

Movement Beyond Medicine is a core part of the Sport for Confidence [Blueprint](#). It explains how we work and why this approach matters.

It reframes how we think about health. Instead of starting with illness, risk or diagnosis, it begins with people – their purpose, identity, connections and everyday roles. It recognises that health is created as much through participation, belonging and meaningful occupation as it is through treatment.

This reflects what many in community, sport, voluntary and health sectors have long understood, yet the wider system can struggle to prioritise. As national policy shifts towards prevention, equity and long-term wellbeing, approaches grounded in inclusion and community become increasingly vital.

Movement Beyond Medicine challenges simple “increase physical activity” narratives. Evidence shows that focusing on activity alone is not the answer to decreasing inactivity or inequality. What matters just as much are confidence, connection, safe environments and the freedom to be active and to rest without judgement. The [Prevention and Enablement evaluation](#) reinforces this, showing strong social, wellbeing and economic outcomes when movement is approached through a broader, more human lens.

This way of thinking complements national agendas including Social Prescribing, Personalised Care, Lifestyle Medicine, the AHP Public Health Framework and Sport England’s Uniting the Movement. It connects these ambitions and highlights what sits beneath them all: people need real opportunities to participate, move and belong.

Movement Beyond Medicine widens what we notice and measure. Movement shapes identity, confidence and connection, not only physical measures. It strengthens communities and reduces demand on stretched services.

Most importantly, it argues that this way of working should be recognised and resourced as central, not peripheral. If we want a fairer and more sustainable health system, community-rooted, occupation-focused practice must hold equal weight in planning and decision-making.

Movement Beyond Medicine is both a description of practice and an invitation: to shift the lens, to value what already works, and to build systems that help people live well, not just avoid illness.

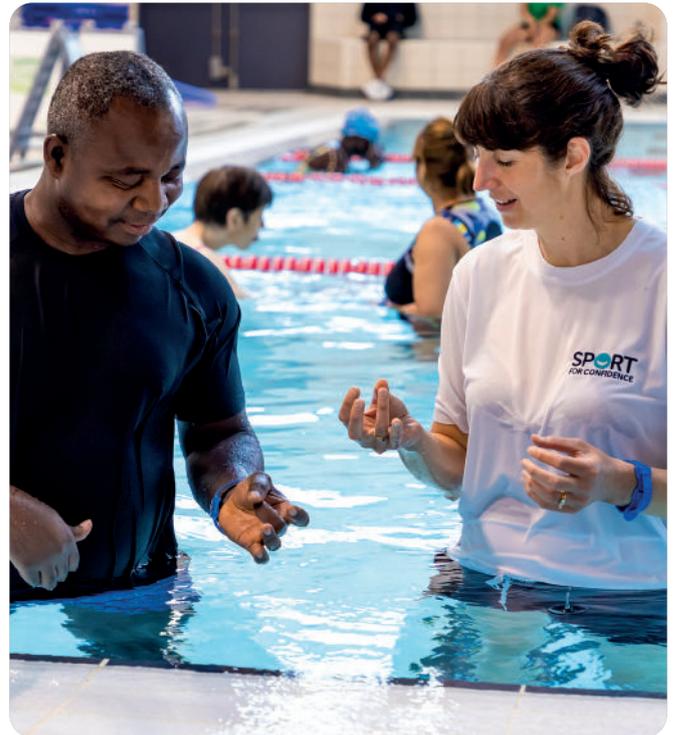


Our approach

Movement Beyond Medicine describes a way in which we work at [Sport for Confidence](#) and gives an additional focus as to why this approach matters. At its foundation is a simple belief: health is created through participation, belonging and meaningful occupation, as much as through treatment or prescription.

This idea is well understood across voluntary, sport, community and health sectors, yet the wider system does not always prioritise, recognise or fully value it. As national policy shifts towards prevention, equity and long-term wellbeing, this way of working should be central, not peripheral.

Movement Beyond Medicine gives us a shared language for this shift. It brings together partners across health, community, leisure and sport, and recognises that this collective practice is health work. It should be reflected in how we plan, fund and deliver for population wellbeing.



