

Active Leicester -Turning the Tide on Inactivity

2023- 2028

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Forward

Introduction

Active Leicester strives to support individuals, communities, partners, and businesses to experience increased opportunities to be physically active to ensure Leicester benefits from a healthier, happier, and more prosperous population.

This strategy has been developed in partnership with a wide range of stakeholders, partners, professionals, community groups and forums through an extensive consultation process. This has ensured that the priorities of the strategy reflect and respond to the priorities that were fed back and most importantly to the needs of our population and addresses the barriers that many of our residents' face in relation to becoming more physically active.

There are always going to be differences in health, many of which are unavoidable, older people tend to experience more ill health than younger people due to the natural ageing process for example. However, many differences in health are avoidable and unfair:

- People living in more affluent areas can often live on average 10 years longer than individuals who live in the most deprived areas of the city.
- The death rate for coronary heart disease is three times higher amongst unskilled men than professionals and the gap has been widening.
- Education and employment have been identified as fundamental determinants of health inequalities. Many children across the city, particularly from areas of deprivation attend school with poorly developed fine and gross motor skills which negatively impacts their attainment and achievement throughout their schooling. It is important to reduce differences in the early years' development of children to ensure that children from low-income families can take full advantage of opportunities at school and subsequently at work. In addition, improving people's health through physical activity can support many people into work which further enables the city to benefit from a healthy and thriving workforce population.
- Diverse Communities can experience worse health, often connected to income and the conditions in which people are living but regarding physical activity there are several issues that contribute to such populations being less active including inaccessible venues and facilities, lack of empathetic, experienced, and reflective workforce and affordability of activity.

Active Leicester – Turning the Tide on inactivity.

Who the strategy is for?

The strategy is for organisations, communities and individuals who have a willingness to work differently to initiate change and embrace collaboration with like-minded organisations to reduce silo working and support the most inactive residents.

Small changes to ways of working can go a long way to tackling inactivity when combined with similar, likeminded organisations. Therefore, we would ask organisations to critically evaluate their practices and see what small changes can be made.

The key principles we would like organisations to adopt, as a way of working towards the strategy include:

1. To focus resource (full or part) on the city's inactive population. Evidence suggests that these residents are more likely to be inactive in Leicester:
 - People in bad health (including mental health) or living with a disability or limiting health condition
 - Women and Girls
 - Residents with no formal qualifications and tend not to be working.
 - Residents who reside in the East of the City and associate with being Black/Black British or Asian/Asian British.
 - Older adults, aged 65+
2. To focus resource for generational change, for the cities under-five and school age population.
3. To focus on activity that is informal, local to where people live, which is recreational in nature, and an activity type that promotes participation with family and friends. Use of the city's public open spaces is an example.
4. Engage, listen, support, and empower the local community. Utilising the role of community-based leaders and partners, whom have an in-depth knowledge of the community, and can support with the creation of sustainable activity models.
5. Create and engender collaborative working, by partners to deliver appropriate and tailored communications which facilitate long-term behaviour change, along with the sharing of resources, to where it is most needed, where inactivity exists.

OUR VISION

As a result, Active Leicester aims to **Turn the Tide on Inactivity**. The strategy will predominantly focus on supporting the inactive and those most at risk of experiencing health inequalities to become more physically active. The strategy will follow the principles of proportionate universalism through embedding a population approach to inactivity with a focus on improved engagement with inactive communities, in partnership with stakeholders and communities themselves.

OUR MISSION

Active Leicester will target the inequalities of inactivity and support those in most need.

We commit to continue to support and build on our universal offer, encouraging everyone to become more active but will focus predominately on our most disadvantaged geographic locations and on those groups more likely to be inactive. We will encourage long term behaviour change amongst the most inactive in our city throughout the life course but with particular emphasis on reducing inactivity amongst children and young people with a particular focus on girls, people from the most disadvantaged areas, some diverse communities, individuals with poor mental health and those with a physical or learning disability. The approach will include a focus on local, informal activity, the social element of being with friends, non-traditional activity, and a family centred approach to support the most inactive to engage in physical activity.

We will endeavour to make adopting long-term healthy lifestyle behaviours and positive physical activity choices the easy choice. We will focus on encouraging people to make small, sustainable changes to daily behaviours to improve longer term health outcomes.

