Sport and Physical Activity

Intelligence Report

This version published in **August 2024**

To be reviewed in **August 2026**

This report

This report has been prepared jointly by Knowsley Council, the Integrated Care Board (ICB) and partners of the Knowsley Health and Wellbeing Board (HWB).

- How much impact does this issue have on local people?
- Can this impact be reduced through local action?
- Can local action reduce health inequalities?
- Will local action on this help address other issues too?

Understanding these things helps the HWB determine the level of priority that this issue should be given in the Borough's Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

This is one of a series of reports that comprise Knowsley's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA).

Further Information

For a PDF copy of this report, and other research intelligence products, visit *Knowsley Knowledge* – the website of Knowsley's JSNA.

Reader Information

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1.0 Why is Physical Activity Important?

Regular physical activity is one of the most important things you can do to improve your health, it has significant health benefits for hearts, bodies, and minds. It increases your chances of living longer, lowers risk of early death by up to 30% [(1)], reduces risk of disease and long-term illness, can help manage your weight, strengthen bones and muscles, reduce symptoms of depression and anxiety, boost self-esteem, improve sleep quality, enhance thinking, learning and judgement skills and improves overall well-being.

Physical inactivity is a leading risk factor for global mortality, accounting for 6% of deaths globally [(2)]. People who have a physically active lifestyle have a 20-35% lower risk of circulatory disease compared with those who have a sedentary lifestyle. Regular physical activity is also associated with a reduced risk of diabetes, obesity, osteoporosis, colon, and breast cancer and with improved mental health. Physical activity has benefits to older people and helps to lower risk of osteoarthritis, hip fractures, falls, dementia, and Alzheimer's disease. The estimated direct cost of physical inactivity to the NHS across the UK is over £0.9 billion per year [(3)].

2.0 Government recommendations – Physical Activity

The Chief Medical Officer (CMO) recommends adults should undertake a minimum of 150 minutes (2.5 hours) of moderate physical activity per week, through a variety of activities. Physical activity levels are monitored by the Sport England Active Lives Survey [(4)].

2.1 Under-5s [(5)]

Being physically active every day is important for the healthy growth and development of babies, toddlers, and pre-schoolers.

For this age group, activity of any intensity should be encouraged, including light activity and more energetic physical activity.

Babies (less than 1 year):

• Infants should be physically active several times every day in a variety of ways, including interactive floor-based activity, e.g., crawling.

• For infants not yet mobile, this includes at least 30 minutes of tummy time spread throughout the day while awake (and other movements such as reaching and grasping, pushing, and pulling themselves independently, or rolling over); more is better. NB: Tummy time may be unfamiliar to babies at first, but can be increased gradually, starting from a minute or two at a time, as the baby becomes used to it. Babies should not sleep on their tummies.

Toddlers (1-2 years):

• Toddlers should spend at least 180 minutes (3 hours) per day in a variety of physical activities at any intensity, including active and outdoor play, spread throughout the day; more is better.

Pre-schoolers (3-4 years):

• Pre-schoolers should spend at least 180 minutes (3 hours) per day in a variety of physical activities spread throughout the day, including active and outdoor play. More is better; the 180 minutes should include at least 60 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous intensity physical activity.

2.2 Children and Young People (5 to 18 years)

Children and young people need to do 2 types of physical activity each week, aerobic exercise[1] and exercises to strengthen their muscles and bones.

• Aim for an average of at least 60 minutes of moderate or vigorous intensity physical activity a day across the week

• Take part in a variety of types and intensities of physical activity across the week to develop movement skills, muscles, and bones

• Reduce the time spent sitting or lying down and break up long periods of not moving with some activity. Aim to spread activity throughout the day.

Disabled children and young people

• 20 minutes of physical activity per day.

• When starting, build up slowly. Ask: can you do this today?

• Do bitesize chunks of physical activity throughout the day.

• Do challenging but manageable strength and balance activities three times per week.

• Lesser amounts of physical activity are still beneficial.

2.3 Adults (19 to 64 years)

• Regular physical activity contributes to good physical and mental health for adults. This should be at a variety of intensities, but any activity is better than none, and more is better still.

• Develop or maintain strength of major muscle groups. Examples are heavy gardening, carrying heavy shopping, or resistance exercises. Ideally, this should be at least two times a week, but any strengthening activity is better than none.

• Each week, adults should achieve at least 150 minutes of moderate intensity activity (brisk walking or cycling is an example of moderate intensity); or 75 minutes of vigorous intensity activity (running is an example of vigorous); or even shorter durations (such as sprinting or stair climbing); or a combination of moderate, vigorous, and very vigorous intensity activity.

• Minimise time spent being sedentary, and when possible, break up long periods of inactivity with at least light physical activity.

[1] Exercise to improve the body's cardiovascular system examples walking, running, cycling. Swimming, tennis, football etc.

Disabled Adults

• For substantial health gains aim for at least 150 minutes each week of moderate intensity activity.

• Do strength and balance activities on at least 2 days per week.

2.4 Pregnant women and after childbirth (birth to 12 months)

It is safe to be active, but pregnant women are encouraged to listen to their bodies and adapt.

• Throughout pregnancy and after childbirth aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate intensity activity every week.

Pregnant women

• Muscle strengthening activities twice a week.

After childbirth and up to 12 months after birth

• Start pelvic floor exercises as soon as you can and continue daily.

• Build back up to muscle strengthening activities twice a week.

2.5 Older Adults (65 years and over)

• Older adults should participate in daily physical activity to gain health benefits, including maintenance of good physical and mental health, wellbeing, and social functioning. Some physical activity is better than none: even light activity brings some health benefits compared to being sedentary, while more daily physical activity provides greater health and social benefits.

• Older adults should maintain or improve their physical function by undertaking activities aimed at improving or maintaining muscle strength, balance, and flexibility on at least two days a week. These could be combined with sessions involving moderate aerobic activity or could be additional sessions aimed specifically at these components of fitness.

• Each week older adults should aim to accumulate 150 minutes of moderate intensity aerobic activity, building up gradually from current levels. Those who are already active can instead do 75 minutes of vigorous intensity activity, or a combination of moderate and vigorous, to achieve greater benefits. Weight-bearing activities which create an impact through the body help to maintain bone health.

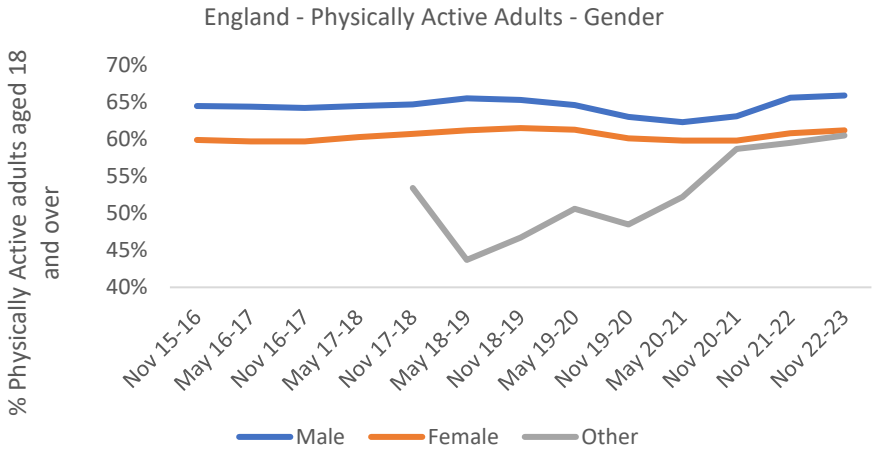
• Older adults should break periods of being sedentary with light activity when possible, or at least with standing, as this has health benefits for older people.

3.0 Risk Factors

Evidence of the benefits of a physically active lifestyle are well documented and very strong but despite this, a high proportion of the UK adult population is not active enough to experience health benefits. Activity levels amongst children and young people are also low.

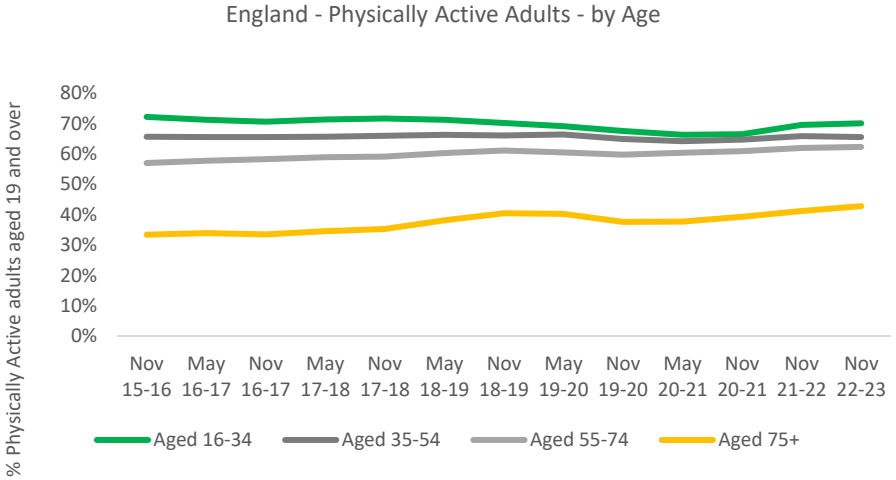
There are significant inequalities in levels of physical activity in relation to geography, age, gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status, sexual orientation, gender identity, and disability:

- Physical activity levels are lower amongst women. Latest Sports England Active Lives Survey data for England shows that 65.9% of adult males are physically active in the year 2022/23 compared to 61.2% of women.