1. Seeing health through a broader lens

The lens we use shapes the health we create.

Models such as Movement is Medicine use physical activity as a clinical tool for prevention and treatment. This is valuable, but it often starts from diagnosis or risk and can centre the narrative on illness.

Movement Beyond Medicine starts somewhere else. It begins with people: their purpose, identity, roles and communities. Movement becomes a route to confidence, connection, routine and participation in daily life. Medical insight remains important, but sits within a wider frame of meaning, inclusion and environment.

This aligns with modern understandings of health, recognising that belonging, participation and occupation are fundamental to wellbeing.



2. Why this perspective matters

Movement supports health and recovery, but focusing on activity alone has not shifted inactivity or inequality (Dibben et al., 2024; WHO, 2024). Belonging, participation and inclusive environments are equally important (Holt-Lunstad et al., 2015).

Sport for Confidence’s Prevention and Enablement evaluation demonstrates the value of approaches built around these foundations, delivering strong wellbeing and economic outcomes (University of Essex & State of Life, 2023).

Recent thinking also challenges narrow “move more” messages. Hawes et al. (2025) show that framing inactivity as failure can stigmatise people and overlook the importance of rest, routine and context, all of which shape a person’s relationship with movement.

Despite growing evidence, preventative, community-rooted work is still too often viewed as secondary. Movement Beyond Medicine responds to this gap, emphasising participation, belonging and purposeful rest as essential components of creating health.

3. Seeing health through a broader lens

Movement Beyond Medicine sits within the same ecosystem of change as other national approaches to population health.

It brings together ideas from public health, occupational therapy, community development and systems leadership into a single, human-centred frame.

Framework	Shared focus	What Movement Beyond Medicine adds	How the lens shifts the starting point
Movement is Medicine	Exercise as a clinical intervention	Places occupation, belonging and participation at the centre	From treatment to participation
Lifestyle Medicine (BSLM)	Prevention across six pillars including movement and relationships	Addresses social and environmental factors shaping people’s ability to move	From behavioural change to health equity
Social Prescribing & Personalised Care	Connecting people to community-based opportunities	Adds therapeutic reasoning and inclusive design for meaningful participation	From referral to relationship
AHP Public Health Framework (2023)	Prevention and equity through professional practice	Demonstrates occupational therapy leadership in system-level health creation	From clinical intervention to population impact
Sport England – Uniting the Movement	Fairer, more connected systems for movement	Creates a health-facing bridge between place-based practice and therapeutic outcomes	From activity offer to system integration

4. Outcomes and impact

Using the Movement Beyond Medicine lens broadens what we notice and measure. Movement influences identity, autonomy and social connection as well as physical health.

These aspects complement biometric and activity data.

Domain	Key outcomes	Example indicators
Health & Wellbeing	Improved physical and mental health; reduced risk of long-term conditions	WHO-5, Warwick–Edinburgh, EQ-5D
Participation & Purpose	Engagement in meaningful occupations; increased confidence and independence	ASCOF, self-efficacy, participation logs
Belonging & Inclusion	Stronger social connection; reduced loneliness; increased trust and belonging	UCLA Loneliness Scale, Inclusion Index
System & Economic Value	Reduced healthcare demand; cost-effective prevention; improved workforce wellbeing	PEM evaluation, GP contact reduction, cost–benefit data

5. Why this approach needs to be heard

This way of working already exists across many places, but system structures still tend to reward short-term treatment rather than long-term prevention. If we aim to reduce inequalities and improve population health, this must change.

Movement Beyond Medicine names this challenge and encourages a shift in how we direct attention, evidence and investment. This is not an optional addition; it is a foundation for a healthier, fairer system.

Summary

Movement Beyond Medicine describes a practical, evidence-informed way of creating health through participation, belonging and occupation.

It values medical care and prevention equally and ensures people have real opportunities to live well.

It calls for community-rooted, inclusive approaches to hold equal influence within the health system.