We will do this through better collaboration, sharing of information and cohesive messaging and identifying key strategic partners, networks, and trusted community champions to create impactful partnership working. Our partners and residents are currently experiencing many challenges regarding the long-term impacts of covid-19 and the more recent cost of living crisis, it is therefore vital that we work smarter, for greater effect. We aim to increase our engagement with organisations who have a willingness to work differently to encourage them to target their resource to those who are inactive. We will provide evidence, advice, and guidance on why tackling health inequalities should be a priority for partners and support them to target their services to those who are not only most at need but who will also most benefit from tailored, accessible, and local physical activity opportunities.

We are aware that there are many other local strategies that all have cross cutting themes with Active Leicester. We aim to ensure that this strategy compliments and supports other relevant strategies rather than duplicating work. This strategy's associated action plan will ensure that priorities align rather than duplicate the actions of other strategies or work programmes. This includes but is not limited to: Sport England's-Uniting the Nation, Active Together's Physical Activity Framework, the city's Health and Wellbeing Strategy, the Active Travel strategies on cycling and walking, and the role of Community Champions at working from within and for communities. A list of interrelated strategies can be found in the appendices.

STRATEGY AIMS

1. Active Start: Increasing physical activity for inactive children and young people

- Improve physical literacy and school readiness for the City's' under five population
- Reduce the number of obese children who start school
- Reduce the number of obese children in year 6 (finishing primary school)
- Reduce the number of inactive school age children, particularly girls.
- Raising awareness on the importance of physical literacy and core movement skills for children and young people

2. Active People: Increasing physical activity for inactive adults

- Increase physical activity levels and opportunities amongst the most inactive, namely:
 - People in bad health (including mental health) or living with a disability or limiting health condition
 - Women and Girls
 - Residents with no formal qualifications and tend not to be working.
 - Residents who reside in the East of the City and associate with being Black/Black British or Asian/Asian British.
 - Older adults, aged 65+
- Enhance knowledge and understanding of the multiple benefits of being physically active amongst individuals, communities, and the workforce.

3. Active Places: Development of place-based approaches to enable people to be active, in their own communities.

- Increased awareness of community assets (human and built) to encourage physical activity in local areas
- Improved collaborative working, by partners to facilitate long-term behaviour change, and self-sustaining physical activity models, along with the sharing of resources, to where it is most needed, where inactivity exists.
- Empower local people, within local networks, to have a greater voice in the provision of activity within the community.
- To raise the awareness, of the importance of a skilled and representative workforce, who can motivate and sustain long term behaviour change amongst the inactive.

4. Active Systems: Strengthen the systems necessary to implement effective and coordinated action to increase physical activity and reduce sedentary behaviour

- Develop system approaches to physical activity and create better relationships with key partners including (but not limited to) planning, transport, police, housing, health, and communities to collectively reduce physical inactivity
- Develop policy actions that address the governance, leadership, multisectoral partnerships, workforce capabilities, advocacy, information systems and financing mechanisms needed to increase physical activity and reduce health inequalities

5. Active Messaging: Improve long term behaviour change through improved communication.

- Provide a framework of consistent messaging and marketing for partner organisations to use to help them deliver appropriate, tailored communications that facilitates long term behaviour change.
- Increased awareness in the use of the Active Leicester and Livewell social media platforms, by the public, to provide a one stop shop for physical activity related interventions, self-help tools, physical activity opportunities, advice and guidance.
- Increase the number of and profile of local role models, as a core method to changing attitudes and perceptions to physical activity

STRATEGY TARGETS

A 1% reduction each year in the 16+ population who are inactive = 10,000 people moving regularly for at least 30 minutes a week

16+ - Adults

Baseline	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
2020-2021					
34%	33%	32%	31%	30%	29%

*Data obtained by Sport England Active Lives tool.

Children aged 5 to 16 years old.

A 1% reduction each year, for five years, for inactive CYP aged 5-16 years

Baseline – 2020 - 2021	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
34.5%	33.5%	32.5%	31.5%	30.5%	29.5%

*Data obtained by Sport England Active Lives CYP data.

How will we deliver and govern the strategy?

Sport and physical activity habits in the city is monitored and managed through variety of forums. The Cities Health and Wellbeing Board, Joint Strategic Needs Assessments (JSNAs), Active Together's ten-year sport and physical activity framework all exist to cement the importance of being physically active.

