them for refinement?

Identifying and having "access" to cultural intermediaries is vital in understanding the assets in the community that can be utilised for physical activity provision that is suitable for the needs of the community. Through developing and maintaining positive relationships that emphasise the mutual benefits between AE (or LDP areas), there is capacity to build upon current assets to encourage active citizenship.

ABCD Catalysts are vital staff that maintain and grow relationships with cultural intermediaries. They are the connection between AE and cultural intermediaries, vital to positioning an ABCD, place-based approach to physical activity in respective localities. Training that supports capacity building in ABCD is important to help facilitate an 'inside out' approach to community development.

ABCD is at the fulcrum of increasing physical activity amongst Essex residents. There is a clear understanding and joint thinking amongst LTO's working with AE to deliver PA. Working with these LTO's is deliberate in how they already demonstrated a community development-based approach to providing physical activity opportunities, allowing AE to place ABCD at the centre of their Essex wide approach.

Participants in community led physical activity share values with the cultural intermediary or the coach/leader/instructor. Having a common ground, informal relationship and shared connection with place is key. This should be continually cultivated.

Further supporting evidence for ABCD

Community residents agreed that:

- 69% developed skills and abilities relating to their ABCD activities
- 76% made use of local places, spaces and amenities
- 62% connected with other local organisations for support (information and resources)
- 69% contributed to positive change in their communities and felt more resilient
- 72% built relationships, trust and were more connected to others
- 66% were building in sustainability to their approach
- 69% disseminated their work with others
- 97% felt an increased sense of ownership and responsibility within their communities

Stakeholders who attended the Nurture Development training agreed that:

- 80% the training content was relevant to people's roles
- 64% the content of the training met people's needs and expectations
- 80% the quality of the training materials and resources was high
- 92% people said that the training facilitator demonstrated relevant knowledge

Initial assumption

Active Essex is able to influence goals and beliefs of wider stakeholders around place based working

How is this playing out?

Place based working is the core of transformational change being led by Active Essex because AE leaders are able to diplomatically facilitate place based awareness. Positioning people in the right forums with their leadership and charisma.

ABCD ways of working can break down and resist pushback from more outside in approaches to physical activity.

Bringing wider stakeholders who traditionally are not always involved is facilitated through AE leadership. However AE is a small cog in the overall machine.

Creating new and improving existing relationships emphasising the importance of place based physical activity helps to break down traditional and technocratic approaches.

By giving responsibility to communities and educating key stakeholders about making the most of their resources there is potential for sustainable physical activity that does not rely on core funding.

Active Essex support wider organisations and locally trusted partners to embody this place based transformational approach. However, people are still reliant on core funding.

ABCD System headlines

Going Deeper into findings - ABCD

What we Explored:

With engagement from stakeholders within the complex system of the community, such as council members and members of the CCG (at the time of writing), there is an opportunity to both understand and adapt some of their core beliefs, values, and goals for their community. Additional services such as health and social care have started to notice the benefit of ABCD-driven physical activity in some communities, demonstrating a potential for success within this. Using this level of buy in, it may be possible to alter modes of thinking about community development and create a shift from deficit-based approaches to strengths-based approaches for supporting physical activity in Essex. By focusing on this, the communities can get creative and develop programmes based on the drive of the members of the public.

What we found:

Active Essex fund and support non-traditional providers of physical activity to encourage wider participation amongst inactive residents through supporting wider organisations that may not have been traditionally supported to delivery physical activity. These non-traditional methods have seen structural change where the approach to increasing physical activity is broader, working with community groups that have the potential to increase physical activity through their provision with gardening and litter picking two prominent examples of investment into projects that primarily see physical activity as a secondary outcome to socialisation, mental wellbeing and sense of community. Find Your Active is an example where non-traditional providers receive support to increase physical activity levels amongst inactive groups.

However, in practice this is challenging whereby **"The shift to ABCD is politically tricky"** (Francine, Senior System Stakeholder) as physical activity is not top of the agenda outside of the physical activity sector. System stakeholders wider than physical activity have **"other priorities to integrate into our work alongside ABCD"** (Francine). Whilst Active Essex has a voice in promoting an ABCD to integrating physical activity, it is a small bit of the work delivered across the system.

Active Essex leaders seek to develop relationships with wider stakeholders that may benefit from an ABCD approach, integrating physical activity into their strategies to reach their goals. Whilst there is this positioning of Active Essex having a voice within forums and panels across the system, it is in the foundational stages of potentially spreading across the system.

Going Deeper into findings - ABCD

What we Explored:

ABCD approaches could be seen to have some pushback with key stakeholders due to the desire to have control over programmes and activities within the area. This may be attributed to political motivations, such as elections and a desire for recognition. By educating or training these key stakeholders such as local officials and council members and giving them a deeper understanding of the benefits of ABCD, it may be possible to foster a sense of consciousness around the community itself being able to take more control of physical activity programmes in Essex.

What we found:

Active Essex's approach to physical activity via ABCD has allowed them to support new and innovative approaches to physical activity is supported by creating new relationships with LTO's that deliver community-based activity and improving existing relationships. Active Essex continues to positively influence and support partners and community groups (through funding and guidance) that already deliver physical activity opportunities and those who hold a belief in the potential of physical activity.

The mutual interest in seeking to improve community wellbeing and resilience when positioning ABCD amongst stakeholders is important when developing relationships across stakeholders. Active Essex leadership are involved in developing relationships with wider stakeholders (healthcare, county council) to emphasise the importance of physical activity across the system, but Active Essex remains a "**small cog in the overall machine**" (Megan, Senior System Stakeholder) which limits its influence in embedding this physical activity approach across the system.

Joe (Senior System Stakeholder) experiences pushback on an ABCD approach where "**people are not on the same page [regarding physical activity] so this is a process or a journey that we are still on**". There is difficulty around political buy in where "**some politicians may struggle to let go as to who leads with physical activity and how to approach ensuring autonomy sits with community members**" (Francine). Roger (Senior System Stakeholder) has also seen challenge where "**there is difficulty in getting the politicians seeing the value**" of place based physical activity programmes.

What do these findings mean and where do we take them for refinement?

Active Essex promotes and leads ABCD with their LTO's as an embedded way of working as they share mutual interest in supporting communities through ABCD approaches to physical activity. This integration through ABCD provides an opportunity to grow this way of working into other sectors who are not always on board.

The positioning and participation of leaders in wider system forums to "push" place-based working is done with an understanding that there is a need for relationship building and bringing people into the journey (through leaders' charisma) but also the expertise and knowledge they have. Active Essex have used their resourcing and positioning well in starting to promote this movement of place-based working.

There is a shared belief amongst engaged stakeholders that funding community led provision will help to fulfil community outcomes. Community members are supported via an ABCD approach to access funding and support to deliver physical activity. In moving forward it is important to think about how 'inside out' approaches to community development may involve more communities on the ground in decision making, whilst taking ownership over the process.



A close-up photograph of two hands shaking in a firm grip. The hand on the left is wearing a silver smartwatch, and the hand on the right is wearing a gold smartwatch with a dark blue face. The background is a soft, out-of-focus blue sky. A large, semi-transparent red speech bubble is overlaid in the center of the image, containing white text.

Section 3.3

Deep Dive 3: Find Your Active Findings

Initial assumption

Community connectors are active members of the community who commence conversations with other residents to make them aware of opportunities to be physically active.

For individuals suffering or at risk of social isolation and loneliness, FYA gives these people the opportunity to connect and develop relationships.

People struggling to find activities and know where to look are able to access information about physical activity in informative place.

How is this playing out?

Community connectors work in innovative ways to access hard to reach groups. This is because of the connections they already have going into the role.

FYA gives people the opportunity to socialise with others whilst being physically active which is leading to socialising and volunteering outside of FYA activities. These people are a combination of isolated and non isolated.

The promotion of FYA website and opportunities via community Facebook groups is a good platform to promote physical activity and to connect people into physical activity. This gives connectors more reach to promote what is out there.

Community connectors sign post individuals to activities that include other activities outside of physical activity going wider than physical activity itself.

Find Your Active Impact headlines

Going Deeper into findings - Find Your Active

What we Explored:

If community connectors are there to encourage people to participate, then by interacting and making themselves part of the community, people will be more likely to participate because they will begin to gain a positive reputation and build relationships with community members.

What we found:

Community Connectors utilise non-physical activity spaces and activities (supermarkets, coffee mornings and arts and crafts activities) to provide opportunities to build relationships with community members. Jill (Community Connector) tries to promote FYA in her daily activities.

"I wear my FYA kit around so when I'm in [the supermarket] people ask me what FYA and I can spark a conversation from there" whereas some, like Anna (Community Connector) utilise their other job role that is community based to promote FYA through those avenues.

"I went out with the Fire Service to speak with socially isolated individuals. Where I could promote FYA, I had the leaflets ready to share with individuals that otherwise might have been missed" (Anna).