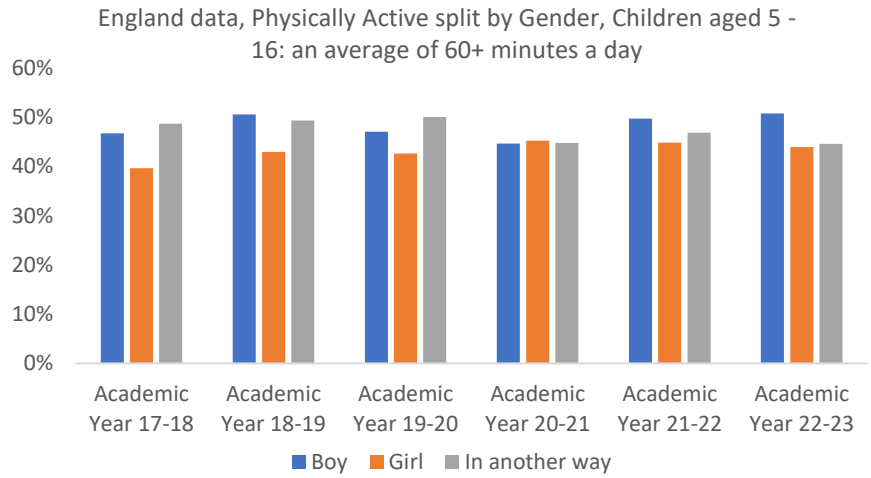
Source: Adults Active Lives Adult Survey, Sport England

- Physical activity declines rapidly with increasing age for both men and women and drops markedly in those aged over 75 years. In the latest years Sport England survey Nov 22-23, split by 20-year age groups for England it shows the youngest age group 16-34 has the highest percentage physically active (70.1%), with the lowest being 75+ (42.8%)



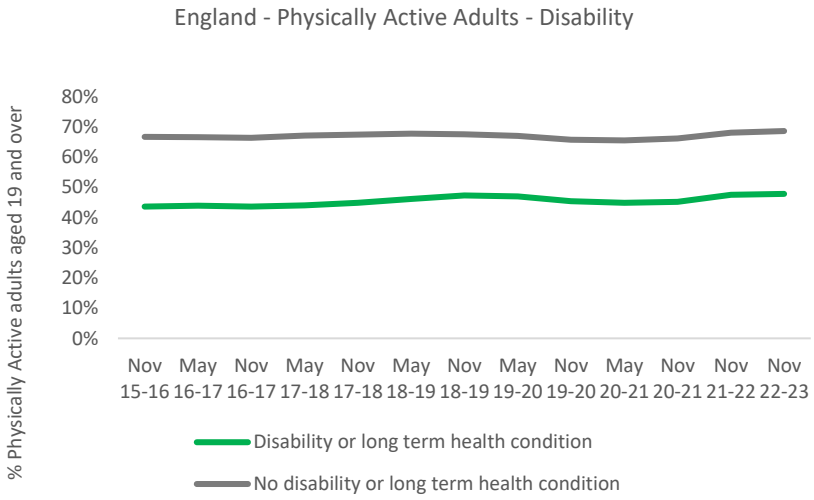
Source: Adults Active Lives Adult Survey, Sport England

- Physical activity levels are lower in children than adults, with girls being less active than boys. Data below for England shows that just less than half of children are physically active. Latest year 22-23 shows that 50.8% of boys are physically active, higher than Girls 44.0%.



Source: Children and Young People Active Lives Survey, Sport England

- Physical activity levels decline in both girls and boys with increasing age, but this decline can be seen more in girls as they move from childhood to adolescence
- Children from lower socioeconomic groups and some ethnic minority groups are less physically active
- Individuals with disabilities/living with long-term conditions are less active. Latest Sports England active lives survey data for England shows that 68.6% (2 in 3) of adults with no disability or long-term health condition are physically active in the year to November 2022/23 compared to 47.8% (less than 1 in 2) of adults with a long-term health condition. The 2021 census shows that Knowsley has a higher proportion of people with a long-term health problem or disability (22.6%) than England (17.3%) and North West (19.4%).



Source: Adults Active Lives Adult Survey, Sport England

- With levels of obesity predicted to increase, physical inactivity levels may increase as a result, as evidence suggests that overweight/obese individuals have lower levels of physical activity.

3.1 Barriers to physical activity:

There are many categories of barriers to physical activity, the impact of which can vary from person to person. Personal barriers come from within the individual, stemming from their habits, beliefs, and psychologies, they can be viewed as “perceived” barriers but are very real to people. External barriers are barriers that occur from pressures outside of the person’s influence, such as the environment a person lives in [(6)].

Personal Barriers:

There are many personal barriers that restrict people’s physical activity levels [(7)]. They include:

- Inconvenience of exercise
- Lack of motivation
- Non-enjoyment of exercise
- Boredom with exercise
- Lack of confidence in their ability to be physically active (low self-efficacy)
- Illness or injury/ fear of being injured
- Lack of confidence in setting personal goals and monitoring and rewarding progress
- Lack of encouragement, support, or companionship from family and friends
- Body image or lack of self confidence
- Uneasiness with change

External Barriers:

There are many external barriers that are hard for individuals themselves to overcome. These include [(8)]

- Time constraints, or a work schedule that doesn’t allow for spare time
- Childcare or caring responsibilities, this again is linked to time
- Cost or lack of disposable income to be able to afford access to facilities
- Relationship problems such as a controlling partner
- Skill (or a perceived lack of skill)
- Safety considerations, some people may not feel safe exercising, e.g., running in a park when its dark
- Unsuitable programs available for the person’s need e.g., the classes available to them are not beginner friendly

Within external barriers, there are many environmental factors that can have a ranging impact on physical activity. This primarily includes accessibility of walking paths, cycling trails, and facilities such as football pitches and swimming pools. However, there are wider environmental determinants that can impact on physical activity such as traffic, availability of public transportation, crime, street lighting, and pollution. These things stated above are the

physical environmental barriers; social environment may also play a role in access to physical activity. This may also include support from family and friends [9].

Advancements in technology including the increased car use and introduction of video games and e-sports are all having an impact on physical activity [10]. Studies show that those that with the advancement of technology, there is an increase of people living more sedentary lifestyles. There is an opportunity to use new technology to improve health by using promotion techniques to encourage people to be more physically active, this is done through more engaging fitness equipment, interactive online/video games, and online/ video exercise classes [11].

There have been a vast number of studies assessing the impact that COVID19 pandemic and the associated lockdowns have had on physical activity levels. Overall, there has been a decrease in mobility, walking, and overall physical activity because of gyms and fitness centres being closed and fitness classes being cancelled, this has resulted in an increase in sedentary activity. On the other hand, the pandemic has seen reports of increased uses of parks/trails and increased recreational activity among certain groups of population, particularly those who were furloughed. More information needed on how this has changed since the end of lockdowns, reduction in free time, and reintroduction of in office working [12].

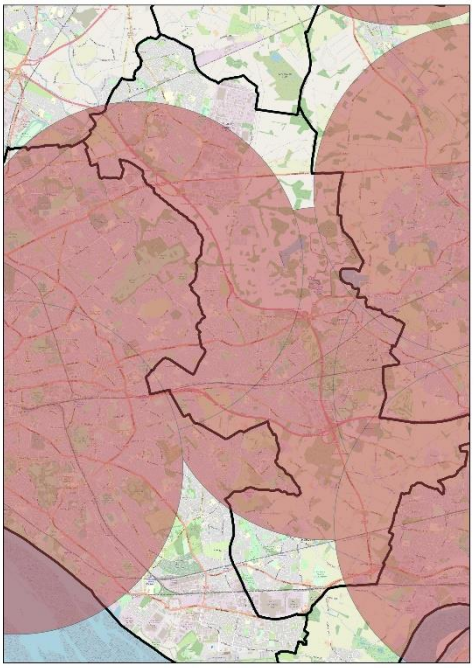
3.2 Communities that are less likely to exercise

Economically deprived adults

Sport England conducted an Active Lives Survey which found that people in lower socio-economic groups are the most likely to be inactive (33%) and the least likely to be active (54%). The survey highlighted that people who are in routine/semi-routine jobs and those who are long term unemployed or have never worked are the most likely to be inactive (33%), and the least likely to be active (54%). This differs from those who are in managerial, administrative, and professional occupations who are the least likely to be inactive (16%) and the most likely to be active (72%) [13].

There are several reasons for this including: lack of disposable income, lack of time, unsafe neighbourhood to be able to exercise outdoors, limited/ outdated facilities available within the area, and caring duties taking priority.

There are a limited number of free and accessible exercise-based activities [14]. One organisation that tried to alleviate these economic barriers is the Parkrun. The Parkrun is a free, community event where you can walk, jog, run, volunteer, or spectate a 5k that takes place every Saturday morning at 9am. Parkruns are national events that are based in parks throughout the country. There is one Parkrun that currently takes place in the borough within the Stadt Moers Park. However, 76% of households in Knowsley are within a 5km radius of a Park Run either within the borough or in neighbouring areas.



Children living in the most deprived areas of the UK

There is strong evidence suggesting that children living in economically deprived areas are less exposed to physical activity and are more likely to have sedentary childhoods, which then follows through into adulthood. Evidence suggests that between 27–65% of these children (aged 7–9 years) fail to meet physical activity guidelines and 81.4% lack proficiency in the four required fundamental movement skills (i.e., run, jump, throw, and catch). The Physical Education curriculum in England focuses on motor skill development in early years (four-to-five-year-olds) to mastery and application of these skills (six-to-11-years-old). However, Fundamental Movement Skills proficiency in England since the implementation of the new curriculum is still low. Teachers are responsible for the implementation of this curriculum, introducing the skills needed to engage in lifelong physical activity, as well as providing opportunities to practice and reinforce these skills. However, teachers themselves have reported their own barriers to promoting physical activity within school time and resources [(15)].

Barriers specific to women

Surveys suggest that 39% of women over the age of 16 are not as physically active as they should be, compared to 35% of men [(16)]. Although any gender can experience any barrier to physical activity, some barriers are more common with women, these include lack of confidence, body image issues, fear of judgement or becoming too “bulky”, menstruation/ menopause, safety concerns within a male dominated area, and lack of time especially with single parents. There is evidence for both physical and internal barriers preventing women from exercising. Although males are more likely to exercise, they can experience any barrier previously stated.