Active Leicester's 'Turning the tide on inactivity' shines a spotlight on the importance of being active, particularly for those residents, who would benefit the most. Therefore, Public Health and Sport Services at the City Council will facilitate, monitor, and manage the creation of a new and live action plan that will be developed with likeminded organisations, whom have the willingness to work differently to initiate change. We will be asking organisations for a commitment to work with the council on this process.

The strategy will be formally measured and tracked by using the base line data from the annual Active Lives and other physical activity data sets.

How will we know if we're successful?

An action plan will be developed that will ensure Active Leicester develops clear actions to ensure we meet the objectives and targets highlighted earlier in the strategy. Active Leicester is a multi-agency strategy therefore action owners will be from a variety of stakeholders to ensure the right people can progress actions to meet our targets and objectives. Targets and KPIs will be developed to ensure all stakeholders collectively work towards the ambitions and objectives of this strategy. A Board will be established that will monitor strategy progress and each action owner will be held accountable to meet the required KPIs. A system wide network will be established to enhance strategy progress and improve partnership working. Partners will include (but not limited to):

- Parks and Open spaces
- Active Travel
- Active Together
- Inspire Together
- Professional sports clubs – Leicester City in the Community, Tigers RFU, Riders Basketball, Leicestershire County Cricket, Leicester Hockey Club
- Universities

- NHS partners
- Leicester Diabetes Centre / Centre for Ethnic Health Research
- Schools and Colleges
- Early Years providers and settings.
- National Governing Bodies of sport.
- Community and Voluntary sector

WHY PHYSICAL ACTIVITY MATTERS?

Regular physical activity provides a range of physical and mental health benefits, these include reducing the risk of disease, managing existing conditions and developing and maintaining good physical and mental function. It can take many different forms; from moderate to high intensity exercise such as aerobics and running, muscle/bone strengthening such as weightlifting, balance training and to day-to-day activities like walking and cycling. The benefits of increased daily activity through walking, cycling and gardening for example can be effective in improving both physical and mental health and are often more manageable for the population to achieve during their daily lives.

Physical activity not only promotes good health and helps prevent and manage disease, it also contributes to a range of wider social benefits for individuals and communities. The importance of the wider benefits of physical activity for individuals vary according to life stage but can include improved learning and attainment, managing stress, improved sleep, the development of social skills and better social interaction.

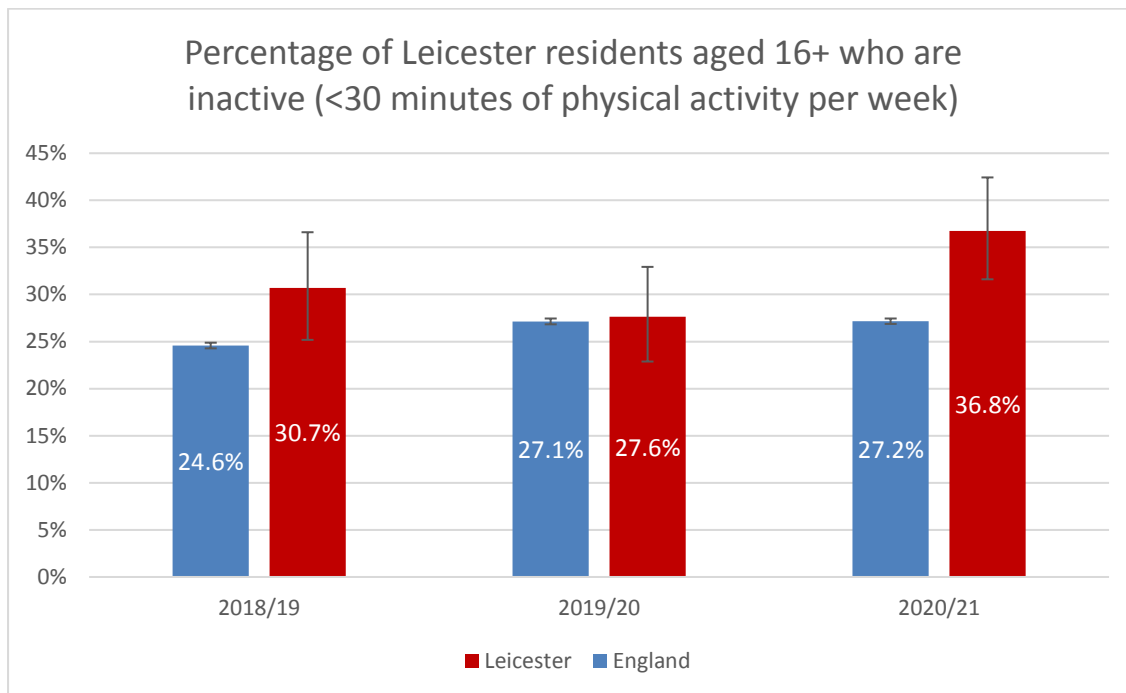
ADULTS

Despite the highly publicised benefits of physical activity, most adults in the UK do not meet the minimum recommendations of doing 150 minutes (2 1/2 hours) of moderate intensity activity (such as brisk walking or cycling) or 75 minutes of vigorous intensity each week¹.