Anna also works with the local Women's Institute to promote opportunities to socialise at local coffee mornings where *"women are able to come along and be part of this wider social group. I lead from behind so when they are ready to take part in physical activity, it is their decision to take part and not mine"*.

Community connectors embody an approach of meeting individuals where they are on their physical activity journey. There is an understanding that some residents will need more support than others to attend physical activity opportunities. Jill (Community Connector) said *"I would go along to some of the activities with some women that didn't want to go alone. Once we got there and she was introduced to the instructor, I wasn't needed anymore!"*. Other examples has seen Jill signposting opportunities to residents with Hayley (activity instructor) *"losing tracking of the number of referrals from Jill"* with many that come through FYA *"being brand new to exercise"*.

Going Deeper into findings - Find Your Active

What we Explored:

If an individual is suffering from social isolation and loneliness, then by finding and joining a club through the Find Your Active they are more likely to develop relationships with other members, having a positive impact on isolation and feelings of loneliness, because they have chosen a club that interests them, meaning they will be in the company of likeminded people.

What we found:

93% of survey respondents feel they are included in the activity they were taking part in, with 85% saying that FYA helps them to socialise with others. There is lots of provision that focuses on physical activity as secondary outcome, with an emphasis on socialising with others or completing a non-traditional physical activity task such as gardening or litter picking. Low intensity activities are common where the intensity allows opportunities to converse throughout the activity, although community connectors also recommend more intense activities that suit the needs and wants of participants.

For those that do suffer from social isolation or loneliness, they are introduced to FYA and physical activity opportunities via another opportunity or organisation that was trying to help individuals overcome personal challenges in their life. For Kara (participant), attending the coffee morning put on by Anna (Community Connector) was important in eventually accessing physical activity. ***"I came along to the coffee mornings to meet other people, make friends and chat. It took some time to join the walks, but I felt more confident with Anna and others at the coffee morning and finally joined the walks which are fun. I'm outside and I'm with friends!"***

Going Deeper into findings - Find Your Active

What we Explored:

As Find Your Active was set up post Covid, the emphasis is on getting people back outside and active by highlighting group activities that people may enjoy or want to try as new experiences because for many people, Covid was a period of social isolation and physical inactivity during lockdown periods which caused many mental health issues which can begin to be resolved through social interaction and outdoor activities.

What we found:

Many FYA participants experience mental health issues as 46% reported a mental health issue, and 31% reporting that a benefit of participation in FYA was feeling mentally healthier. Being physically activity and being outdoors was highlighted as a key way for participants to maintain their mental wellbeing. Donna, (FYA activity organiser) experienced mental health issues, and had stopped working as a result. Donna felt she was **"stuck in the house with no confidence to go out. I saw people were litter picking through Facebook and decided it was a reason to get out the house"**. Being involved in the litter picking allows Donna to feel productive in making her local area look better and to be physically active without becoming overwhelmed and negatively impacting their mental health.

Being involved in FYA has seen different benefits for participants where there is an increase in physical activity levels post covid (51%) and strengthening of mental health (27%).

FYA focuses on physical activity and promotes the benefits of being more active for an individual's wellbeing, including their mental health. Many of the activities are low intensity with walking very popular as the intensity allows for conversation, and it is accessible in terms of clothing and equipment requirements. This also builds on green and blue spaces within the community where residents can exercise for free, locally, although where an indoor venue was required, some FYA activity organisers found difficult as **"every community space around here is booked up"** (Hayley, activity instructor).

Going Deeper into findings - Find Your Active

What we Explored:

If people are struggling to find activities that they enjoy or that suit their lifestyle then by interacting with the Find Your Active website, they will be exposed to a wider range of activities that they may enjoy because the website provides information about a vast array of local activities and clubs as well as home-based activities that people can utilise to increase their physical and mental wellbeing.

What we found:

Promotion of activity is popular via family and friends (27%) and social media (44%). Facebook most common in conversation with participants who were members of community Facebook groups and their local FYA Facebook page was promoted via the community Facebook page. Grace (Community Connector) said how some FYA participants that meet her at activities **"go on Facebook [and] put a little comment on my [FYA] Facebook page"** This means Grace feels like she is making a connection with these people online.

Community Connectors utilise Facebook for participants to discuss authentic experiences of FYA so that others can resonate and trust the activity is true and enjoyable because the experience is shared by a real person. Anna (Community Connector) would encourage participants in her activities to post their experiences to **"make the activities seem genuinely enjoyed and not just promoted by myself"**. The website is often shared via social media via the FYA community connector as well, however no one on the FYA activity visits (led by the evaluation team) had accessed the website. There was some concern as to how up to date the activity finder on the website was where Mike (FYA Ambassador) said **"the criticism some people give is that the information goes out of date very quickly"**.

Further supporting evidence for Find Your Active

- **Community residents who engaged with Find Your Active said key benefits that they experienced related to increased physical activity, increased feelings of positive mental health and wellbeing and increased engagement with social interactions.**
- **Community residents agreed that they felt:**
 - 98% physically healthier
 - 95% more active
 - 85% more confident in general
 - 85% more focused
 - 71% more independent
 - 78% more able to tackle any health conditions
 - 83% more included (socially)

What do these findings mean and where do we take them for refinement?

Participants that engage in FYA activities feel healthier and increase their physical activity levels through participating.

Social media is a key avenue for participants to find out about FYA activities whilst word-of-mouth is another common way individuals are introduced to FYA.

Community Connectors are important in supporting inactive individuals into physical activity. Their approaches are innovative to meet potentially inactive individuals in non-physically active environments with the intention of meeting the community members where they are on their physical activity journey. This links with the importance of ABCD provision.

Where FYA participants are socially isolated, being introduced to cultural intermediaries, that are trusted by Active Essex and LTOs, within non-physically active environments is important to relationship building. This is a longer-term view for introducing socially isolated individuals to physical activity where they trust the cultural intermediary to participate in FYA.



Initial
assumption

As FYA activities are taken up by community members, then system partners will recognise the benefits and further promote the programme.

If healthcare providers recognise the benefits of FYA then they will refer patients into FYA activities.

How is this
playing out?

AE's emphasis on place based working and meeting people where they are on their physical activity journey is embedded within FYA activities. LTO's recognise how being physically active is different for different people leading to supporting of innovative activities to suit a wider range of residents.

Where Stakeholders in the health sector, that hold a belief that physical activity has potential for better health outcomes, have actively engaged with FYA, they have actively referred patients into suitable FYA activities.

Find Your Active System headlines

Going Deeper into findings - Find Your Active

What we Explored:

If stakeholders across the community and programme partners collaborate in the provision of these activities, then this will help to develop the local community because there may be an increase in the utilisation of neglected space within the community. By utilising this neglected space, it increases the value of the area, as it is likely that it will be more taken care of and become an asset to the programme. Increasing the net value of the area may lead to greater attraction to the programmes available and spread awareness and support.

What we found:

Where Active Essex positions ABCD at the centre of their approach to place based physical activity provision, there is a broad range of physical activity opportunities that are promoted as part of FYA. Basildon and Colchester (who work closely with Active Essex through the Local Delivery Pilot) have embraced FYA within their PA focus. Lisa (system stakeholder), states how FYA funding "**[does] not just go to the same people who we know have had funding before**". It is opening new community groups and members to work with to fund new ideas that can reach different members of the community.

Participants spoken to feel a greater connection to their local space as they were able to experience it through taking part in the FYA activity where sessions were hosted in community blue and green spaces. Dianne (FYA Participant) enjoyed "**being in a beautiful place that's so close to where I live**" encouraging her to use the space more often for leisure opportunities. Innovative approaches to PA are embraced by Active Essex and LTO's, where there is potentially added value to local community spaces. Examples of this are litter picking and gardening which have been funded through FYA. For LA's, they understand how these types of activities can offer benefits to the community wider than increased physical activities, and where "**there is less funding available [for LAs]**" (Roger, Senior System Stakeholder), Active Essex's approach to ABCD is considered a potential opportunity to achieve community based strategic goals.

An ABCD approach has meant Active Essex relationships with LTO's goes beyond a transactional relationship, where support is provided to focus on a community led approach to physical activity. This a change in structural approach to traditional physical activity, working towards an inside out approach where the community that understands its needs is supported to utilise its assets, to provide opportunities to be physically active.

Going Deeper into findings - Find Your Active

What we Explored:

If healthcare providers and other system stakeholders begin to notice the benefits of Find Your Active within the community, then they will begin to refer patients to the service because of the wide array of activities that accommodate for all abilities and preferences, this is because it will begin to be built into their practices.