LGBTQ+

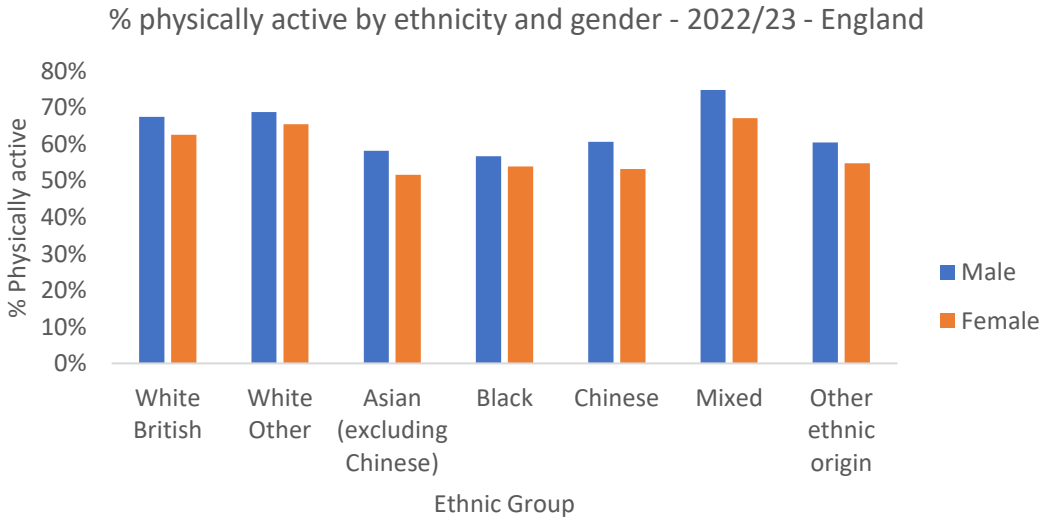
There is a limited amount of evidence available for physical activity levels within the LGBTQ+ community, however, it is commonly acknowledged that they are less likely to exercise than people who are heterosexual and identify as the same gender as they were

given at birth. Although everyone will have their own experiences, common themes within the barriers include [17]:

- Gendering in sport – Most sports are segregated by sex and traditionally sports have been very rigid in the way they identify genders. This can make people feel as though they must fit into a category that they may not identify with. This can have a huge impact on young people who are exploring their gender identity and can make them feel excluded from sport altogether. This can create negative experiences that are then associated with sport
- Negative previous experiences – often as adults those that identify as LGBTQ+ can feel as though they missed out on physical activity earlier in life, which can prevent them participating as adults.
- The environment – sporting facilities can create spaces that make individuals feel uncomfortable. For example, the gendered toilets and changing facilities can make individuals feel embarrassed or uneasy and in turn prevent people from engaging with the sport altogether
- Homophobia and transphobia – in a survey conducted with the LGBTQ+ community, 79% of respondents thought there was a homophobia problem within sport, and 62% have experienced or witnessed homophobia or transphobia within sport
- Lack of role models/ representation within media – although LGBTQ+ role models are emerging within the sporting environment, there is still a lack of representation within the media for younger people to aspire to

Ethnicity:

According to the Sport England Active Lives Survey, people of mixed ethnicity are the most likely to be physically active, this has been the case for the last 6 years. The least likely to be physically active are people from Asian or Black ethnic groups. Within Asian ethnic groups, women are far less likely to be physically active than men. See graph below for a breakdown of ethnicity and gender, please note that the numbers of those reporting their gender as other could not be reported on by ethnicity as the numbers are too low making it unreliable [18].



This review also identified the importance of providing access to a culturally appropriate environment for physical activity. For example, some cultural traditions mean that women cannot reveal parts of their body in the presence of a male, for this reason sports facilities

must create sessions that are female only to allow for their engagement whilst still respecting their culture.

Co-morbidities/ illness

For people who are experiencing chronic illness or co-morbidities exercising may be daunting, however, physical activity can help with conditions by relieving symptoms and improving overall health [19]. There are many barriers specific to these groups of people including:

- Perceived risk of making the condition worse
- Confusion over what types of activities that are safe for their condition
- Being unsure on how often, how much, and what intensities are suitable for themselves
- If they need to do anything beforehand e.g., consulting a doctor, which can come with its own barriers such as lack of doctor's appointments

4.0 Wider benefits to Physical Activity

4.1 Antisocial Behaviour

According to the Antisocial behaviour act 2003, antisocial behaviour is defined as 'behaviour by a person which causes, or is likely to cause, harassment, alarm or distress to persons not of the same household as the person' (20). Examples of antisocial behaviour are excessive noise disturbances, graffiti, large groups hanging about in the street (if they are causing, or likely to cause, alarm and distress), or littering [21].
There is an overwhelming amount of evidence supporting the idea that an increase in physical activity can reduce antisocial behaviour. For these studies physical activity is any skeletal muscle-induced movement requiring energy expenditure. There is evidence that increased physical activity could help with increased self-control and emotion regulation, improved social inclusion, and a more positive self-identity and self-worth, all of which contribute to improving antisocial behaviour. Prisons and youth offending groups have increasingly been using physical activity programs to rehabilitate offenders and deal with problematic behaviours. Using Physical activity is a cheaper and more accessible method of tackling antisocial behaviour with added benefits of improving health and fitness compared to more traditional methods of reducing antisocial behaviour [22].

4.2 Mental Health and stress

Physical activity is great for a person's mental health [23]. Being active releases chemicals in your brain that make you feel good, boost self-esteem, and help concentration. Links between physical activity and psychological benefits have been made over many centuries [24]. There are many studies which evidence this, for example, it can help with [25].

- Better sleep
- Happier moods – physical activity releases feel-good hormones that make you feel better in yourself and give you more energy
- Managing stress, anxiety or intrusive and racing thoughts – doing something physical releases cortisol which helps us manage stress. Being physically active also gives your brain something to focus on and can be a positive coping strategy for difficult times

4.3 Brain activity

Physical activity can improve your cognitive health by helping to think, learn, problem-solve, and help to maintain an emotional balance. Regular physical activity can also reduce the risk

of cognitive decline, including dementia. One study found that cognitive decline is almost twice as common among adults who are inactive compared to those who are active [26].

4.4 Social

The social aspects of exercise, including meeting and interacting with new people on a regular basis has huge benefits to people's lives and wellbeing. Physical activity can help social health by increasing [27].

- Motivation
- Accountability and discipline
- Friendship and communication skills
- Team building and team work skills
- Dealing with negative emotions

4.5 Reduces falls in older population

The rate of fall-related injuries increases with age. Consequences of falls include fractures and head injuries, reduced quality of life, fear of falling, loss of confidence, and self-restricted activity levels leading to a reduction in physical function and social interactions. On average exercise reduces the rate of falls between 23% and 42% (Depending on the type of exercise e.g., exercise that involves improving balance has the greatest effect) [28].

4.6 Reproductive health

Studies indicate that exercise and fertility are directly related. Consistent exercise can increase ovulation which leads to more regular menstrual cycles and can help fertility. Exercise for 30-60 min per day is shown to be associated with a reduced risk of anovulatory infertility [29].

4.7 Menopause

Exercise can help with the management of some of the physical changes that happen in the body during menopause. Being more physically active may help with some of the menopause symptoms. Regular exercise might [30]:

- Reduce hot flushes
- Help to manage body weight
- Improve mood
- Improve self-esteem
- Improve sleep
- Reduce anxiety

Menopause can also cause a person to be affected by osteoporosis, a condition that causes bones to become weaker. This is because menopausal women have less of the hormone oestrogen in the body, which is important for bone density. Keeping active can help keep the bones healthy and can reduce the chance of them breaking or fracturing as a result of a fall.

As oestrogen reduces during the menopause, bone minerals are absorbed quicker than they can be built. This results in a reduction in bone density which can be a contributing factor to osteoporosis. One in three menopausal women will suffer an osteoporotic fracture which equates to 536,000 people in the UK each year [31].

Weight bearing, resistive and low impact exercise can increase bone density. Research shows that a progressive resistance training programme for a minimum of four to six months can positively influence bone density. The Royal Osteoporosis Society recommends two to three sessions of strength training each week.

Oestrogen plays a role in maintaining a healthy system by preserving the flexibility of the blood vessels and helps to control cholesterol. As oestrogen reduces women are at risk of higher blood pressure and the build-up of plaque leading to coronary heart disease, high blood pressure, heart attack or stroke.

Cortisol can increase menopausal symptoms and contribute alongside reduced oestrogen to fat deposits around the abdomen. Prior to the menopause these may have been more evenly distributed. Exercise releases endorphins which can help reduce stress.

Menopause can affect mental well-being, some women report anxiety, irritability, mood swings, lethargy, or lack of energy. Increasing or maintaining regular physical activity would be beneficial as it reduces symptoms of depression and anxiety, boosts self-esteem, improves sleep quality, and increases overall well-being.

4.8 Reduces cigarette cravings/ reducing alcohol and other drugs

There is a small amount of evidence to suggest that regular physical activity can act as a healthy stand-in for addictive substances. That's because exercise and drugs of misuse work on similar parts of your brain. They both activate your reward pathway, which triggers the release of feel-good chemicals like serotonin and dopamine [(32)].

4.9 Productivity

Productivity can be a result of various factors including environment, education, mental wellbeing, training, and career development. Exercise raises your energy levels, combats stress, battles fatigue, and improves general well-being [(33)]. When a person is physically active, they often feel happier and energized, are more efficient and effective at all tasks in life and therefore are more productive. Recently media attention has been drawn to the links made between lower rates of physical activity, increase in obesity and a reduction in productivity.