Nationally, nearly 3 in 10 adults do not meet this guideline. The 2020/21 Active Lives Survey shows higher rates of inactivity in Leicester compared to England. 36.8% of Leicester's population aged 16+ did less than 30 minutes of physical activity per week and are therefore classed as physically inactive compared to 27.2% in England overall.

¹ [UK Chief Medical Officers' Physical Activity Guidelines \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/92121/uk-physical-activity-guidelines.pdf)

Figure 1. Inactivity levels for Leicester and England, trend data, 2018/19 – 2020/21



There are significant health inequalities in relation to physical inactivity according to age, gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status and disability.

Leicester’s Health & Wellbeing Survey (2018) highlighted that;

- Women are generally less likely to achieve the recommended 150 minutes of physical activity each week compared to men.
- People of Asian heritage are significantly less likely to achieve the recommended physical activity levels, compared to ethnically White residents.
- People of Black British ethnicity are significantly more likely to be inactive.
- Physical inactivity rates increase with age group: 65+ year olds are three times more likely to be inactive than 16-24 years old.
- Those in bad health, lacking formal qualifications, disabled, retired or with poor mental wellbeing were also significantly more likely to be physically inactive.

The figure below presents levels of inactivity (less than 30 minutes) across Leicester by ward, as per the Adults Health and Wellbeing survey 2018. The map below highlights that people in the East of the city are more likely to be physically inactive than those in the South and West.