What we found:

With an embedded ABCD and Place-based working approach, there is a consistent understanding amongst stakeholders that Find Your Active is about providing opportunities for people to participate in physical activity. **"We are still having problems in some health arenas"** (Francine, Senior System Stakeholder). There is a structural influence where a LA is embedding staff across the Local Delivery Pilot with Active Essex, and the health team. Francine does acknowledge that **"the health arena is one of the hardest areas to break through"** but Mike (FYA Ambassador), who works within the healthcare system, believes **"by harnessing the power of communities to promote physical activity, we can keep people fitter and healthier and happier and give them better health outcomes for longer"**. This belief was influenced by his experience of utilising FYA as interventions for physical activity for individuals that were waiting for surgery with the intention of them returning quickly to activity post-surgery.

There is commitment from LTO's and LAs to promote FYA as a referral opportunity for system stakeholders. Francine acknowledges that **"getting people who are making the clinical decisions into to the process of routine referrals is really challenging"** and this is also seen by Hayley (fitness instructor) who said **"I know loads of fitness instructors that have done the whole GP referral schemes. They're always complaining they don't get the referrals"** although she did argue that **"GPs are not going to recommend an exercise class they haven't attended"**. Where a trainee GP had attended some of Hayleys PA sessions and saw Hayley was a qualified instructor delivering PA suitable for older adults, the trainee GP began referring patients into the programme.


What do these findings mean and where do we take them for refinement?

LTOs and LAs that work with Active Essex and seek to embody an ABCD approach see FYA as an opportunity to sustain and grow community led physical activity. There is a shared belief in utilising community assets as spaces for physical activity provision.

Positioning health professionals who share the belief of community led physical activity leading to better health outcomes within Active Essex has been able to help connect FYA within the health sector. To move beyond connection and for FYA to be promoted and embedded into healthcare provision, shared beliefs amongst stakeholders is vital.

Where FYA embodies an ABCD approach, many of the findings and recommendations from the ABCD section are applicable to FYA.





Section 3.4
Deep Dive 4: ActivAte/HAF
findings

Initial assumption

If socialisation has declined since COVID then **ActivAte/HAF** can provide a safe place for children to socialise during the school holidays.

The ActivAte/HAF programme will support families that are low income through providing free childcare opportunities in the holidays.

When children participate in the ActivAte/HAF activities, trust between the children and staff builds which leads to conversations and actions around physical activity and healthy eating.

How is this playing out?

Children's motivation for attending ActivAte/HAF is predominantly to socialise with their peers and with staff members in a fun and safe environment. Parents and carers also felt their children were making friends through ActivAte/HAF.

ActivAte/HAF provides opportunities for Parents/Carers to spend time caring for family, working or education/training, or moments of respite without the costs of childcare.

Parents/Carers who have paid for the programme also benefit from the opportunities provided however they have the cost of childcare.

Staff are important in fostering a safe and trusting environment for participants to have a positive experience. Children follow the example set by the staff i.e. staff eating range of foods, children more likely to try the foods. Staff being physically active and joining in, children more likely to join in.

ActivAte/HAF Impact headlines

Going deeper into findings – ActivAte /HAF Participant Reflective Log One

What healthy foods do you eat at home?

"Veggies, peas, corn, banana, raspberry, strawberry."

Sa

Sammy felt she ate healthily at home, and recorded the items she enjoyed in her diary.

What new healthy foods have you tried in the sessions? "Melon, watermelon."

Sammy preferred breadsticks as a snack but didn't think they were healthy. The activity provided many options for Sammy to try new foods.

Do staff encourage you to make healthy choices? "No I encourage myself."

She agreed that staff would eat healthy but felt she could her own decisions without encouragement.

Are the staff role models to you for being healthy? "No, I am my role model."

Sammy set and managed her own goals, using a diary to make sure she drank enough water. She said the staff were active and ate healthy food in front of the children.

Do you feel happy coming here? "Sometimes."

Why? "I get into arguments [with friends]." Sammy struggled to communicate, leading to arguments. Staff remained calm and wouldn't prevent attendance or send anyone home

Do you feel safe coming here? "Yes."

Why? "Gates (school gates) and solve things myself."

Sammy felt safe and was familiar with the school in which the activities were based.

What have you enjoyed the most? "Lots of paper."

Sammy enjoyed writing and drawing. The staff made sure other provisions were available if she didn't want to engage in physical activity.

What have you not enjoyed? "Arguments."

Sammy's differences in communication caused conflict with others. She was told she "displays bad body language" and appears disinterested or rude towards others and their feelings.

Sammy- Summer 2022

- Sammy was provided with a safe space to take time alone when overstimulated, helping build trust with the staff and feeling safe with the activity.
- Staff sought to re-engage children with varying needs to make sure they felt included and encouraged socialising with others.
- In creating a fun, safe and understanding atmosphere, staff could build trust with the children and encourage healthier eating.
- Staff completed qualifications to better support children and young people with SEND. This created a deeper understanding, develop communication skills and create an inclusive environment.

Dan – Summer 2022

- Dan is 9 years old and enjoys attending as he could be with his friends and play games.
- He thought the staff were "really polite" which helped him feel included and involve others in activities.
- Dan found other activities "really enjoyable" and could also take part in his favourite activity, which was important to him.
- Staff encouragement and understanding helped build trust with the children. This created a safe environment where the children felt comfortable taking part in new activities.

Going deeper into findings – ActivAte /HAF Participant Reflective Log Two

What healthy foods do you eat at home?

"Apples, Bananas, Strawberries, Salad."

Dan said he eats healthily at home but struggled to recall more examples.

What new healthy foods have you tried in the sessions? *"Peppers, Cucumbers."*

Dan felt he has tried most of the food outside of this session and was not a picky eater. He reported eating most of what he was given, whether it was healthy or not.

Do staff encourage you to make healthy choices? *"They encourage us to be active in a nice way."* Dan felt they had the option to take part when they were ready and weren't punished if they chose not to.

Are the staff role models to you for being healthy? *"They are really polite, and they join in activities with us."*

The positive relationship with staff encouraged Dan to join in with new things or activities he didn't enjoy outside of the HAF programme.

Do you feel happy coming here? *"Yes."*

Why? *"it's fun and they do football which is my favourite."*

Do you feel safe coming here? *"Yes."*

Why? *"All of the staff members are nice."*

Football was important to Daniel as it was his favourite activity. He felt comfortable participating in other activities as he trusted the staff who would encourage trying different activities.

What have you enjoyed the most? *"The zorbs because I kept rolling backwards and I loved it."*

This was a new experience for Dan.

What have you not enjoyed? *"I really enjoyed everything."*

Dan felt everything was fun and enjoyable to take part in, with staff facilitating an inclusive and safe experience that motivated Dan to take part.

Going deeper into findings – ActivAte/HAF

What we Explored:

If children lack role models at home, then by attending these clubs that put them in contact with people working within the community to aid in the intervention delivery, trust begins to be built between the children and supervisors and staff leading to a development of role models because children will begin to form relationships with peers and staff.

What we found:

Children look forward to seeing some staff members again after seeing them at other activities/previous holiday provision which makes them feel comfortable when attending the activities. **"Some of the children will bring the staff drawings they made at home"** (Andrea, delivery staff) and children described the staff as **"fun", "silly", "kind"** and **"helpful"**. Despite parents and carers having limited interaction with staff, two parents received **"glowing reports on the staff"** from the children.

For Dan (participant, reflective log two), staff are important in getting him to try activities he was unfamiliar with or did not like because he trusts it will be fun if the staff member joined in due to the positive relationship that had been built up by staff with himself. **"They join in the activities, and it makes me want to join in too"** (Dan).

The children feel welcome when they turned up to sessions. **"They would greet us when we turn up and give us nicknames. They are always happy to see us"** (Lily, participant). The staff are positive to the children and displayed healthy habits where children saw **"adults always moving around"** and **"eating the fruit snacks"**.

Where children had higher needs, they benefit from staff that are trained and have experience in working with higher needs children. For Sammy (Reflective Log One), her need for a safe space and patience when experiencing conflict is important to allow her to feel included so that she could re-join the group when she was ready. Staff had undergone training in working with higher needs children and work to provide an inclusive environment.

Going deeper into findings – ActivAte/HAF

What we Explored:

If there is a large population of in obesity in children per capita, then by providing an intervention which teaches children how to eat correctly and healthily through first hand lessons on nutrition, there will be a shift in mindset on a wider group as children will transmit what they have learnt to peers through their direct and indirect actions, therefore creating healthier children as they begin to recognise the benefits of healthy eating.

What we found:

ActivAte/HAF delivery partner A had built up a relationship with a local restaurant to provide inexpensive food that was still nutritious. This relationship was informal, but it means low cost, nutritional food was provided because the local partner wants to help by providing inexpensive food to local children. Where children like Sammy (reflective log one) are fussy eaters, they are a range of snacks that ensure there is an option to eat if the children do not like the main lunch option. The delivery partner also offers less healthy options such as breadsticks as a last resort for children who do not like the snacks or main lunch option so that these children are still fed.

