

Implementation Plan

2025-2026 |

Fit for the Future

The Physical Activity and Sport Strategy for Essex, Southend and Thurrock 2021-31

Download the Fit for the Future Strategy



Our introduction

Our Implementation Plan for 2025-26 sets the foundation for achieving measurable and meaningful outcomes. This document outlines our approach to performance measures and indicators, providing clarity on how we will evaluate our impact and success in fulfilling our ambitions.

We know that the Fit for the Future vision and mission cannot be achieved in silo, and we emphasise the importance of using a place-based approach to drive meaningful change within our communities. By fostering trust and collaboration with local partners, we aim to address local needs effectively, and promote sustainable behaviour change.

We recognise that investing in our team is essential to success. By equipping our staff with the skills, training and development opportunities they need, we empower them to excel.

We are committed to fostering a culture of continuous learning. Through thoughtful reflection, shared learning, and constructive challenges, we build strong foundations that support professional growth. Our values remain at the heart of our decisions and actions, ensuring an inclusive and respectful environment where every team member feels safe, valued and heard.

We take pride in the diverse skill sets within our team, recognising them as a cornerstone of collective progress. By embracing ongoing learning opportunities, we cultivate an environment that encourages growth, collaboration and excellence for all.

There is a varying and uncertain landscape across Greater Essex with devolution and local government reform, as well as the national picture of the health system, and in particular the NHS. As pressures on healthcare continue to rise, the physical activity and sport sector plays a crucial role in supporting preventative health measures, as well as contribute to the county's economic growth.

To do this, we know behaviour change is central to our ethos. Our flagship campaigns, Find Your Active and #MoveWithUs, serve as powerful catalysts for inspiring and motivating residents to engage in physical activity and sport in ways that work for them. Through this approach, we generate valuable data and insights that inform strategic decisions, strengthening our ability to create sustainable opportunities that improve health and wellbeing across Essex. By championing an active lifestyle, we contribute not only to individual wellbeing but also to the broader effort of reducing long-term healthcare pressures, reinforcing Essex's position as a thriving, healthier community.

Race Equality Commitment



2024-25 Diversity, Inclusion, Action Plan



Safeguarding Commitment Statement



Our values:



We are COLLABORATIVE

We are committed to working with others. We can achieve so much more when we work together and support each other. We believe in building strong and lasting partnerships based on honesty and a shared purpose.



We are INCLUSIVE

We believe that everyone should have the right to benefit from physical activity and sport regardless of age, gender, sexuality, ethnic background or ability, reducing the inequalities in physical activity and sport.



We are INNOVATIVE

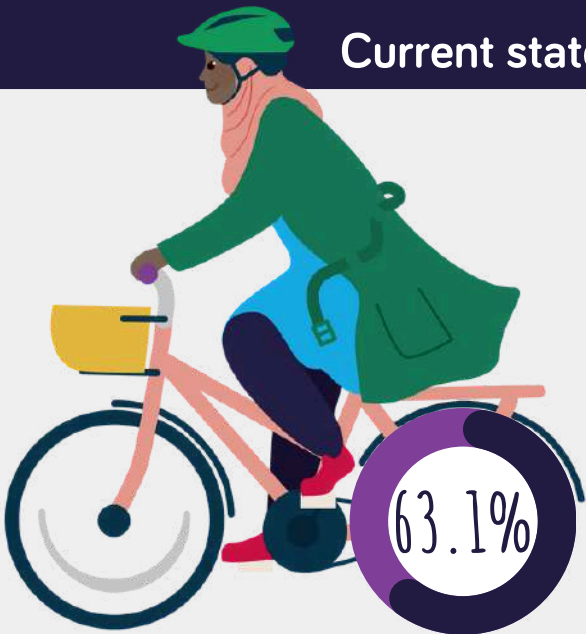
We are adventurous and forward-thinking, committed to learn from our past and each other. We value a spirit of innovation to inspire the creation of new ideas and new approaches that are shared with our partners.



We are PASSIONATE

We are passionate about transforming lives and communities through physical activity and sport. We have the energy and enthusiasm to succeed in using innovative methods whilst staying focused on the vision.