Figure 2. Inactivity (<30 minutes per day) by ward, 2018

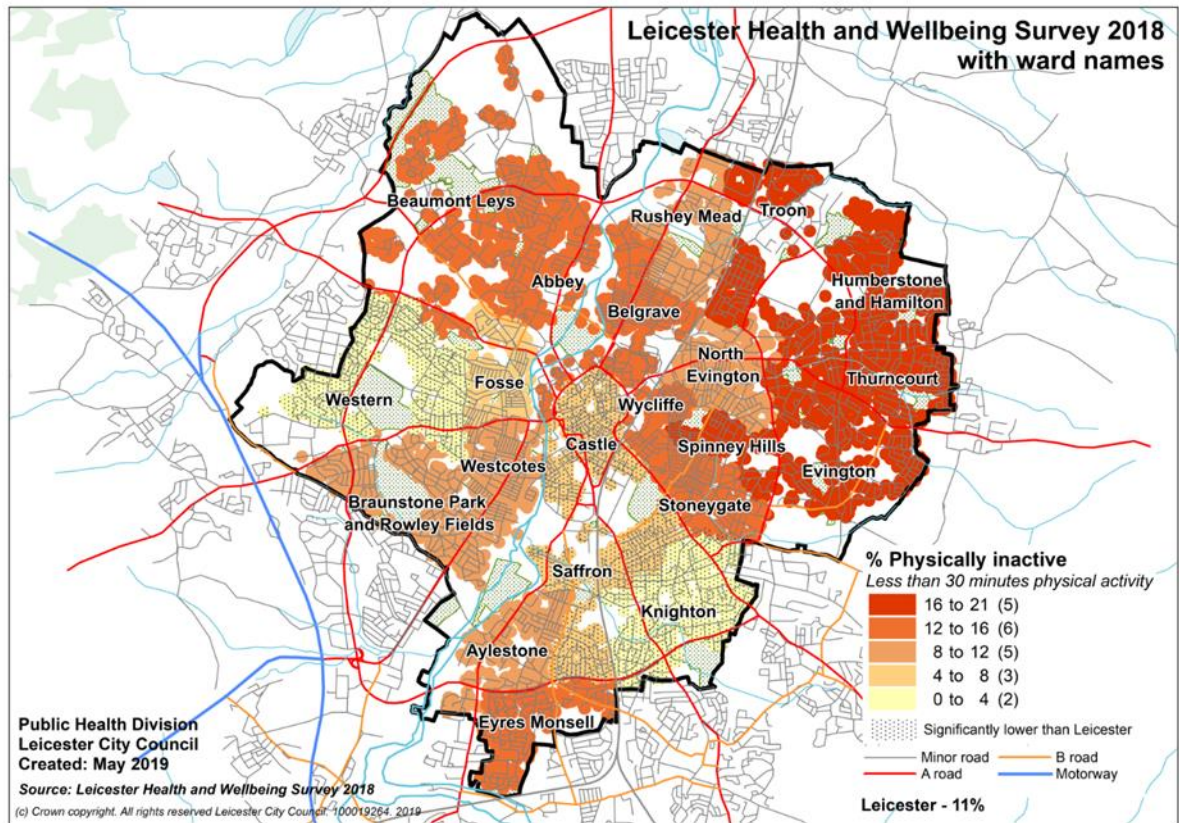
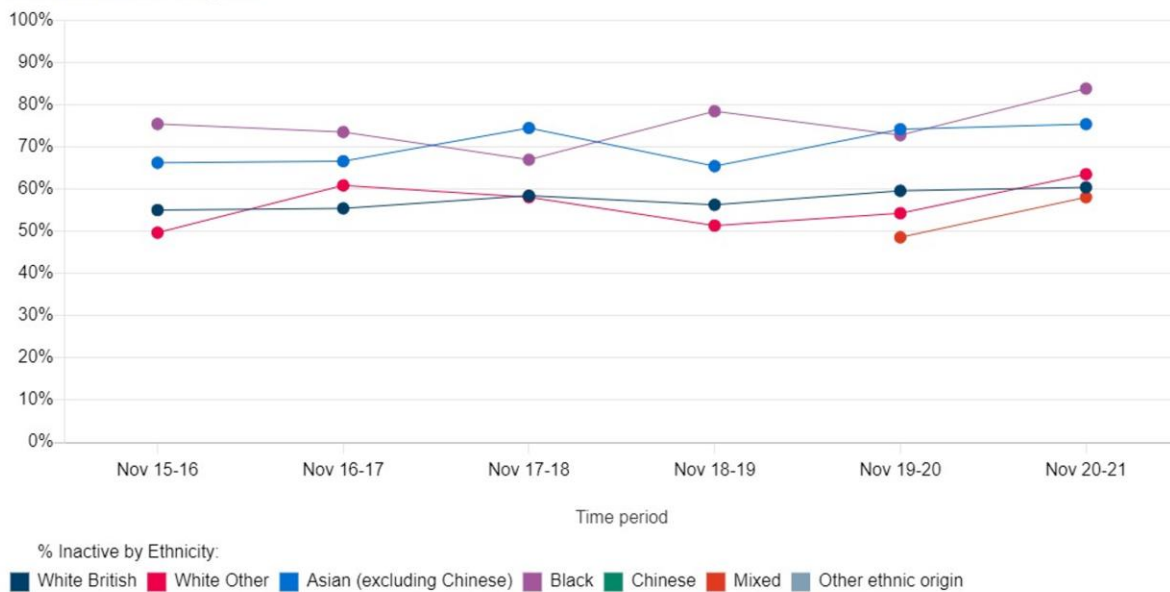


Figure 3. Inactivity by ethnic origin, 2015-2021

Inactive : (No activity in last 28 days): % of all who are inactive - Ethnicity
East Midlands Region



CHILDREN

Studies tracking child obesity into adulthood have found that the probability of overweight and obese children becoming overweight or obese adults increases with age. In an effort to monitor and mitigate this risk, the National Child Measurement Programme (NCMP) was introduced as an annually mandated programme to capture the body mass index (BMI) of children in Reception and Year 6 in state-maintained schools in England. The findings help inform local funding allocations and commissioning decisions through multi-agency partnerships. In 2020/21, around 2 in 10 Reception-year children (21%) and 4 in 10 Year-6 children (41%) were classified as overweight and obese (combined) in Leicester. For children in Year-6, this is higher than the National average (38%). The latest NCMP figures are an increase on pre-pandemic years (2019/20).

Physical activity not only helps to reduce the risk of children and young people (CYP) becoming overweight and obese it is also associated with better physiological, psychological and psychosocial health. Evidence shows that boys are more active than girls at all ages and that physical activity levels decline through childhood into adolescence. There is also some evidence to suggest that physical activity levels track from childhood into adulthood. As such, ensuring that all children are as active as possible throughout childhood is important for current and future population health.