Delivery partner B's provision of hot food provision is limited to burger, sausage, or chicken nuggets and chips for lunch. This does not align to the values of teaching children to eat correctly and healthily although there are options of fruit as healthy snacks. The nutritional value of the food is not an issue for some parents and carers because they feel children could be *"fussy"* and *"it was more important they ate something rather than nothing"*. The survey data suggests that 82% of parents and carers feel the food options were healthy although only 59% feel their children talk about healthy foods they eat at the activities.

Some children that are entitled to free lunches bring their own packed lunch, guaranteeing something they like but not guaranteeing the nutritional quality.

Going deeper into findings – ActivAte/HAF

What we Explored:

If there is limited support to lower income households in regard to managing working life and childcare, then this initiative will support parents with childcare along with the added benefits of the programme therefore making it more attractive because parents will not have to pay for childcare or take time off work to care for their child allowing them to generate more of a disposable income.

What we found:

For parents and carers, ActivAte/HAF provides an opportunity for childcare which allows them to work, care for other children or family members, or for moments of relaxation. 54% of parents and carers are able to work during the times their children were at ActivAte/HAF. One parent works from home so **"having them occupied during the day means I can work without worrying about entertaining [the children]"** whilst another has a new-born baby so it provides them with the opportunity to relax and look after their baby.

The ActivAte/HAF programme is important to parents that do not use the programme as childcare to go to work. For their children, they enjoy **"seeing friends in the holidays"** and taking part in their favourite activities, keeping them entertained whilst the parents can care for other family members or use the time for relaxation. The opportunity to work is not the key factor for all parents signing up their children to participate in ActivAte/HAF.

Going deeper into findings – ActivAte/HAF

What we Explored:

If families are apprehensive to send their children to the programme, then by recognising the success and benefits of the programme through the community they will be more inclined to sign their children up therefore reaching a larger audience.

What we found:

The relationship of LTO's with Active Essex allows for continued provision across Essex with trusted providers. Providers deliver locally and are known by community members (ABCD and Place Based working). For Angelica, she has attended the activities for the last couple of years. ***"I know lots of the instructors but sometimes there are new ones. They're fun as well. I like coming here"***. Angelica felt she is treated well by staff and that behaviours were dealt with well. ***"Sometimes we can be silly or loud, but the instructors always talk to us. They don't shout if they tell us off"***.

Where there is a need for support for higher needs children, organisations are expected to cater for this by Active Essex. There needs to be greater education around working with SEND children across all staff involved in ActivAte/HAF where children may not be supported and even excluded because additional needs. LTO's that have experience and training in working with SEND children recognise that many parents and carers were grateful for an activity club that was inclusive for their child.

Going deeper into findings – ActivAte/HAF

What we Explored:

If socialisation amongst children has declined since COVID, then we can introduce a safe place for children to socialise, parents will then recognise the social benefits of the programme and the main driver for parents will no longer be the food because they will understand the multitude of other positive effect to both themselves and their children.

What we found:

The main driver for many parents and carers appears to be the opportunity for their children to socialise during the holidays, where the food was beneficial but the opportunity for their children to socialise with others was more important than the nutritious value of the food. Joe (parent) feel that their child could "**see their friends and do different activities**". It also meant children were out of this house and "**not playing on their consoles**" (Glenn, parent). Angelica (participant) said that if she wasn't at the ActivAte/HAF provision, she would "**probably be lazy or playing online with my friends**" during the holidays.

Socialising with friends is a big reason that children enjoy attending ActivAte/HAF. They can meet new people and see their friends in the holidays, whilst taking part in fun and structured activities. The instructors/coaches create a fun environment where children could enjoy participating in these activities and make new friends. ActivAte/HAF activities provides opportunities for the children to socialise which is important to the children and parents. 90% of parents and carers feel their child had made new friends through ActivAte/HAF, where the activities provides fun opportunities to be active and facilitates a fun environment to meet new people.

Further supporting evidence for ActivAte/Holiday Activity Food

- Parents and carers were asked about their perceptions as to how their children engaged with the ActivAte HAF activities.
- Whilst their children took part, parents and carers told us that they were able to engage in paid employment (54%), childcare (19%), take vital time to relax (12%), participate in education or training (10%) or undertake other activities (such as errands) (5%).
- **Parents and carers strongly agreed that:**
 - 83% the activities were fun
 - 99% the activities promoted positive wellbeing in their child
 - 90% their child made friends whilst meeting and socialising with other children
 - 79% the activities were healthy for the children to engage with
 - 89% said their child will engage in more physical activities in the future
 - 68% their child learned new skills or abilities relating to physical activities
 - 71% their child was more confident because of the activities
 - 59% children had talked about the healthy food and drinks they were given. 82% parents and carers said they thought themselves that the food options were healthy and 80% said the drink options were healthy too.

What do these findings mean and where do we take them for refinement?

ActivAte/HAF provides opportunities for children to socialise during the school holidays where they may otherwise not socialise with other children. The inclusive nature of activities and staff is important to encouraging children to connect with others during the activities.

Overall, ActivAte/HAF promotes a message of healthy eating during the activities. Activity providers influence the provision of healthy foods in which children can eat whilst attending the programme and staff act as role models when they demonstrate healthy eating habits in front of the children.

There is a need to identify where providers would benefit from support in accessing inexpensive and nutritional food. This is to ensure nutritional food is offered throughout all providers.

There is a gap in understanding if families are accessing further opportunities of support through signposting. Where there are relationships with organisations being signposted to for additional support and resources, it is important to identify how and why families are accessing additional support.



Initial assumption

Working with Locally Trusted Organisations (LTOs) means there is capacity to build trust within the community. These clubs will provide a safe and fun environment for vulnerable families because these organisations will already be well established and understanding of community needs.

If ActivAte/HAF is able to pick up traction with system partners, then these system partners will start to embed strategic goals of the programme because they recognise the benefits to the community and therefore align their aims and objectives with this.

How is this playing out?

AE had already built up a good network of LTO's they can utilise and support to deliver the HAF/ActivAte programme. This meant many organisations that delivered the programme were able to provide more opportunities for physical activity or additional support post ActivAte/HAF programme delivery.

It is clear that the aims and philosophies of the ActivAte/HAF programme are fully embraced by the LTO's delivering it. However, more collaboration is needed across the Essex landscape if more senior system stakeholders are to embrace the role of ActiveAte/HAF providing sustainability beyond the reliance on government funding.

ActivAte/HAF System headlines

Going deeper into findings – ActivAte/HAF

What we Explored:

If ActivAte/HAF picks up more traction with system partners, then there is more potential for it to be reflected in the strategic goals of these organisations because they will recognise the benefits that the intervention is bringing to the community so will therefore align themselves with similar aims and objectives.

What we found:

The influence of ActivAte/HAF is amongst LTO's that Active Essex work with already. The network was built up over time and has enabled Active Essex to deliver the ActivAte/HAF programme which had post programme opportunities for physical activity already available via the LTO's delivery outside of the school holidays. This sees a continuation of mutual interest in getting people active, through a different programme where funding is available.

There is potential for community capacity building in which opportunities for further support are signposted to families that are potentially vulnerable as they are in receipt of free school meals or are low income. Where ActivAte/HAF is the conduit between families and potential access to further opportunities, there is need track how families engage when signposted to understand if families are accessing these further opportunities as a result in their engagement in ActivAte/HAF.

Going deeper into findings – HAF/ActivAte

What we Explored:

If ActivAte/HAF can encourage healthier eating amongst children, then wider stakeholders may refer children that need the programme as the benefits are being recognised. This referral system may aid in targeting the most in need cases and will also promote the programme to families that qualify.

What we found:

The LTO's that Active Essex work with embody the values of ActivAte/HAF to provide opportunities for children to be physically active and have access to nutritious food. There is an understanding of the potential benefits to vulnerable families when they can access free holiday childcare with free food, amongst the organisations involved directly in ActivAte/HAF.

Supporting low-income families is a politically contentious subject. For wider, potential, system partners, the political will for change may not see ActivAte/HAF as a viable option to reach their strategic goals and may cause a divide amongst sectors goals and beliefs and how supporting ActivAte/HAF benefits them. Where parents and carers may potentially be **"unemployed, feeling depressed, not living in a great community, housing substandard. The fact you've taught me to cook from scratch probably isn't going to going to generate fundamental change"** (Megan, Senior System Stakeholder) there is a concern over how ActivAte/HAF can have a sustainable impact in tackling structural inequalities. Whilst there are conversations happening across sectors, in which Active Essex are involved to some extent, stakeholders are **"not as joined up as we could be"** (Megan, Senior System Stakeholder).

What do these findings mean and where do we take them for refinement?

ActivAte/HAF is positioned to provide low-income and targeted families access to further support and resources that can potentially improve their overall wellbeing. Within a constrained education sector and cost of living crisis there is significant value for wider sector integration to take shape in considering how such an approach can become sustainable.