Current state of play:



63.1% of Greater Essex adults are active

The highest level since Active Lives survey started



47% of adults with a disability/long-term health condition are active



24.1% of Greater Essex adults are inactive
This is an all time low, and a significant improvement over previous years

MORE THAN 1 IN 2

children across Greater Essex are active

Activity levels among underrepresented communities still remains a critical area of focus.

* Active Lives Data, Sport England, 2023-24

Our place-based approach

Active Essex embraces a place-based approach to ensure that our work is deeply rooted in the unique needs of local communities. Our hub team structure enables us to co-design community-led initiatives, using physical activity as a powerful tool to ensure resilience, strengthen social connections and enhance overall wellbeing. We are committed to ensuring that every resident, regardless of their circumstances, can experience the many benefits of an active lifestyle.

This way of working has largely been as a result of the learnings from the Essex Local Delivery Pilot, which used innovation to hardwire physical activity into the work across multiple systems and partners in Basildon, Colchester, and Tendring. Sport England recently invested £4.99m into these 3 Place Partnerships to sustain the work until 2028.

Furthermore, as a Sport England funded Place Partner, Active Essex will provide additional support to six key areas - Basildon, Castle Point, Colchester, Harlow, Tendring and Thurrock, focusing on reducing inequalities for residents facing the greatest barriers to physical activity and sport. This investment ensures more intensive support for these areas, and their funding will act as a catalyst to build new and stronger relationships with partners, attracting additional investment and resources.

But, our footprint spans across Greater Essex, to include 12 Essex County Council local authorities, as well as the two unitary authorities, Thurrock and Southend. Each locality has its own distinct culture, identity and characteristics, making a place-based approach essential for understanding and responding to the nuances of every community. Through this approach, the scale and intensity of our support are directly aligned with the level of inequalities or need in each area, ensuring that resources are directed where they are most impactful.

Our universal offer

Active Essex collaborates with partners across Greater Essex, working closely with local places to identify local strengths and needs, working together to create conditions that enables communities to thrive. By sustaining strong, trusted relationships and building upon the strengths of each of our 14 local places, we can better create meaningful, lasting impact.

This is our universal offer providing you with a high level overview. The entirety of this document, identifies our deliverables across Greater Essex, which will be delivered at place level. To understand how this translates to your area, speak to your [local Hub team](#).



Place-based ways of working - Active Essex offer place specific insight, guidance, facilitate relationships and partnership working opportunities through our Hub teams and Place Navigators



Leadership development - an offer for leaders in place to gain insight from our learnings in navigating both systems and place-based working.



Networks and learning - we offer networking and training opportunities, that partners can attend specific to their area of interest. In addition our Share-Connect-Collaborate events will provide broader learnings from across the business



Sector support - provide strategic leadership to skills and employability to help address the sector's workforce needs, and work collaboratively with NGBs and clubs to deliver the Essex Community Sport and Improvement Plan.



Capacity building - an offer for community organisations and partners to develop, grow and sustain



Planning and strategy - Provide resources, expertise and guidance to help places build physical activity into local plans/ strategies



Behaviour change resources - scientific research and evaluation will be shared through our flagship campaign work, Find Your Active and #MoveWithUs



Funding - Active Essex will identify opportunities, and help leverage and distribute funding relative to the needs of that place



Educational support - we will offer educational CPD and support for school-based initiatives to all 14 places and offer staff from all educational settings the opportunity to engage in our children and young people conference.

Our outcomes

Active Essex have embraced an outcomes-led approach this year, to strengthen its contribution to the Fit for the Future strategy. This framework allows us to demonstrate our impact across two dimensions: population level and performance level.

It helps answer two key questions - **are we focusing on the right priorities,** and **are we delivering them effectively?**

With these short term outcomes in mind, the following pages will outline the indicators and performance measures that will help us measure our impact. The **indicators** will show the current state of play and will help us to articulate the impact our work has had, by measuring this continually over the next few years. Whilst our **performance measures** are our targets for this financial year 2025-26, that will be our focus of work in order to contribute to that outcome.