Chief Medical Officer (CMO) guidelines for children and young people (5-18 years) state that they should engage in Moderate to Vigorous Physical Activity (MVPA) for an average of at least 60 minutes per day across the week. This can include all forms of activity such as physical education, active travel, after-school activities, play and sports. Children and young people should engage in a variety of types and intensities of physical activity across the week to develop movement skills, muscular fitness, and bone strength. Children and young people should aim to minimise the amount of time spent being sedentary, and when physically possible should break up long periods of not moving with at least light physical activity.

The latest figures from Sport England, which are based on 1,233 responses to the Active Lives Children and Young People's survey, show that for the 2020/21 academic year, 45% of Leicester's Children and Young People aged 5-16 were physically active (60+ mins per day), 20% were active (30-59 mins per day) and 35% were inactive (less than 30 mins per day). 35% of CYP is equivalent to approximately 23,500 children, which highlights the scale of inactivity in the city.

Between 2017/18 and 2020/21, Leicester saw around a 5% overall increase in CYP who were active and a 4% increase in CYP who were fairly active, although both were not significant. More encouragingly, Leicester also saw an 8% reduction in CYP who were inactive which was significant. During the early stages of the pandemic, between 2018/19 and 2019/20, there were modest changes in CYP's activity levels; those active decreased from 47% to 45%

and those inactive increased from 29% to 31%. There has been very minimal change since 2019/20.

Whilst we do not have local data by ethnicity and deprivation, National estimates show variation in CYP activity levels by these two demographics. For the 2020/21 academic year, those of Asian (37%) and 'Other' ethnicity (33%) had the highest inactivity levels (<30 minutes per day), compared to Mixed (22%), White Other (24%) and White British (26%). When looking at deprivation, those most deprived showed over 10% higher levels of inactivity (41%) compared to those least deprived (30%); this was similar when looking at those active, with the most deprived reporting almost 10% less (38%) than those least deprived (46%).

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IN LEICESTER

Contributions to the higher rates of physical inactivity in Leicester include the high levels of deprivation we experience across the city. Barriers to being active amongst our residents include low income and affordability of exercise, access to facilities, cultural barriers, poor health, and community safety. Despite on-going efforts to bridge inequalities, high rates of physical inactivity are prevalent amongst females, people of Asian heritage, people of Black British ethnicity, people with a physical disability and low socioeconomic groups. Those in poor health, lacking formal qualifications, disabled, retired or with poor mental wellbeing were also significantly more likely to be physically inactive.

There is also geographical variation across the city, with the proportion of residents who meet the recommended amount of exercise differing; with residents in West and South more likely to achieve the recommend amount of exercise whereas residents in the East and North are doing less. This variation is likely to be related to both deprivation and ethnicity.

Leicester benefits from 130 parks, 13 of which are considered large parks, all offering something different for everyone. Facilities include playgrounds, outdoor gyms, park runs, walking and cycling trails and meditation areas. Leicester City's parks, open spaces, community gardens and riverside corridor provide opportunities to participate in organised sport and fitness sessions along with space to enjoy informal recreational physical activity opportunities. However, Leicester's parks and open spaces are still not used effectively, Leicester residents are significantly less likely to exercise using outdoor space, with only 12% using parks or the countryside for health or exercise purposes compared to 17.9% in England, on a weekly basis. A priority of the Active Leicester Strategy will be to promote the use of free universal provision, particularly the use of the city's wealth of parks and open spaces, a such a guiding principle of the strategy is the use of local, recreational spaces to be active in.

As people become busier, there has been more inclination to participate in informal activity. In the Leicester Health and Wellbeing Survey (2018) informal activities were most popular

with 47% of people walking for leisure and 35% walking for travel. A fifth of respondents named heavy housework (20%) and only a sixth (17%) referred to sports.

Active travel is identified as an increasingly popular form of physical activity, it is recognised that in Leicester two in five residents use some form of weekly active travel (either walking or cycling as a means of transport). Most people do not have access to a bike with only one fifth of residents reporting that they use a bike for travel. There are differences across the city when it comes to active travel; those in the West are more likely than those in other areas of the city to actively travel, whereas those residents living in the East are least likely to do so. This further highlights the importance of partnership work within this strategy particularly with planning and transport colleagues to increase the opportunity for people to become more active through increased access to bikes, opening of walkways, lighting, and community safety measures for example.