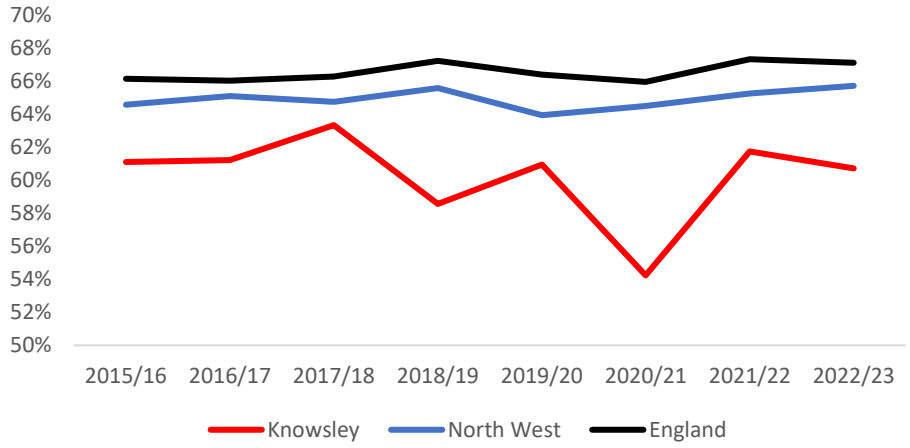
Productivity can be measured by Gross Value Added (GVA), which is the value of the amount of goods and services that have been produced, less the costs of all inputs and materials that are directly attributed to that production. This figure can be used to show how productivity of a place differs to the rest of the UK. If an area is around 100, they are in line with the UK average, lower than 100 and they have lower productive than the UK average, and higher than 100 means they are more productive than the UK average [(34)]. In 2020, Knowsley was given a GVA score of 91, suggesting it is less productive than the UK average. As well as this the Active lives survey found that Knowsley has a significantly lower rate of physically active adults than the UK average. This correlation is not specific to Knowsley and can be seen in many local authorities [(35)].

5.0 THE KNOWSLEY PICTURE

5.1 Adults Physical Activity prevalence

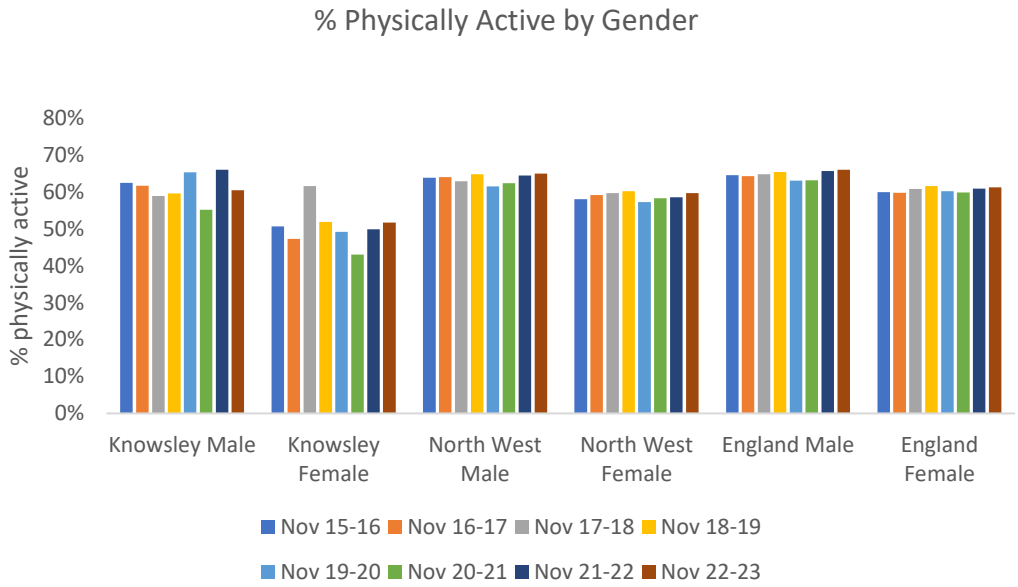
Data from year to year can fluctuate significantly, especially at Local Authority level due to lower volumes of survey data. The impacts of Covid-19 are likely to be significant due to lockdowns, with leisure centres closed at times, also outside exercise being restricted significantly during the first lockdown.

Just over a half (60.7%) of adults aged 18 and over in Knowsley met the recommended levels of physical activity in 2022/23, this is significantly below the England 67.1% and lower than North West 65.7%. An estimated 48,700 adults in Knowsley are not meeting the recommended levels of physical activity as set out by the CMO.



Source: OHID fingertips (based on the Active Lives Adult Survey, Sport England)

In 2022/23, over a quarter of adults (28.6%) in Knowsley were classed as being physically inactive (doing less than 30 minutes of moderate intensity activity per week). This was higher than the England average of 22.6%. This equates to an estimated 35,400 adults in Knowsley who were physically inactive in 2022/23.



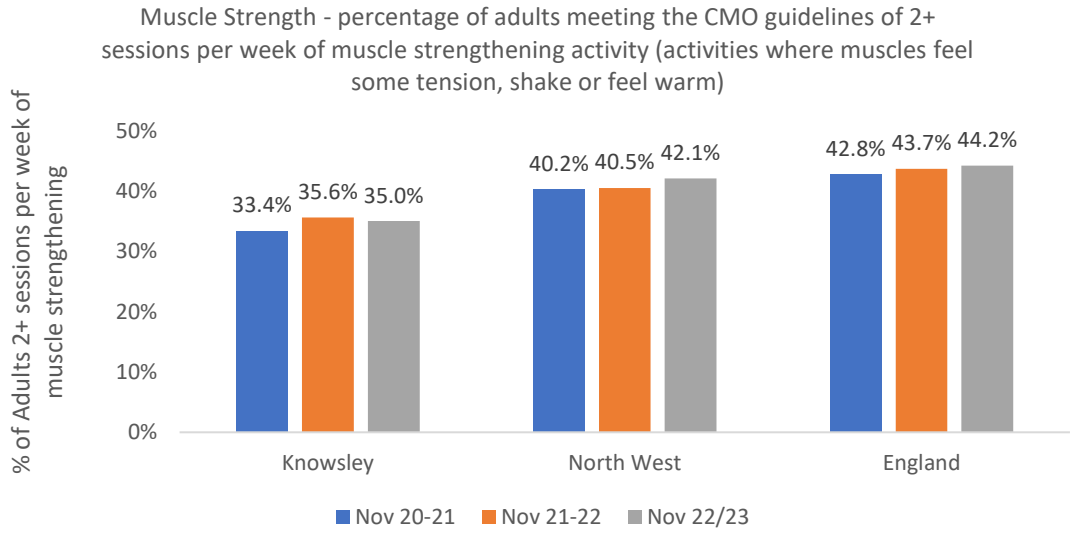
Source: Active Lives Adult Survey, Sport England

Gender trends in physically active population are not as smooth in Knowsley as England and North West due to smaller survey samples. However, in most years there is larger gap in physical activity between Male and Female in Knowsley than North West and England, with Males more physically active than females. In the latest year to Nov 2022/23, there is a 8.8% difference between Male and Female in Knowsley, compare to a much smaller 4.7%

gap in England and 5.3% gap in the North West. The gender gap is larger in Knowsley for all years compared to North West and England apart from in Nov 17-18, where Female activity was higher than Males.

5.2 Adults - Muscle Strength

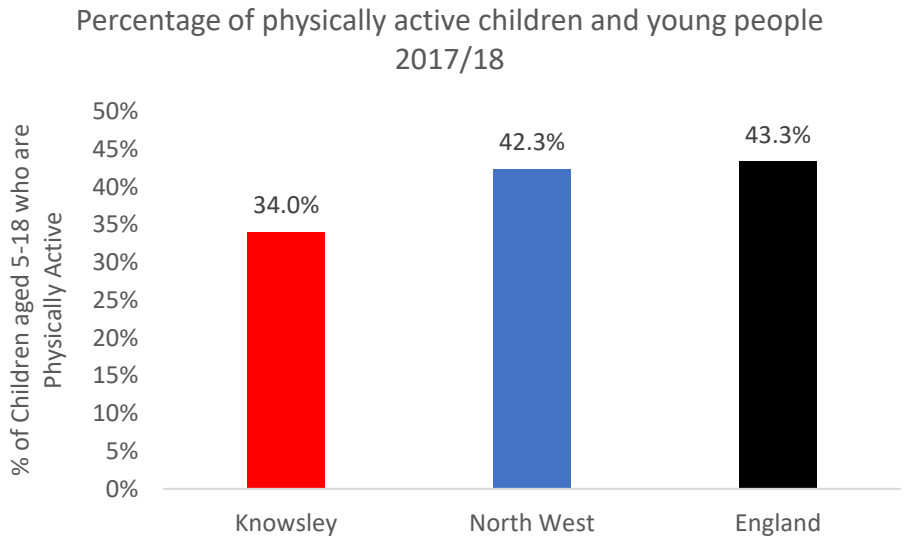
The Chief Medical Officer also recommends adults should do muscle strengthening activities on at least two days a week.



Source: Adults Active Lives Adult Survey, Sport England

The latest data from the Sports England survey, shows that a third of adults (35.0%) are meeting the Chief Medical Officer guidelines of 2 sessions a week of muscle strengthening, this is lower than both North West (42.1%) and England (44.2%).