Better connected and accessible places, designed to increase active travel and physical activity



Essex has a highly skilled, diverse workforce contributing to a network of connected, resilient and sustainable organisations



Children and young people have positive attitudes to physical activity and sport

The Essex system uses physical activity as a preventative approach to improve social, mental and physical wellbeing



To be achieved by 2035

Long-term outcomes

A shared commitment to community-led, evidence-based approaches that tackle inactivity and address inequalities.

Short-term outcomes

The conditions exist so that communities are resilient, feel safe, are active and healthy.



Where you see this icon click through for full details of performance measures in relation to this workstream.

Better connected and accessible places, designed to increase active travel and physical activity

Active Essex's contribution to achieving this outcome, will focus on the key areas of active travel, planning and infrastructure, activating community spaces and environmental sustainability.

By having better connected spaces and accessible places, we believe communities we will be more likely to utilise active travel opportunities, and lead a physically active lifestyle.

To the right you will find a selection of high level target performance measures, demonstrating how much we will do, how well we will do it, and the impact this will have on our communities.



Where you see this icon click through for full details of performance measures in relation to this workstream.

Indicators:

These are the measures we will use to help us quantify the achievement of this outcome, over the next few years. Below you will see what the current state of play is:

Local Authority Active Travel Capability Rating

These ratings are based on three key areas: local leadership, plans, and delivery record, on a scale from 0 to 4. The 2024 rating, as stated by Active Travel England;



Essex



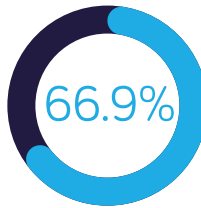
Southend



Thurrock

% of adults who agree, or strong agree that the places and environments they exercise in are inclusive and welcoming

2023-24 figures from Sport England Active Lives Survey state:



of adults agree or strongly agree that the places and environments they exercise in are inclusive and welcoming

Active travel

Active Essex promotes active travel through initiatives like the Essex Cycle Grant, supporting cycling activities, Scoot Safe classes at Essex ActivAte clubs, and collaborating with schools to encourage sustainable transport, healthier lifestyles and reduced traffic congestion.

Refurbished bikes schemes and Essex Pedal Power will also improve wellbeing, and boost access to employment, education and services.



130

Greater Essex schools will sustain with their active travel plans and 20 new sign ups



An increase in non-traditional cycling organisations accessing the Essex Pedal Power Police Bikes



5 projects from Place Partnership funding will focus on active travel



1,500 new and recycled bikes given out through Essex Pedal Power

Activating community spaces

Active Essex is revitalising community spaces through partnerships and grants that promote physical activity, healthier lifestyles and social connections. We will work to improve access to blue spaces for recreation and wellbeing, supporting inactive residents and public leisure services.



4

additional projects to be funded through the Active Thames Fund, increasing the number of residents accessing blue spaces for physical activity across the county.



15 assets improved through Places and Spaces fund, in addition to the 20 to date

Planning and infrastructure

We are dedicated in our pursuit to embed Sport England's Active Design Principles into environments to promote physical activity. Collaborating with local authorities, we will continue to support Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) and will actively contribute to Playing Pitch Strategy meetings. Our aim is to ensure future planning reflects community aspirations, creating inclusive and sustainable spaces.



10%

of residents utilising spaces due to engaging and inviting designs (such as benches, lightening, signage etc.)

£7.1mil

Investment from Active Travel England

Environmental sustainability

Active Essex will prioritise environmental sustainability by promoting greener practices through initiatives like Sport England's pledge to reduce energy use, waste and reliance on single-use plastics.



25

organisations that Active Essex fund, will complete the 'Going for Green Pledge' to demonstrate how they aim to reduce their carbon footprint



Essex has a highly skilled, diverse workforce contributing to a network of connected, resilient and sustainable organisations

Active Essex's contribution to achieving this outcome, will focus on the key areas of connected system leaders, skills and employability, sustainable and resilient organisations, and safe and inclusive opportunities.

A focus on workforce and organisational development will help create a thriving sector where people wish to work, volunteer and play.

To the right you will find a selection of high level target performance measures, demonstrating how much we will do, how well we will do it, and the impact this will have on our communities.