At present only 26% of the population utilise designated sport and leisure facilities to exercise. Whilst we are aware that not everyone will use a designated sports and leisure facility this does tell us that we do have the capacity and scope for our facilities to play a larger role. Formal activity also remains underutilised. A quarter (26%) use sports and leisure centres at least once a month, but almost half (48%) never use them; 13% use outdoor gyms at least once a month, with two thirds (67%) never using them. One in ten (10%) Leicester residents' cycle along a cycle route at least once a week.

Over the last 2 years, there has been a significant impact from the COVID 19 pandemic. The virus has posed serious challenges to the residents of Leicester with the City experiencing an extended lockdown which severely limited the opportunity for people to remain active. Requirements for self-isolation particularly amongst the clinically vulnerable and the emergence of newer variants posing need for harsher and ongoing restrictions further impeded the return of employees to physical workspaces. This not only reduced the positive mental benefits of social engagement in the workplace but also physical activity from commuting to work and in the work environment. As a result of the pandemic many food businesses increased their delivery and take away options resulting in larger numbers accessing more unhealthy food whilst also becoming less physically active. This increasing consumption of out-of-home meals has been an important contributing factor in the increasing rates of obesity, with higher rates noticed in the unemployed, sick/disabled, specific ethnic groups and those between ages 16 and 34. The 2020/21 cohort for National Child Measurement Programme data collection is much smaller due to issues with data collection during the pandemic, which may affect the quality of the data presented, however the data did show fairly drastic increases in unhealthy weight amongst reception and year 6 children in Leicester during the pandemic. NCMP data for 2021-2022 shows that unhealthy weight levels in CYP across the City are improving, however it has not reduced to pre-covid levels.

Universal Provision in the City

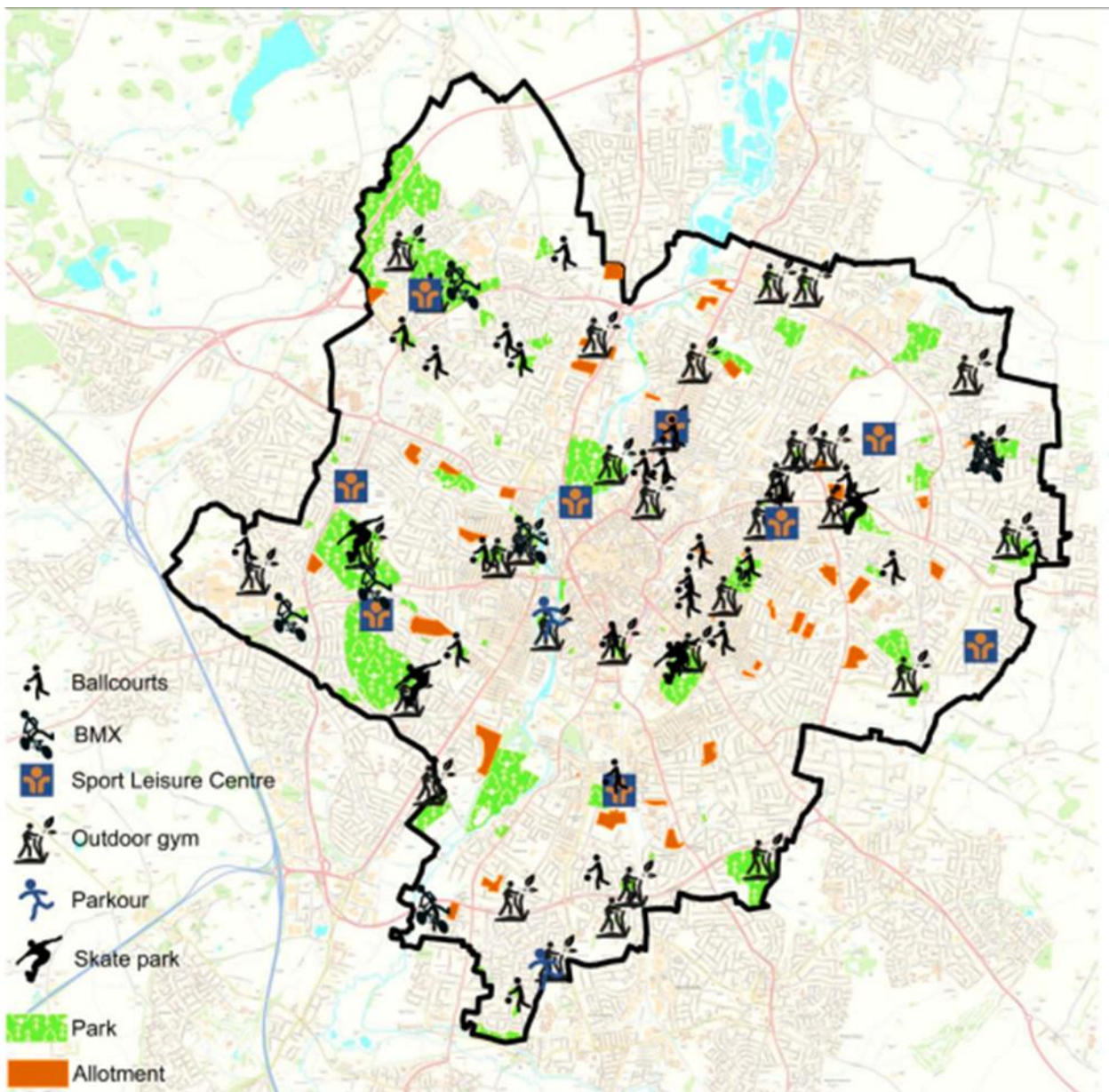
Leicester is keen to continue to promote and develop its universal offer of physical activity to all residents across the city. Multiple opportunities for people to become physically active will result in multiple benefits not only to the physical and mental health of our residents but to employment, community development, tourism, and infrastructure amongst others.