5.3 Physical Activity prevalence in Children



Source: Children and Young Peoples Active Lives Survey, Sport England

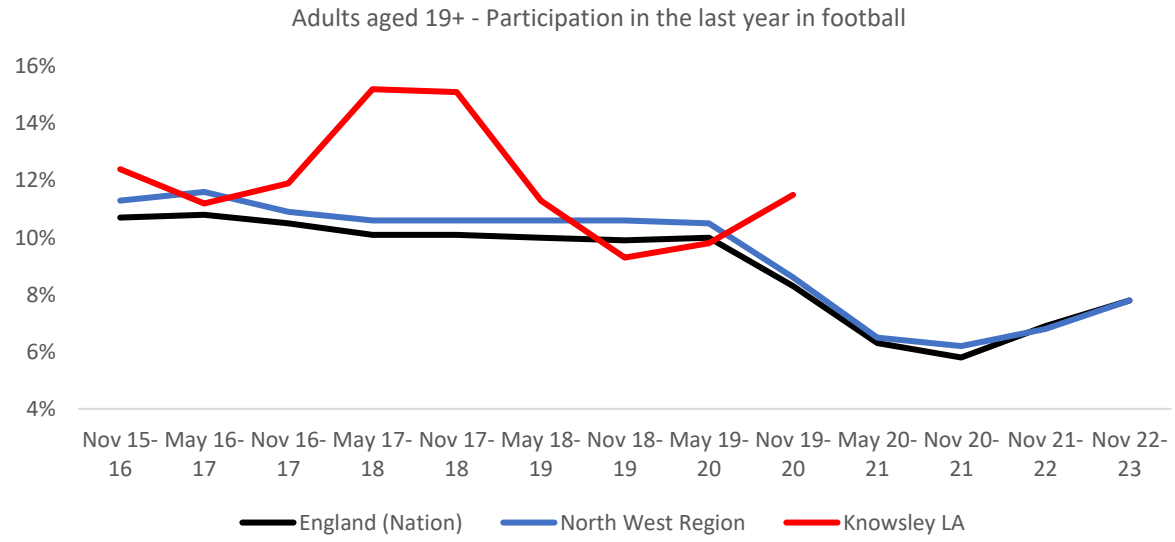
Local Authority level data for Knowsley is limited for Sport and Physical Activity. Most Sports England Active Lives survey data is not published for Knowsley due to the sample sizes being too small. Data however was published in 2017/18 on the prevalence of children and young people who were physical active. This data shows that Knowsley has a third of children (34.0%) meeting the Chief Medical Officer guidelines of undertaking an average of at least 60 minutes of physical activity per day, this is lower than both North West (42.3%) and England (43.3%).

5.4 Participation in Sports - Adults

The Sport England Active Lives survey captures participation levels in different sports, some of this data is available at Local Authority level. Trends are often not smooth due to lower volumes of data; however, this gives an idea of which sports are more popular than others at a local level:

5.4.1 Participation in Football

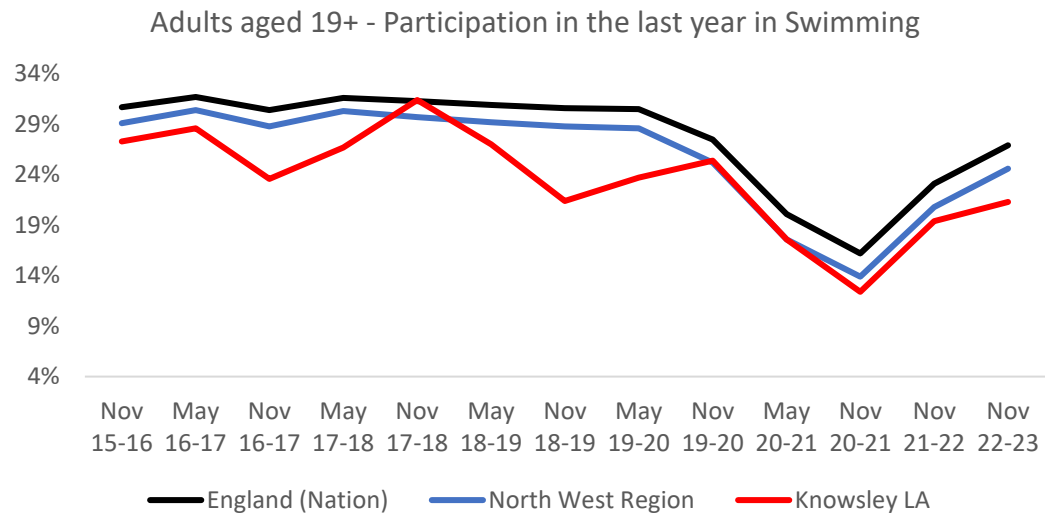
The sport England data shows that in most years Knowsley participation levels in football were at and sometimes above the North West and England average. The last few surveys not enough data was collected in Knowsley, however North West and England participation roughly halved from May 19-20 to Nov 20-21 and participation has been slow to recover



Source: Adults Active Lives Adult Survey, Sport England

5.4.2 Participation in Swimming

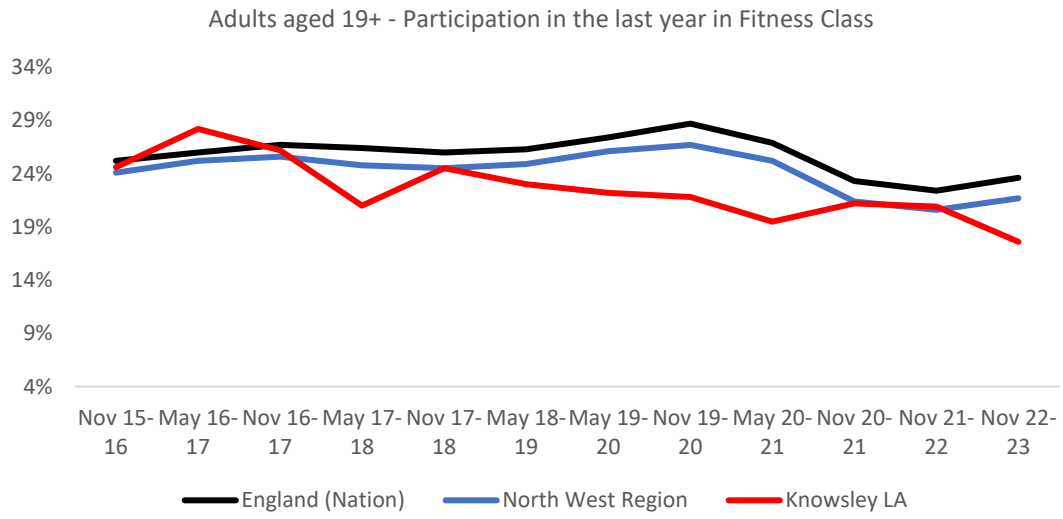
Sport England data shows that in most years Knowsley participation levels in Swimming has been generally below that of North West and England with Knowsley similar to North West average. A significant decline in participation can be seen from May 19-20 to Nov 20-21 both locally and nationally due to the Covid-19 pandemic, with participation roughly halving between this period. Latest Knowsley participation in the last year increased to 21.3% in Nov 22-23 from 19.4% in Nov 21-22. Similar increases also occurred in the North West and England during this period with levels of participation still being lower than before the pandemic started.



Source: Adults Active Lives Adult Survey, Sport England

5.4.3 Participation in Fitness Classes

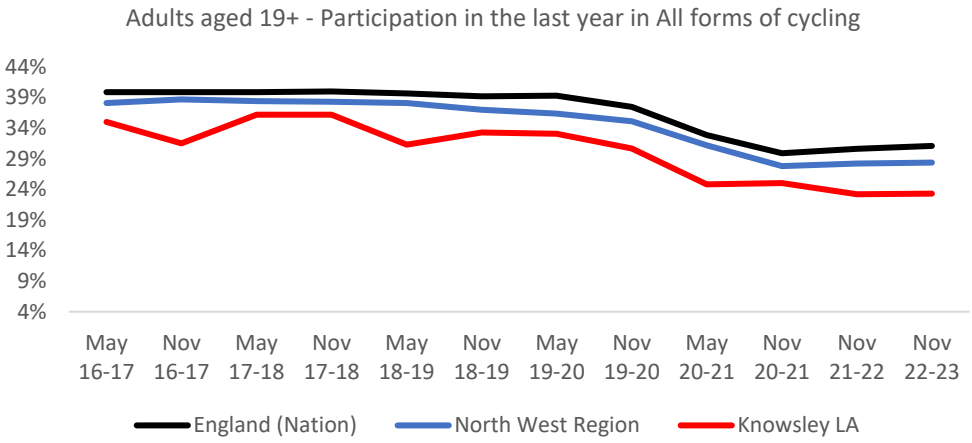
Sport England data shows that in most years Knowsley participation levels in fitness classes has been generally below that of North West and England. Latest data for Nov 22-23 for Knowsley participation was 17.6% of adults in the past year, this is the lowest participation seen over previous surveys and is lower than both North West (21.7%) and England (23.6%).



Source: Adults Active Lives Adult Survey, Sport England

5.4.4 Participation in All forms of Cycling

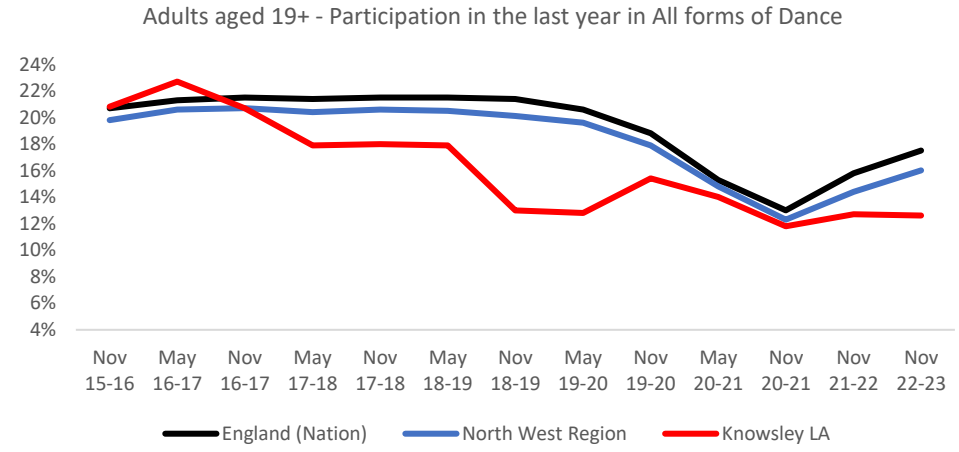
Sport England data shows that Knowsley participation levels in all forms of cycling has been consistently lower than North West and England. The last few surveys have seen a fall in participation both locally and nationally due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Latest data for Nov 22-23 for Knowsley participation was 23.3% of adults participated in the past year, this was lower than North West 28.4% and England 31.1%.