Where you see this icon  click through for full details of performance measures in relation to this workstream.

Sustainable and resilient organisations



Active Essex is committed to helping local organisations thrive by fostering sustainability and resilience. Through tailored access, we will strengthen leadership, refine strategies and processes, and address sector-specific skills gaps to build workforce capacity. Supported by the London Marathon Foundations' small grants programme, we aim to support Essex-based projects to flourish and empower communities to lead active and healthy lives. By promoting an asset based community development approach, we will guide organisations to better understand and connect with the communities they serve, ensuring long-term impact and growth.

250

organisations will be engaged across capacity building programmes with an increase in the number of organisations able to sustain beyond 12 months

100

grants will be awarded through the Small Grants funding programme, with an average value of £2,500
This continues the progression of this offer from previous years.



Connected system leaders



We are dedicated to collaborating and co-owning solutions to address local challenges and reducing inactivity. By cultivating a robust network of partners and leaders, we will facilitate meaningful engagement that strengthens connections, promotes shared learning, and drives collective action toward creating active, healthier communities.

14

Place Based Networks co-owning solutions to physical activity



1 large event, 5 place workshops and a series of online leadership and learning activities will help us engage individuals and organisations, in making new connections with others

Safe and inclusive opportunities



Active Essex is dedicated to fostering a safe and inclusive environment for all. Through a variety of initiatives, we aim to promote good practices, enhance community sport, support coaches, and ensure accessibility. Through co-ownership we will focus on local needs, breaking down barriers to participation and create a thriving, inclusive sector.



100

coaches will be engaged through the Essex Coaches Club



75%

of these coaches engaged, will increase their confidence and capability of workforce to deliver inclusive opportunities

Indicators:

These are the measures we will use to help us quantify the achievement of this outcome, over the next few years. Below you will see what the current state of play is:

% of sport and physical activity organisations in Essex becoming scaleups and established

2024 rating, as stated by CIMSPA TBC

Demographic of our workforce in Essex

2024 rating, as stated by CIMSPA TBC

Skills and employability



Active Essex will tackle the under-representation in the sector through initiatives like the Black Interns national programme, and Coach Core apprenticeships, providing inclusive opportunities for skill development. By mentoring future leaders and collaborating with local employers, we will use sport as a pathway to employment, while delivering strategic leadership to meet workforce needs in Essex's sport and physical activity sector.



75% of Coach Core apprentices will move into paid employment, improving skills and knowledge to aid future development.
This sustains impact from previous years.



Essex employers report skills gaps are further reduced




15

career activities attended.
An increase by 3 from previous year.

Children and young people have positive attitudes to physical activity and sport

Active Essex's contribution to achieving this outcome, will focus on the key areas of PE, school sport and physical activity, as well as sport for development. By ensuring children and young people have the capability, competence, confidence, enjoyment and understanding of the benefits of movement, we can ensure more of the next generation lead active and healthier lives into adulthood.

To the right you will find a selection of high level target performance measures, demonstrating how much we will do, how well we will do it, and the impact this will have on our communities.

Where you see this icon  click through for full details of performance measures in relation to this workstream.

Indicators:

These are the measures we will use to help us quantify the achievement of this outcome, over the next few years. Below you will see what the current state of play is:

% of children and young people with 1+ positive attitude towards physical activity and sport

2023-24 data from Sport England Children's Active Lives survey stated:



% of children in Greater Essex that are active for more than 60 minutes a day

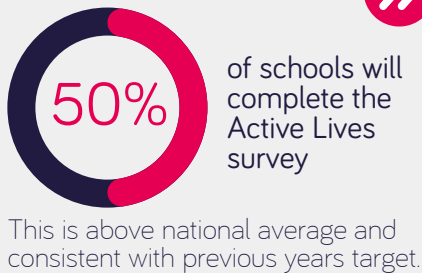
2023-24 data from Sport England Children's Active Lives survey stated:



PE, school sport and physical activity

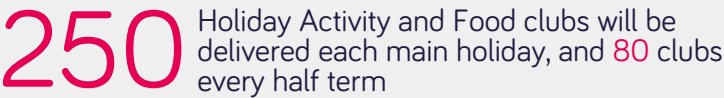
Active Essex will inspire schools across Essex to adopt initiatives like the Daily Mile and Barclays Girls Football festivals, promoting physical activity and fostering positive relationships with sport. Through Active Lives survey responses, we will gain insights into young people's engagement with physical activity, guiding tailored approaches like the Creating Active Schools programme.