For ActivAte/HAF to have wider system stakeholder engagement within the programme, there is a need to demonstrate the value that Active Essex provides through ActivAte/HAF in achieving outcomes that are important to wider system stakeholders.

The background of the slide features a close-up, shallow depth-of-field shot of a person's hand holding a silver pen. The pen is positioned as if about to point at a line graph displayed on a computer monitor. The graph shows a blue line that rises to a peak and then fluctuates. A vertical red line is drawn on the graph, intersecting the peak of the blue line. The overall lighting is soft and blue-toned.

Section 3.5

Social Return on Investment findings

Social return on investment

Based on the outcomes that could be monetarised, a social return on investment (SROI) forecast was undertaken for people who were known participants because they engaged with either Essex Pedal Power, Find Your Active, ActivAte Holiday Activity Food or Asset Based Community Development between the start of 2021 and the end of 2022.

This forecast SROI tentatively illustrated that for every £1 that was invested, it will be possible to generate £16.47 in social value when the programme is delivered to the target audience who achieve the intended outcomes that can be measured.

The processes that led to this calculation are described on the following slides.

Social return on investment

A forecast social return on investment (SROI) was integrated into this realist evaluation to explore the potential impact and social value across the Active Essex four areas of focus. The four areas were Essex Pedal Power (EPP), Find Your Active (FYA), ActivAte Holiday Activity Food (ActivAte HAF) and Asset Based Community Development (ABCD).

An array of intended outcomes were identified through conversations, workshops, interviews, focus groups and survey methods that were utilised throughout the wider evaluation to explore for whom, how and why Active Essex works for people who engage with at least one of the four areas of focus. Through a broad appraisal, we also asked, under optimal conditions, how much of a social value return Active Essex stakeholders might expect to see. This considered the different contexts and resources that varied across the four areas of focus.

Social return on investment

There are challenges to all evaluation methods. The social return on investment approach is no exception to critique. Forecasting necessarily involves decisions about what and how to explore social value and these decisions may make sense to some stakeholders and not to others. It is important to transparently bring this critique to the surface. Overall, we present the forecasted SROI here as a starting place for future work. This might include for example, an evaluative SROI/ROI, cost benefit analysis or use of the Wellby approach. In our capacity building work, we thought it was important to build into the survey designs that were co-produced with Active Essex, aligned data collection so that the Wellby work could continue at pace with data collected during this evaluation period.

This SROI demonstrates the wide engagement with stakeholders, their perspectives about intended outcomes and the potential impact and value that successful engagement with using one's own bike, taking part in activities that involve movement, nutritious eating and drinking and/or making the most of community assets and activities might be realized. The SROI method or steps taken, alongside the findings are presented on the following slides.

The SROI principles and steps

To promote clarity and transparency, the SROI method is guided by a series of principles and steps. The guiding principles are outlined below.

1. Involve stakeholders

- Develop inclusive and collaborative relationships.
- Co-identify the focus, value, method and beneficiaries.

2. Understand what changes

- Understand change through the programme theories. For this evaluation, this includes the integration of the Action Scales Model and the National Evaluation and Learning Partnership work that can support the SROI process in considering the plausible contributions and outcomes from the goal of hardwiring of physical activity into the Active Essex system.

3. Value things that matter

- Use financial proxies to recognise the value of outcomes. These change over time.
- This gives voice to outcomes previously excluded and offers balance in power between outcomes and stakeholders.

4. Only include 'what is material'

- Determine what evidence and information is included to give a fair picture, to enable stakeholders to draw reasonable conclusions about impact.

5. Do not over-claim

- Focus on the value that the organisation is responsible for creating or being involved in creating.
- Factor in the impact of other organisations where this information exists (evaluative SROI).

6. Be transparent

- Document decisions about areas such as stakeholder inclusion, outcomes, methods, and information sources.
- Consider the influence of the SROI analyses in future adaptation of approaches.

7. Verify findings

- Ensure appropriate independent assurance.
- Ensure decisions are open to enable others assess how reasonable the whole analyses was.
- The evaluative SROI approach has more detailed opportunities to verify the findings.

Social return on investment method

The forecast SROI steps



Step 1

Establishing programme scope and identifying key stakeholders.

This included (though was not limited to) Active Essex's relationship managers, staff involved with ABCD, EPP, FYA and ActivAte HAF, embedded researchers, partner organisations, funders, council stakeholders and community members.



Step 2

Mapping the outcomes for all programme cohorts.

This included the identification of a broad set of intended outcomes that were shared across all four areas of focus. For consistency, the Sport England approach to considering the social and economic value of community sport and physical activity in England was used as a guide (Davies, Christy, Ramchandani and Taylor, 2019).



Step 3

Identifying how organisations might evidence their outcomes and understand the context surrounding them.

Sourcing approaches to information glean about the outcomes. Outcomes were then monetised to indicate their financial value. For future SROI or CBA work, the approach to evidencing outcomes has built in industry and academic standard ONS measures (Office for National Statistics) that also align to the Wellby approach.



Step 4

Establishing the potential impact of the programmes within Active Essex collectively.

Exploring the potential intended and unintended outcomes that might occur and whether the data collected can account for the outcomes and impact of the programmes, where there are shared ideas about the outcomes.



Step 5

Calculating the SROI

Taking into account the deadweight (what happens anyway), attribution (who else facilitated outcomes) and drop-off from Active Essex. Note: One SROI for all four programmes has been commissioned and there is an initial plan for further exploration of the calculations will take place with Amelia Hall.



Step 6

Dissemination of the SROI

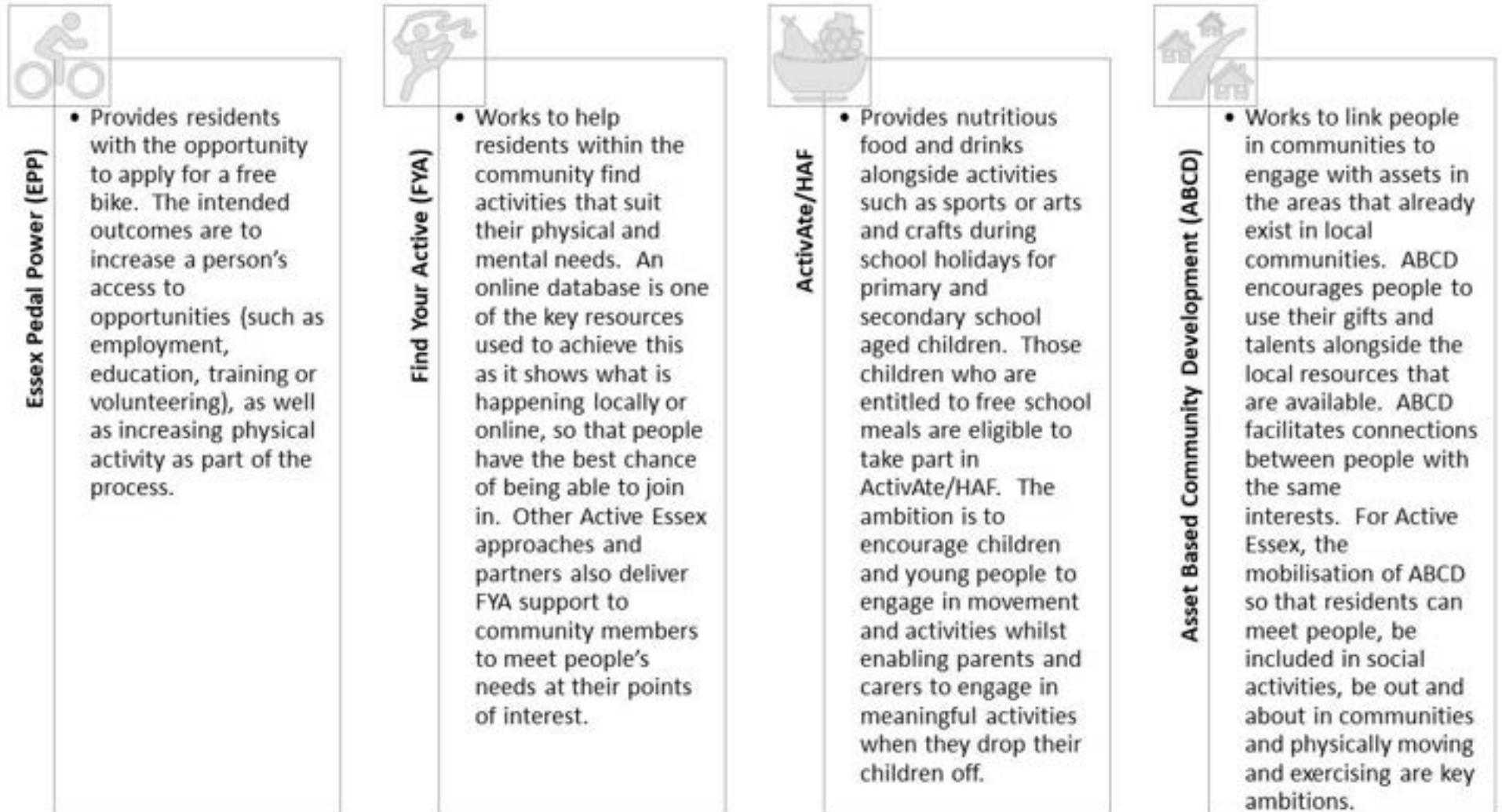
This is achieved through reporting and embedding the findings into practice. Tangible outputs of this process will have the potential for future utility. As such, we have included a broad approach towards dissemination in the main report.