Source: Adults Active Lives Adult Survey, Sport England

5.4.5 Participation in All forms of Dance

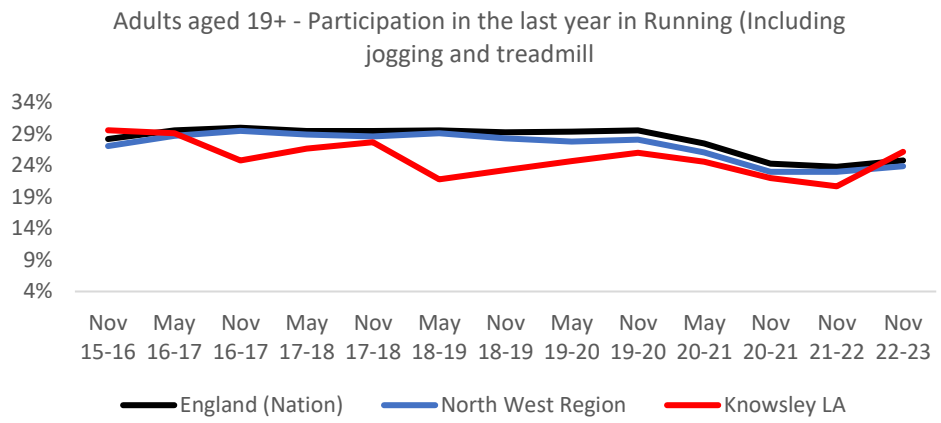
Knowsley participation levels in all forms of Dance is has been consistently lower than North West and England and some years have suggested participation was significantly lower. A decline in participation can be seen from May 19-20 to Nov 20-21 both locally and nationally due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Latest Knowsley participation in the latest year was 12.6% in Nov 22-23. Knowsley participation is currently very low compared with previous years and has not seen the levels of recovery that North West and England has seen during this period with levels of participation still lower than before the pandemic started.



Source: Adults Active Lives Adult Survey, Sport England

5.4.6 Participation in Running (including jogging and treadmill)

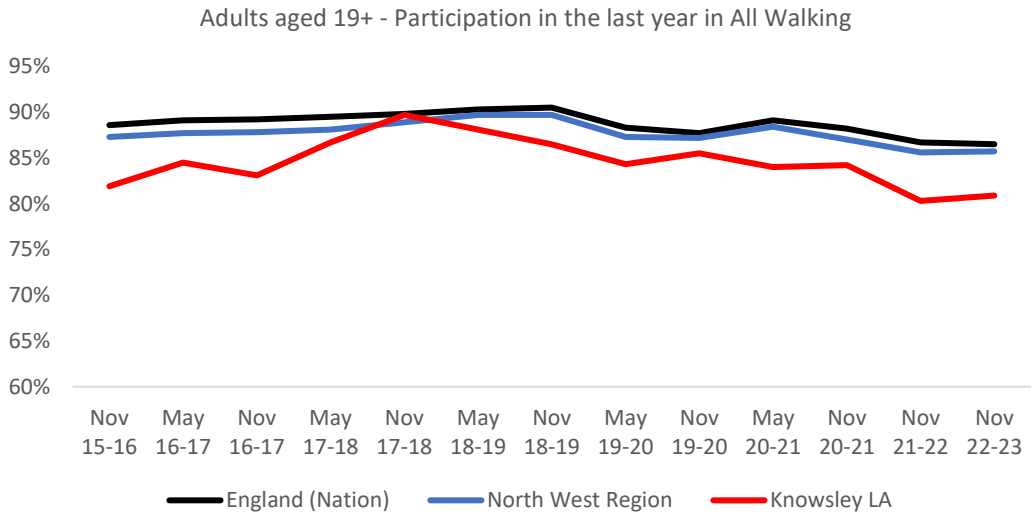
Knowsley participation levels in running has been consistently lower than North West and England for most years. The trend in Knowsley is one of decline, however in the latest year in Knowsley has increased above that of North West and England. Latest data for Nov 22-23 show that Knowsley (26.2%) was higher than the North West (23.9%) and England (24.8%) for adult participation in the last year.



Source: Adults Active Lives Adult Survey, Sport England

5.4.7 Participation in All forms of Walking

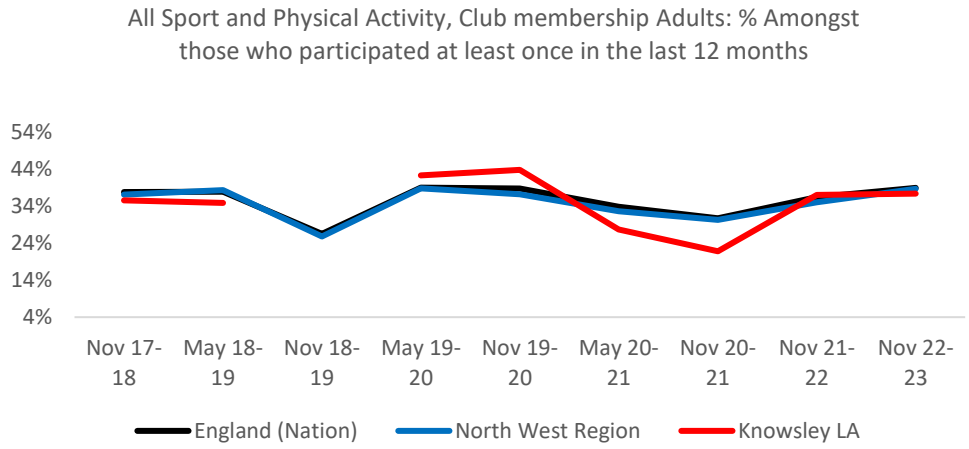
Knowsley participation levels in walking has been consistently lower than North West and England. The pandemic does not seem to have affected participation as much as other activities. Latest data for Nov 22-23 show that Knowsley (80.9%) was lower than North West (85.7%) and England (86.5%) for adult participation in the last year.



Source: Adults Active Lives Adult Survey, Sport England

5.5 Club Membership - Adults

Knowsley Club Members of those that participated in sport or physical activity has on occasions been higher than North West and England. During the Covid pandemic saw a large decrease in club membership both locally and nationally, the effect on Knowsley however was worse than that of North West and England, which is understandable because Knowsley was one of the hardest hit Local Authorities in England with very high Covid-19. Knowsley participation has recovered well in recent years and its participation rate is 37.4%, this is similar to North West (38.7%) and England (38.9%)



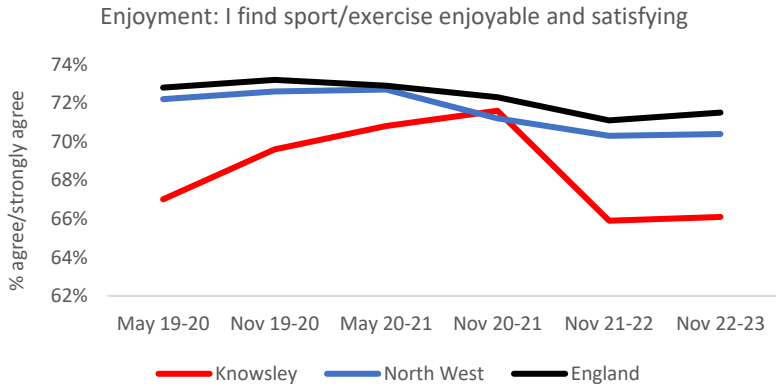
Source: Adults Active Lives Adult Survey, Sport England

5.6 Attitudes and behaviours towards Physical Activity and Sport

5.6.1 Sport England Active lives survey questions

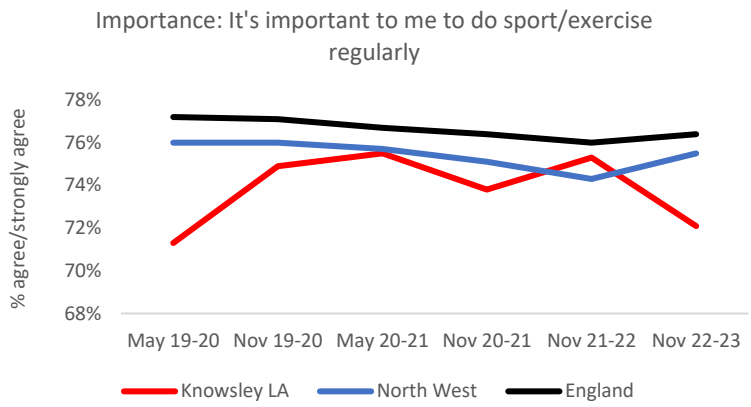
The Sport England active lives survey collects and asks about people's attitudes and behaviours towards Sport and Physical Activity.

Surveys have shown that less people in Knowsley agree/strongly (66%) agree to finding exercise enjoyable and satisfying in the latest survey than North West (70%) and England (72%).