With support from School Games Organisers, we will deliver impactful local and countywide programmes, and initiatives like #MoveWithUs will amplify youth voices to inspire active lifestyles. Commitment and excellence will be celebrated through the Key Stage 1 Awards and Early Years Movement Mark.



Sport for development

Active Essex will deliver the Essex ActivAte programme, providing free holiday clubs for young people eligible for Free School Meals across Essex and Thurrock. The Active Essex Foundation, will collaborate with local organisations, equipping them to use sport as a tool to support vulnerable young people, including those at risk of exploitation, offending or poor mental health. By promoting wellbeing and resilience, we aim to empower communities and create lasting positive impact.



The Essex system uses physical activity as a preventative approach to improve social, mental and physical wellbeing

Active Essex's contribution to achieving this outcome, will focus on the key areas of community cohesion, capability and capacity and influencing system change.

In return, these workstreams will provide the foundation to help showcase the power of sport and physical activity to strengthen communities and increase residents' longevity and quality of life.

Below and to the right you will find a selection of high level target performance measures, demonstrating how much we will do, how well we will do it, and the impact this will have on our communities.

Where you see this icon  click through for full details of performance measures in relation to this workstream.

Indicators:

These are the measures we will use to help us quantify the achievement of this outcome, over the next few years. Below you will see what the current state of play is:

% of adults who are inactive (less than 30 minutes of activity per week)

2023-24 figures from Sport England Active Lives survey state:



of Greater Essex adults are inactive, participating in less than 30 minutes of physical activity a week

Overall how satisfied are you with your life nowadays

2024 figures from Essex residents survey state:



of Essex residents report medium to high levels of satisfaction with their life

Primary value of increased wellbeing of adults, children and young people participating and volunteering in sport and physical activity

2022-23 Sport England Social Value Measure report stated:

£2,556,120,000

value of increased wellbeing of adults, children and young people volunteering and participating in physical activity

Community cohesion

We aim to enhance social prescribing routes by adopting healthy behaviours and wellbeing, through physical activity. The Reconnect initiative will empower individuals with disabilities and long-term health conditions, improving their quality of life.

By promoting sport and physical activity, we will build active, supportive networks, that connect and uplift communities. Through our Find Your Active Place Navigators, we will improve access to local opportunities, ensuring better connectivity for all.



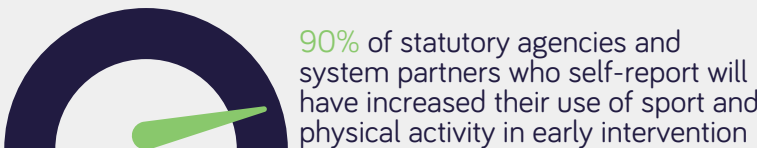
Capability and capacity

We collaborate with local organisations to support the emotional wellbeing of 17-25 year olds through physical activity and tailored interventions. We also focus on empowering health and care professionals with the skills and confidence to promote physical activity, helping participants embrace healthier lifestyles. This work is underpinned by initiatives such as the Physical Activity Clinical Champions, and the Public Health Accelerator Bid fund.



Influencing system change

Active Essex drives change by embedding physical activity into processes and securing resources for community projects. By leveraging its influence, Active Essex will continue to secure funding and resources to support projects that benefit local organisations and communities. The Essex Year of Opportunities showcases the impact of sport in empowering children and young people to lead healthier lives.



We will work in partnership with colleagues across Essex County County to ensure that we are able to align our key priorities with that of key work such as [Levelling Up](#) and [Caring Communities Commission](#).



For details on our current 2024-25 [impact](#), visit our microsite here



For the detail behind each outcome workstream, keep exploring...