SROI Step 1: Programme Scope and stakeholder findings

Active Essex SROI Scope

A forecast SROI was undertaken based on budget and participant engagement data between 2021 and 2022. The scope included four key areas within Active Essex, as outlined in the diagram below.



SROI Step 1: Programme Scope and stakeholder findings

Active Essex SROI Scope

Further work is being planned by Active Essex to commission a more detailed cost benefit analysis of Pedal Power at a national level. The evaluation team have supported this development (and to avoid conflict of interests, will not apply to undertake the work) as there is benefit to potentially link with this work through the dissemination steps in this SROI. As a light touch forecast SROI was undertaken as part of a wider evaluation, one single exploration of the social value has been undertaken, which was contributed to by all four areas of focus.

Active Essex Stakeholders

For the purpose of the SROI, stakeholders are defined as people or organisations that experience change or affect activity (Davies, Christy, Ramchandani and Taylor, 2019). As this SROI was integrated into the wider realist evaluation, this definition was expanded. This meant that stakeholders were included if they represented any person, group or organisation who had the potential to influence the "system" or to have an impact directly or indirectly on outcomes for people on an individual, community or organisational level, including Active Essex partners and the National Evaluation Learning Partnership (NELP) stakeholders.

Similarly, to the evaluation and SROI, the Sport England model also identifies stakeholders as public and government sector professionals, private and commercial sector employers and staff, charities and third sector organisations and the 'consumer' sector stakeholders who are Active Essex's residents and/or community members. The diagram on the following page examples some of the stakeholders who contributed to this evaluation and the SROI processes.

SROI Step 1: Programme Scope and stakeholder findings

Examples of the stakeholders who contributed to the evaluation/SROI



By building layers of evaluation approaches into conversations, workshop content, interview and focus groups schedules and surveys, it became possible to engage a wide number of stakeholders. This led to a detailed gleaning process to draw out patterns in the outcomes that different stakeholders identified (intended outcomes and observed outcomes). This mapping process is summarised in the diagram on the following page.

SROI Step 2: Mapping the intended outcomes findings

In this forecasting, the value of the inputs, a description of the activities and the numbers of residents who were known to engage with either EPP, FYA, ActivAte HAF or ABCD were captured. This can be seen in the scoping slide previously and in the inputs and outputs listed below. As a conservative measure, only those residents who were known to participate in one of the four areas of focus were considered in this SROI. However, there were gaps in terms of being able to audit precisely the extent to which people took part in FYA and ABCD because these activities are embedded naturally in communities. This means that residents can engage with opportunities to connect to activities without Active Essex necessarily knowing. With EPP and ActivAte HAF, there were more opportunities to gather data because of the onboarding processes, the nature of the activities and routine monitoring of resident engagement. Recommendations about developing a full framework to capture data to ease future analyses have been made at the end of the wider report. Based on stakeholder interview responses, there is an underestimation of the numbers of people who have benefited from or engaged with the activities.

Input value	Activity	Output measurement
£1198096.00 (2022-2023)	Essex Pedal Power	360 Residents were recipients of bikes / using their EPP bikes.
£2000000.00 (2021-2022)	Find Your Active	8,922 Unique attendances by residents were captured.
£4939840.00 (2022-2023)	ActivAte Holiday Activity Food	23,057 Unique attendances by child/young person residents were captured.
£7750.00 (2021-2022)	Asset Based Community Development	101 Residents are known to have engaged in ABCD activities or groups.

SROI Step 2: Mapping the intended outcomes findings

Increased physical activity and physical health: Reduction in risk of heart disease and stroke and type 2 diabetes. Increase in general good health. Increase in opportunities to eat and drink healthier or more nutritious meals.

Social connections and social and community development and volunteering/participation in employment, education or training opportunities: Increase in social inclusion, social networks and friendships. Increase in community, social and volunteering activities, all contributing to an increase in overall social capital. Some residents have used physical activity as a method to engage in education, employment or further training.

Increased mental health and wellbeing: Reduction in risk of loneliness and social isolation, depression and anxiety. Further, when family members observe an increase their loved one's mental health, wellbeing and physical activity, they worry less (and are less anxious).

Primary and unplanned healthcare access: Being happier and feeling healthier can be associated with less unplanned engagements with GPs.

Programme partner profile: When residents participate in physical activities through EPP, FYA, ActivAte HAF or ABCD, the involved delivery stakeholders benefit from the opportunities to evidence and disseminate their impact and this increases their public profile and reputational respect for a safe environment, safer physical activities and positive staff-community member relationships.

These outcomes were identified by stakeholders (see stakeholder scoping diagram). In most cases, the outcomes can be viewed in relation to their social impact and can be monetarised (based on published evidence). In the interests of *not* over-claiming and promoting transparency, outcomes cited here that cannot be supported through published evidence or where estimates of numbers of community members are not clear, have not been included in this SROI. However recommendations to explore these outcomes further have been outlined.

SROI Step 3: Identifying how outcomes might be evidenced

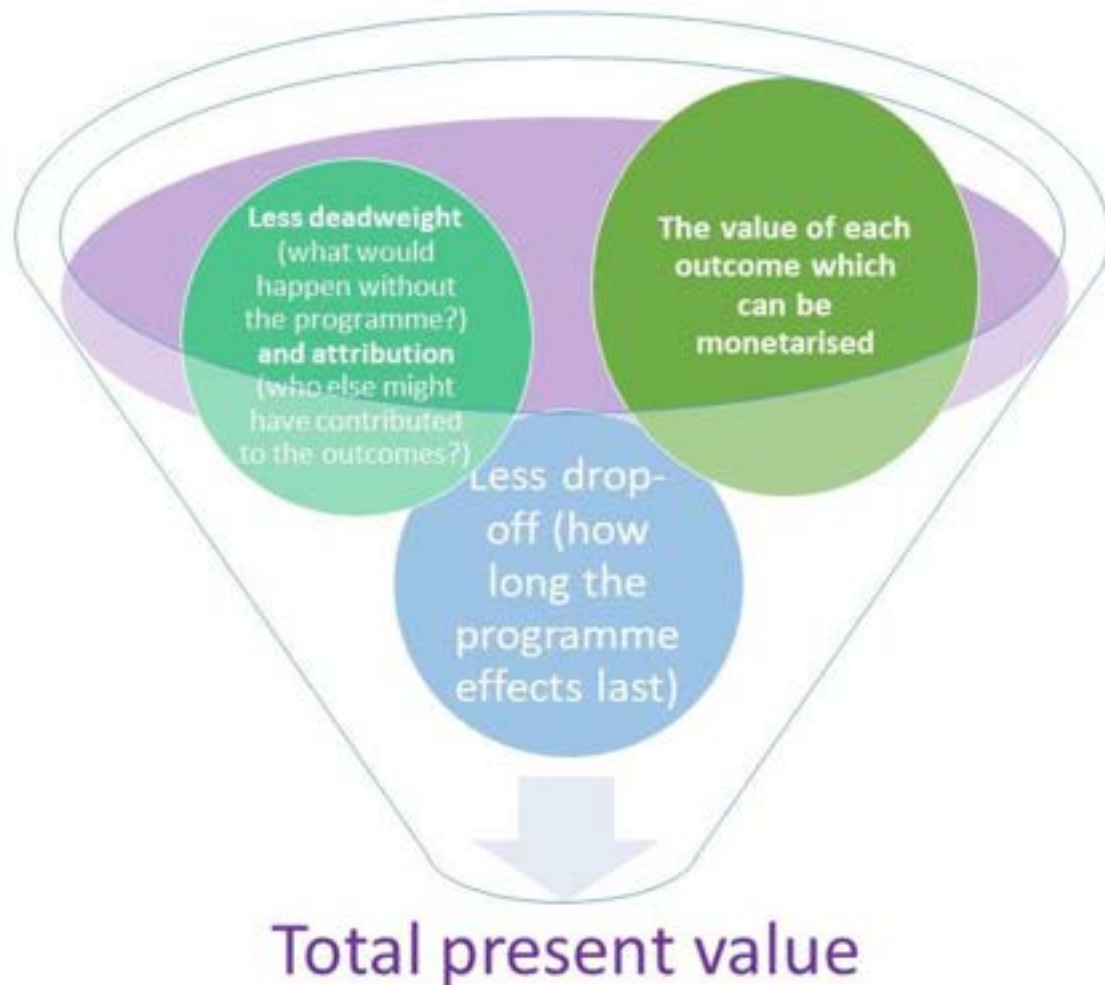
- We were encouraged by Active Essex staff and their partners, including the embedded researchers, community connectors, ambassadors, the council staff and charity and community organisations who were enthusiastic about evidencing the system and impact changes across the four areas of focus (EPP, FYA, ActivAte HAF and ABCD).
- We co-produced surveys and developed the evaluation methods with Active Essex and the embedded researchers. Connections with the National Evaluation and Learning Partners and the Local Delivery Pilot teams were strong throughout this work. Data was collected in each of the four areas of focus. However, we have advised adjustment to the framework so that outcomes may be evidenced at different timepoints over people's engagement in the four focus areas. Specific measures around the suggested SROI outcome areas may need to be built into future evaluations. We have encouraged the ongoing influence of the realist evaluation approach too, to continue to surface questions around for whom, under what circumstances and why within any analytical frameworks to contribute to explaining system and impact change.
- In terms of accompanying methods, we are aware that the Wellby may feature in future evidence building. Thus, we included the x4 ONS wellbeing questions that are recommended across statutory sources. We also recommend the continued use of mixed methods such as focus groups, interviews, stories of change and ripple effects mapping, whilst focusing upon the action scales model as a theoretical driver for evidence gathering.