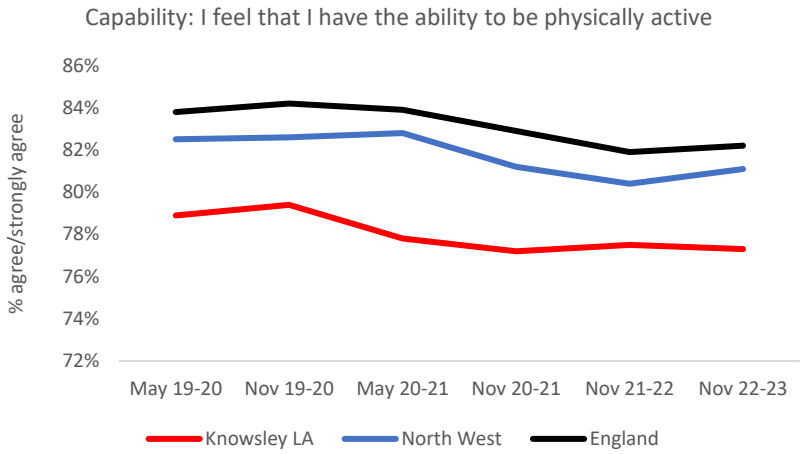
Source: Adults Active Lives Adult Survey, Sport England

Less people in Knowsley agree/strongly agree (latest Nov 22-23 survey) (72.1% that it is important to do sport/physically activity regularly compared to North West (75.5%) and England (76.4%)



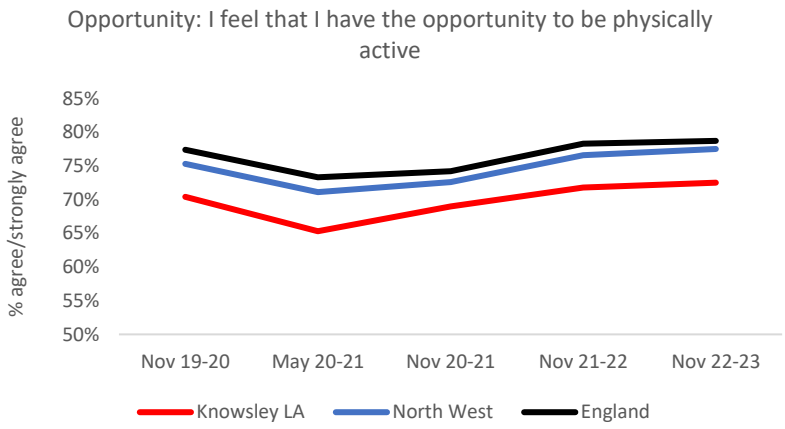
Source: Adults Active Lives Adult Survey, Sport England

Less people in Knowsley agree/strongly agree (latest Nov 22-23 survey) (77.3% that they are capable to be physically active compared to North West (81.1%) and England (82.2%)



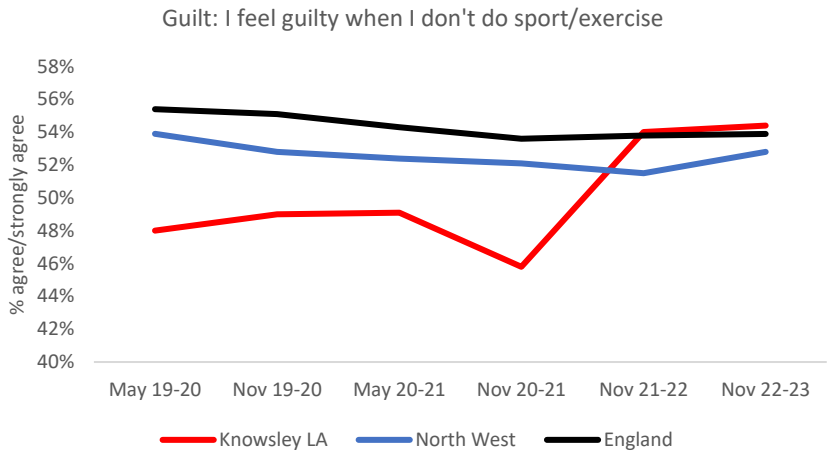
Source: Adults Active Lives Adult Survey, Sport England

A smaller proportion of people in Knowsley agree/strongly agree (latest Nov 22-23 survey) (72.5%) that they feel they have the opportunity to be physically active compared to North West (77.5%) and England (78.7%)



Source: Adults Active Lives Adult Survey, Sport England

In Knowsley (latest Nov 22-23 survey) (54.4%) agree/strongly agree that they feel guilty when they do not do sport/exercise. This is similar to North West (52.8%) and England (53.9%). Previous surveys however showed that Knowsley residents are less people that agree/strongly agree to feeling guilt.



Source: Adults Active Lives Adult Survey, Sport England

Other questions asked include the following in the latest Nov 22-23 survey:

- For a challenge: I exercise to challenge myself (either against myself or others). Less proportions of people agree/strongly agree in Knowsley (39.8%) compared to North West (46.7%) and England (47.8%)
- For fun: I exercise socially for fun with friends. Less proportions of people agree/strongly agree in Knowsley (36.7%) compared to North West (42.4%) and England (42.3%)
- To relax: I exercise to help me relax and worry less about things. Similar proportions of people agree/strongly agree in Knowsley (64.0%) compared to North West (64.6%) and England (65.3%)
- For fitness: I exercise to stay fit and healthy. Less proportions of people agree /strongly agree in Knowsley (77.1%) compared to North West (80.4%) and England (81.4%)
- Disappointing others: I do sport/exercise because I don't want to disappoint other people. 9% of people surveyed agree/strongly agree in Knowsley compared to North West (10%) and England (10%)

5.6.2 The Knowsley Offer consultation responses to Sport and Physical Activity (36)

During the summer of 2022 the council carried out an extensive borough wide survey (The Knowsley Offer) engaging with Knowsley residents and asking what the key issues were affecting them and what they needed to help them to thrive and live their best life.

The survey received a great response and over 800 residents took the time to tell the council about what they liked about living in Knowsley, focusing on how the area could be improved,

the challenges and barriers they face and what they need for them to thrive in the borough. Some respondents told us about their relationship with physical activity and exercise, and those answers are reflected below.

One of the questions asked about what residents' main priorities were for the next five years. They were asked to select up to three from a list with the option to provide their own.

- 69.5%[2] of residents stated one of their priorities was to improve or maintain their physical and or mental health.

  Of these:

  - 72.2% stated that they were female[3],
  - 96.1% of those who provided an ethnicity stated they were white.
  - 17.5% considered themselves disabled.
  - People under the age of 24 years were underrepresented compared to other age groups. This may well be because this age group are more likely to be in good physical health and less likely to feel improvement was needed.

This strongly indicates that improving physical health is very important to Knowsley residents.

Given that physical inactivity rates in the borough are high and becoming more physically active is key to improving physical and mental health, it is important to understand what is preventing residents from achieving something that is clearly important to them.

It is difficult to unpick the barriers to residents achieving their goal of improving their physical and or mental health from other priorities as the survey doesn't ask for one for each priority. Cost of living/lack of money/finances is the biggest barrier given to prevent them achieving priorities. Health (physical and mental), time and childcare (expense of) were also often mentioned.

Residents were asked what could help them reach their goals, as with the barriers answers it was not possible to identify those specific to improving their health. Better access to gyms and leisure centres, free or cheaper gyms membership, exercise groups were stated.

The same survey also asked residents what their sources of support were, multiple answers could be given.

- Of those that answered 47.4% stated that the Leisure Centre or Gym was a source of support. This was one of the highest answers, with many respondents recognising the importance of gyms and leisure centres in their daily routines.

This demonstrates not only that physical activity is an important for residents, but that leisure centres and gyms are an asset in Knowsley.

[2] Not everyone answered this question or listed three priorities.

[3] Not everyone answered the gender identity question 10.6% did not answer or gave an answer that was not a gender identity).

Residents were asked whether they volunteered or who be interested in volunteering. The following areas could be linked to physical activity:

local sports teams and groups:

- 11.1% were already involved in this type of volunteering
- 24.6% were interested in doing more
- 18.8% were unsure
- 45.5% would not like to

Helping their community improve their health:

- 12.8% were already involved in this type of volunteering
- 39.8% were interested in doing more
- 21.8% were unsure
- 25.6% would not like to

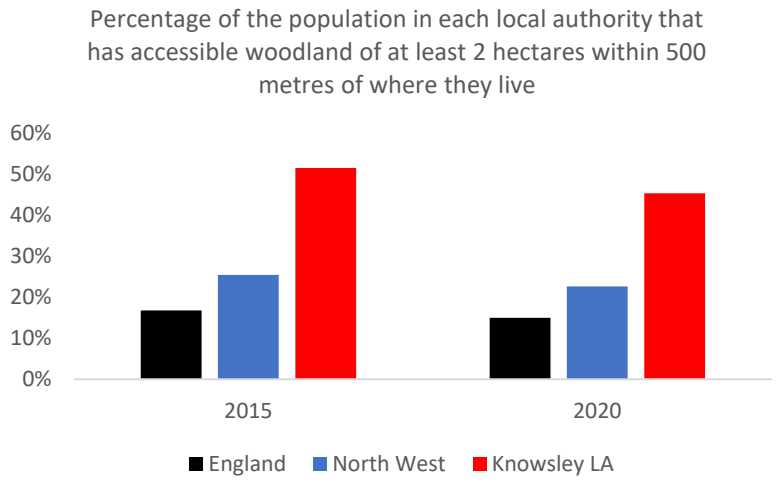
Maintain parks for the enjoyment of all

- 10.5% % were already involved in this type of volunteering
- 42.3% were interested in doing more
- 19.4% were unsure
- 27.8% would not like to

5.7 Access to Green spaces

Access to green space such as woodland, enables people to engage in physical activity. Woodland that is readily accessible represents a significant asset to that community.

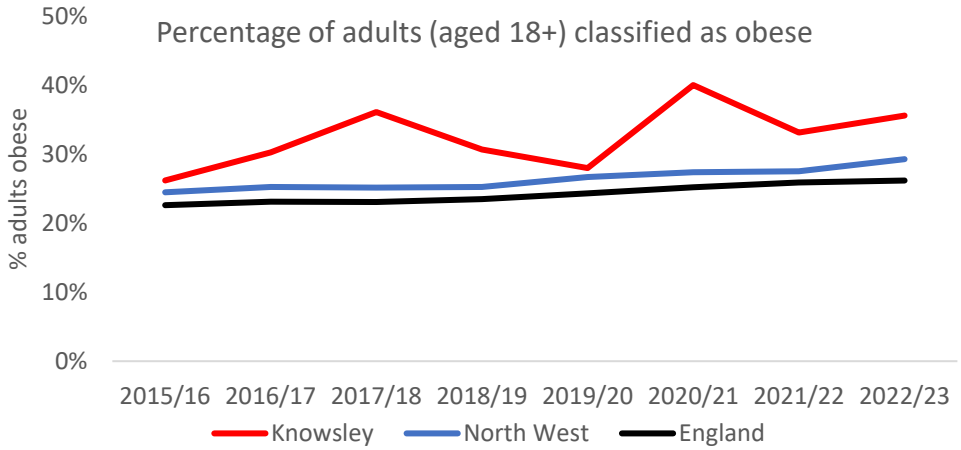
Knowsley is a Local Authority that has access to vast areas of woodland, parks, and open spaces. In 2020, nearly half of the Knowsley population (45.3%) have access to least 2 hectares of woodland within 500 metres of where they live, this is much higher than North West (22.6%) and England (15.0%). Knowsley has the 3rd highest percentage of the population with easy access to the woodland in the country, with only Southampton and Bolton having a higher proportion.



Source: Woodland Trust, OHID Fingertips

5.8 Obesity

Highly linked to physical inactivity is overweight and obesity. Knowsley has some of the highest levels of Adult and Children Obesity in the country. Latest data from Sports England Active lives survey in 2022/23 show that Knowsley has the 9th highest rate of Obese adults in the country (35.6%) higher than North West (29.3%) and England (26.2%)



Source: Sport England Active Lives Survey, OHID Fingertips

6.0 Current Services offered, sports assets and needs being met

6.1 Physical Sports Assets in Knowsley

Much of the sporting facilities in Knowsley centre around football. Well over half of the numbers of facilities are football pitches.

Count	Type
147	Grass Pitches
28	Artificial Grass Pitch
23	Sports Hall
19	Studio
15	Health and Fitness Gym
10	Swimming Pool
9	Outdoor Tennis Courts
6	Squash Courts
3	Golf
2	Indoor Tennis Centre

6.2 Knowsley Volair

Volair is responsible for the management and delivery of Knowsley's leisure services. Volair is a council-owned and controlled organisation that has been established specifically to maintain leisure services across Knowsley.

Volair operates five leisure facilities across Knowsley and a further five centres for learning.

Volair have approximately 6,000 members, 3,000 casual users and over 1,700 children learning to swim every week. Over 150 people are employed, including an expert health and fitness team qualified in the latest qualifications including: GP Referral, specialised pulmonary rehab, cardiac rehab, metal health, diabetes.

The gyms have the latest cardio and resistance equipment, functional space, and free weights. Group exercise classes include all the latest MOSSA Fight and Power, with over 145 classes per week.

Across the facilities there are six swimming pools, 18 badminton courts, a state-of-the-art squash court, coaching programs and facility hire.

Volair have café areas, free Wi-Fi, children's parties, event space, an ultra-modern Velodrome and BMX Park. Volair Spa is a fully equipped beauty salon and thermal spa.

7.0 National and Local Policy

7.1 The Council, local and regional strategy

Knowsley's Council Plan is a key strategy document setting the direction the Council's work. The Council's three priorities are:

- Effective Support for those in need
- Inclusive growth and skills
- Achieving net zero 2040

Sport and physical activity can contribute to all these priorities, but in particular the objective to provide effective support to people in need, which includes the theme objective; improving people's health and wellbeing and reducing health inequalities - focusing on prevention and early intervention approaches which are person-centred and rooted in communities. The Plan also sets out early intervention and prevention as an enabler for achieving the priorities, and we know that sport and physical activity supports this.

The Council Plan also sets out the Council's commitment to the Knowsley 2030 principles. The 2030 principles also include to "prevent problems occurring or stop them getting worse".

- A place with welcoming, vibrant, well-connected neighbourhoods and town centres.
- A place with a thriving, inclusive economy, opportunities for people and business.
- A place where people are active and healthy and have access to support they need.
- A place where people of all ages are confident and achieve their full potential; and,
- A place where strong and safe communities can shape their future.

Sport and physical activity can support people to be active and healthy as well as to be confident and connected to their neighbourhood and community.

There are a range of local policies and strategies, developed by organisations or partnerships within the Borough and the wider region, with aim and priorities which sport, and physical activity can support. Some examples of this include:

- Cheshire and Merseyside Health and Care Partnership's interim strategy includes an overall objective to improve population health as well as healthcare, and there is another objective to tackle health inequalities.
- The All Together Active strategy sets out partners' vision that fewer people in Cheshire and Merseyside will suffer health inequalities resulting from health inactivity.
- Knowsley's Health and Wellbeing Board prioritises reducing health inequalities and mental health, wellbeing, and social isolation.
- Merseyside Sports Partnership strategy has a focus on ensuring everybody across Merseyside can benefit from sport and physical activity. It also recognised the community and environmental benefits of participation.

7.2 National Policy

The Chief Medical Officers for the UK issues guidance on the amount of physical activity which is recommended at various stages of life. For example, children aged 5-18 should engage in moderate-to-vigorous intensity physical activity for an average of 60mins per day across the week, while older adults should aim to accumulate 150 minutes of moderate intensity aerobic activity per week [(37)].

The UK Government's School Sport and Activity Action Plan was published in 2019 and was due to be reviewed in 2022. This includes overarching ambitions:

- That all children and young people should take part in 60mins of physical activity daily, split between 30 minutes in school and 30 minutes outside of school.
- Children and young people to be able to benefit from development, character building and experiences through sport, competition, and active pursuits
- Sport and physical activity for children and young people is designed around the principles of physical literacy, focuses on fun and enjoyment, and aims to reach the least active.

Sport England's Uniting the Movement strategy sets out a mission to reduce inequalities in access to sport and activity so that everyone can benefit. It identifies five big issues:

- Recover [from the pandemic] and Reinvent
- Connecting Communities
- Positive Experiences for Children and Young People
- Connecting with Health and Wellbeing
- Active Environments

House of Lords; A national plan for sport, health, and wellbeing (2021/22) [(38)]
Highlights inactivity, “particularly among women, ethnic minorities, disabled people and those with long-term health conditions, the elderly, and people from less affluent backgrounds”
Recommends a national policy with key themes:

- Physical literacy
- Providing a welcoming and inclusive environment
- Application of behaviour change science and motivation
- A proactive approach to health inequalities
- Making a contribution to individual development and community cohesion through enhanced support for sport for development organisations and projects

7.3 In other areas

A desktop review of sport and physical activity policies and strategies from other parts of England reveals that there are some trends in what sorts of priorities local areas chose:

- **Health benefits**. Unsurprisingly, many local areas prioritise realising the health benefits of sport and physical activity. This often includes an appreciation of the mental health benefits as well as physical. For example, South Kesteven Council plan have actions to; provide enhanced information about physical activity, diet and exercise as part of core services; to embrace the national mental health challenge; and to facilitate social prescribing.
- Tackling **inequalities** /reaching the least active. Many of the plans we reviewed had some focus on health inequalities and/or on groups with lower rates of participation, worse health outcomes, or additional barriers. Different groups are identified depending on the particular circumstances of an area, but this could include people with long term disabilities, people on low incomes, women and girls, families with children, older people, people with mental ill-health, and ethnic minorities.
- Community. Some plans focused on the impact on, and role of, community groups and community connection. For example, Southwark Council have prioritised "active communities", including a focus on strengthening partnerships with community organisations which are in close contact with the most inactive residents. This often acknowledges the role of clubs and volunteers in key players in sport and physical activity.
- Facilities. Many of the plans have a focus on ensuring that the facilities in a place enable physical activity to happen. For example, Wirral Council prioritise "active facilities", with an ambition to "create accessible, affordable, environmentally sustainable facilities offering a quality opportunity and environment that encourages Wirral residents to be more active, more often".
- Some of the plans have a priority around the **environment and physical assets** of their place more generally. Bristol City Council prioritise "active environments" and "active places". This includes specific actions around enabling active travel, supporting physical activity through planning, improving the safety of streets, ensuring low-income groups are able to access transport to facilities, maximising the use of community assets, and using active design to create active places.

A common approach is to set priorities based which in some way address the health of individuals, the role of communities and groups, the facilities available in the locality, and the wider place/environment. Southwark, for example, organised their strategy into "Active People", "Active Places" and "Active Communities", while Wirral Council have thematic areas "Active People", "Active Partnerships", Active Spaces and Places", and "Active Facilities".

8.0 Recommendations

- Long term, this work would benefit from having a designated Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council Officer designated to acting upon these finding and engaging with the population to increase physical activity participation in residents.
- Knowsley has a high rate of obesity and low physical activity rates in school age children, for this reason it would be useful to work with schools and local community groups to increase physical activity provision for younger people.
- In 2020 Knowsley has the lowest life expectancy in the country, physical activity is a good preventative technique of many diseases and can increase the chances of a healthy long life. For this reason, providing initiatives to increase female participation in sport may have huge benefits on female life expectancy.

- A lot of the indicators for physical activity rely on looking at diseases related to lack of physical activity such as obesity. These are also linked to diet, for this reason it would be useful to link this report to the diet and obesity JSNA currently being undertaken.
- Knowsley has a vast amount of green space within the borough, a recommendation is to use of these spaces and providing sessions for specific target groups within these settings which are accessible and affordable.
- The barriers identified in this report are general barriers from national studies. It would be beneficial to identify specific barriers for the local population through engagement work to deliver targeted services.
- Due to Knowsley's high deprivation and low car ownership, it would be useful to run initiatives to increase physical activity that are free/ cheap and accessible throughout the borough.

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37. UK Chief Medical Officers' Physical Activity Guidelines (publishing.service.gov.uk)
38. A national plan for sport, health and wellbeing (parliament.uk)