SROI Step 4: Establishing the impact of the SROI analysis

Based on the work undertaken to date, the following impact of this SROI can be considered:

- This was a forecast SROI. We decided to focus on the outcomes based on a hypothetical though informed picture because we understand that further work will be undertaken in an evaluative sense. We suggest that the evaluation framework that is in its design phase can benefit from data collection that reflects in detail the value, resource and context inputs, an audit of the four areas of focus activities (being delivered or developed), the outputs (engagement level) and outcomes and impact monitoring. This could be captured as a 'common data set' to aid future analyses.
- We co-produced a series of community member (or resident) surveys, interview schedules and reflection logs that were administered to adults, children and young people and parents and carers who engaged with Active Essex. We also built the four ONS questions that the Wellby team advocate into the survey design so that the precise number of people impacted by statistically significant differences (with effect size considerations) can be calculated amongst participants to establish whether intended outcomes are achieved.
- The system and impact aspects of the wider evaluation found broadly agreed upon benefits from engaging in EPP, FYA, ActivAte HAF and/or ABCD amongst the majority of participants. Indeed, when it comes to establishing social value and impact, the questions that Active Essex may decide to focus on might be: ***“Is the money being spent on the target cohorts?”*** and ***“what sort of social value does the investment realise?”***. Naturally the emerging picture must be considered tentatively, though it is a promising picture and contributes to the wider evaluation findings.

SROI Step 5:
Estimating
the SROI
across all
four Active
Essex areas
(EPP, FYA,
ActivAte HAF
and ABCD)



The SROI can be calculated in different ways. We calculated it by dividing the total present value by the total inputs to the programme (the programme budget or costs).

$$\frac{\text{Total present value (£134,193,708)}}{\text{Total inputs (£8,145,686)}}$$

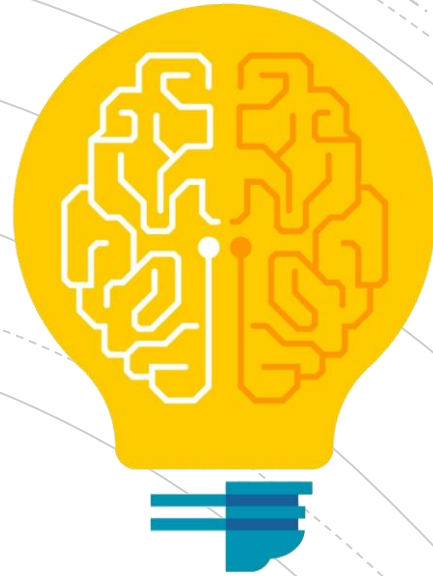
This provided a number that we could express as a ratio.

For every £1 that is invested, it is possible to generate £16.47 in social value when the programme is delivered to the target audience who achieve the intended outcomes that can be measured.

SROI Step 6: Dissemination Plan

Suggestions for dissemination of the forecast SROI findings, in the context of the wider evaluation findings are:

- Return initially to the Active Essex stakeholders to share, discuss and where possible, validate the findings, identifying where there is confidence and where there are gaps that may be addressed through recommendations for further work. For example, in this forecasting SROI process, financial input, activity audit, output and outcome monitoring has been recommended, through revisiting Active Essex's evaluation framework. Building upon what has been learned through the realist evaluation is recommended in this process.
- Utilise the findings to share with interested parties, including communications, fundraising, funders or investors and collaborate to discuss how these may be taken forward to 'realise use'.
- Present the findings, where funders are confident to share the students, academics and community and social policy leaders: Identify where there are opportunities to inform programme development (of EPP, FYA, ActivAte HAF and ABCD) and to ascertain the contributions to social change.
- Identify how to approach further cost benefit or return on investment work, in this case, the use of the Wellby (which Active Essex have expressed a keen interest in exploring).
- Collaborate to publish the findings through discussion forums, blogs and articles. The dissemination plan for this work is outlined further in the report.



Section 4

Phase 3— Refining for learning and recommendations

Overarching learning for action

Over the last year we have gained an in depth understanding about how and why Active Essex impacts stakeholders at the community level *and* contributes to changes in the system. Our conclusion suggests some key recommendations for learning. Throughout this work, we have been passionate about creating a collaborative environment where findings inform action through 'use'. As an emerging guide that we hope will be a starting place for consideration, we suggest:

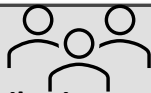
The audience has time to understand and make sense of the findings.

The audience can take action where needed to make changes and refinements to provision. Notwithstanding, some of these findings may support existing provision and structures.

Recipients of this report can use it, and the evidence within it in other spaces that may strategically align with the organisational goals of Active Essex (and sometimes with other regional and national goals too).

Consideration is given to continuing to embed the collaborative approaches to evaluation principles. Alongside this we recommend that Active Essex coproduces a full framework to capture inputs and value, activity audits and the measurement of outputs, capturing a broad range of outcomes and impact based on the realist evaluation, learning from the NELP work and the SROI. This will strengthen the evidence building processes and learning with an ambition to influence practice and system change.

Learning to action



Positive contribution to communities:

Active Essex is positively contributing to the lives of people in communities. Approaches such as ActivAte HAF, Essex Pedal Power and Find Your Active offer unique contributions for helping people engage in physical activity and connect with others to form friendship. ABCD is a key driver across these areas of focus. Enhanced data collection built into wider staffing roles (with appropriate training) would capture the impact and enable deeper contexts associated with change to be understood.



System synergy:

Across the areas of focus there are clear signs that Active Essex is working in strong sector-wide collaborations within partnerships. Active Essex are taking the lead in driving innovations in place-based working. The data indicates that due to the investment of the LDP and other resources, Active Essex use their collaborative skillset to facilitate a 'joint focus'. As the system matures, further exploration to attribute changes in structures, goals, and beliefs is necessary. In our system focused interviews, stakeholders valued Active Essex's role in contributing to the coordination of a place-based approach to physical activity.



Evaluation is and should be everyone's business:

Building evidence-based thinking and consciousness into the ways of working of all Active Essex staff is key for understanding the impact of these areas of focus. If staff are more engaged in evaluative thinking, this can enhance the existing evidence base and support commissioned partners accessing data in a more efficient way.



System versus impact:

We have attempted to distinguish between system and impact, and we are aware that other evaluation frameworks within Essex are doing the same. This has been a challenge because in many respects 'impacts' operate within, and form part of the system. Further, the impacts we see in communities are part of the 'whole system'. Therefore, we suggest that 'impact *and* system' are integrated into a single 'system' to align with the programme theories and to enable pragmatic and authentic data collection.



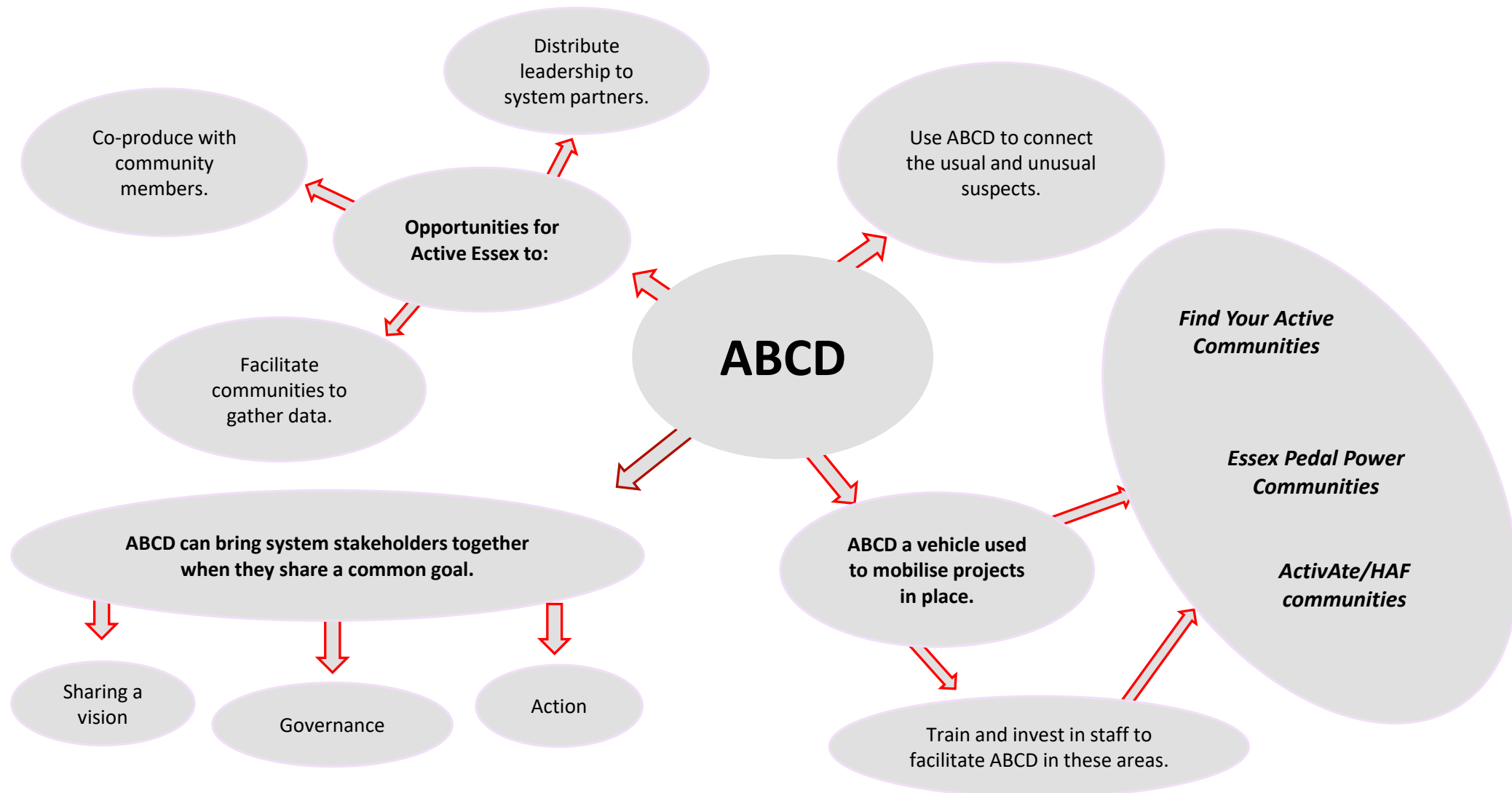
The ABCD fulcrum:

ABCD is a key driver for the positive contributions across the Essex 'eco-system'. Taking a strengths-based approach to working with communities and encouraging them to take control over their physical activity is a key mechanism for fostering more of a physical activity culture. However, it is not possible to assume that this happens on its own. Instead, there has been success in utilising cultural intermediaries and mobilizing Active Essex staff to broker links and support community members to enact ABCD approaches. This is why CPD training (like Nurture Development) is so important to embed ABCD into the ways of working for staff. We encourage Active Essex to further develop and communicate their ('**this is how we do it**') 'place-based approach' building upon current evidence.



Learning to action

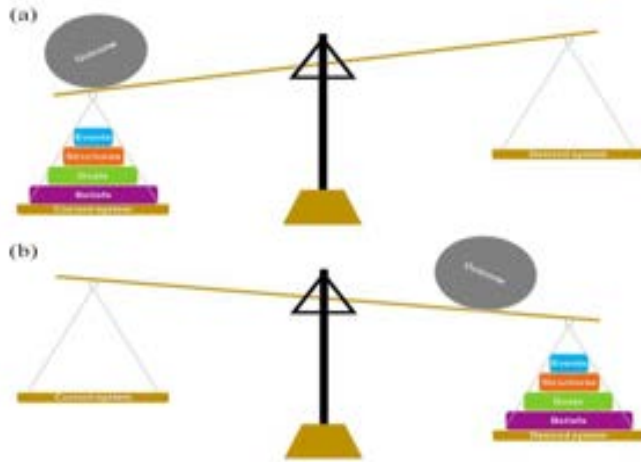
This is a working illustration of what we believe constitutes Active Essex's place-based approach to physical activity. We position ABCD at the centre as it appears to be the main fulcrum which can activate many of the benefits of physical activity and the contributory way that Active Essex can influence stakeholders.



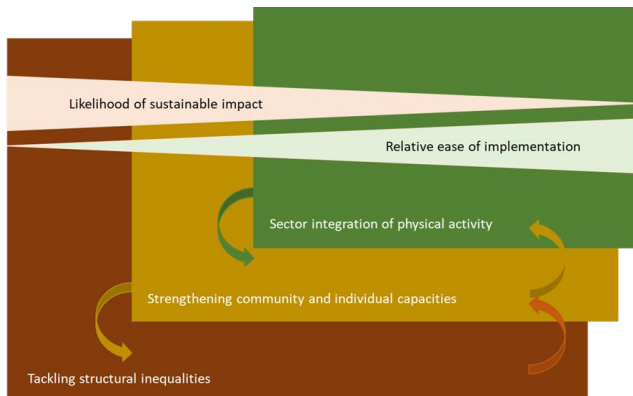
Learning to action

Position statement of system maturity:

At the inception point of this evaluation we stated how our exploration was informed by the Action Scales model and NELP conceptual model. Here is our final reflection:



It is clear from the deep dives that Active Essex are part of a shared network of stakeholders and organisations working towards a place-based approach to physical activity. Key events such as EPP, Activate/HAF and Pedal Power are instrumental mechanisms to mobilise new structures, as well as goals and beliefs within the system. From the data, we can particularly see this across EPP and the way ABCD is driving people's ways of working. Active Essex are instrumental in this and have made good use of their resources and funding to bring people into this culture. However, this captures the provisional part of the process where goals and beliefs in hardwiring physical activity still need to be cultivated with system partners who are yet to fully subscribe to these ways of working.



The data that we have captured from this deep dive evaluation have helped us to understand where Active Essex's areas of focus sit within the conceptual model. Much of the system findings speak to the importance of sector integration of physical activity. This is seen with the large number of stakeholders coming together for a shared purpose, whereby physical activity is promoted through place-based working. At the level of strengthening community and individual capabilities, we can see that ABCD is a key driver for helping communities take more control over their assets. This is seen in the ways of working promoted amongst Active Essex staff by mobilizing ABCD approaches, which speaks to more of a likelihood of sustainable change. Finally, at the structural inequalities level EPP provides a compelling case from the evidence we have obtained that has helped people to access physical activity (and associated benefits) in ways they were not initially able to. The same can be said for ActiveAte/HAF where have illustrated the importance of providing free meals for low-income families whilst providing childcare.

Dissemination plan

We understand that reports are the starting point for mobilizing the evaluation findings. To understand and embed the learning from these findings, we propose the following:

1. Co-deliver a workshop with the Active Essex leadership and insight teams to identify the participant's key interests within the findings; and to establish which refinements from the 'deep dives' to take forward.
2. Meet with the insight teams to identify which outcome areas from the SROI may be the most interesting to take forward for further evaluative cost-benefit analyses (through the Wellby work).
3. Discuss and provide pointers or support to the Active Essex insight teams/embedded researchers on approaches to communicate the findings in community setting and partnership contexts.



Acknowledgements

The evaluation team would like to thank all stakeholders who participated and contributed to the evaluation. Additionally, we would like to acknowledge these key stakeholders:

Essex Pedal Power: Thomas Oliver, Rob Macdonald, John Fox, Hilary Wicks, Lisa Swallow, Anna Watson, Kerry McDonald

Find Your Active: Holly Adams, Rob Hayne, Jason Fergus, Grace Hilton, Rachel Lewis

ActivAte / HAF: Louise Voyce, Alexa Cadwallader

Asset Based Community Development: Sarah Stokes, Cheryl Lomas, Tom Tayler, Nina Head, Grant Taylor, Tom Tayler, Michelle Tarbun, Carla Andrews

If you have any questions about the report, please contact Dr Kevin Harris. Thank you.
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If we can include you by naming you directly, please contact Claire Hannah-Russell to enable us to add your name to this section. Thank you. (clhr20@bath.ac.uk)