To support people to become more physically active we already have many opportunities for activity to be integrated into daily lives, work and play and this will remain a priority going forward. Increasing physical activity across the life course is a key aim of Active Leicester, encouraging active play and recreation in early childhood will support healthy growth and development, improve school readiness, family inclusion and physical literacy for long-lasting, healthy lifestyles.

Active Leicester also provides an opportunity to further develop digital innovations to support people and families of all ages to be more active in a manageable and effective way. The Active Leicester website continues to be improved along with the development of a phone app that will enable easier access to leisure centre information such as class and swim timetables but also self-help tools.

Leicester City has many assets to encourage and support greater participation in physical activity, from leisure centres and sports clubs to numerous parks and outdoor gyms which can be used for free. The wide range of provision across the city aims to ensure that both formal and informal activity is accessible to all our residents.

The map on the following page highlights Leicester's outdoor gyms, sport and leisure centres, and public green spaces:



The types of universal provision available in the city include, but are not limited to:

Sport and leisure facilities across the city provide a variety of opportunities for participation in indoor activities such as swimming, badminton, table tennis and climbing. Outdoor opportunities include golf courses, football pitches, athletics tracks, outdoor gyms, park runs, walking and cycling.

The city benefits from 5 successful professional sports clubs all of which provide opportunities for people to become physically active through their community outreach programmes. In addition, the LiveWell Leicester lifestyle service is available to support clients into a wide variety of lifestyle support including exercise, weight management and smoking.

Opportunities for people to participate in informal activity such as gardening are also available across the city and more structured activity through a vibrant private and self-employed sector of gyms, community-based sessions, and freelance instructors.

STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT

Despite the universal offer of physical activity and sport in Leicester we still see lower levels of physical activity, particularly amongst the most deprived with further variations depending on people's gender, ethnicity, age, and disability. As previously discussed, people who are less active are often pre-disposed to experience poorer health outcomes, life limiting disability, multiple co-morbidities, and lower life expectancy. Leicester experiences vast health inequalities and we continue to see this gap increasing, particularly accelerated by the covid-19 pandemic.

The strategy development included a wide ranging and in-depth consultation with key partners and community members from a variety of sectors including the voluntary sector, charities, statutory organisations, health professionals, the education sector, and professional sports clubs. Also consulted were groups representing the very young, preschool children, schools, colleges and universities and groups representing and working with the elderly.

Tackling health inequalities were a priority for most stakeholders, whilst they supported a continuation of encouraging everyone to be active, they felt groups, ethnicities, areas and communities across the city needed additional support with targeted, accessible options for those that are most at risk of experiencing poor outcomes as a result of being inactive. In addition, an appetite for wider systems thinking was apparent from stakeholders who identified that working in silo will not have the impact this strategy strives for when supporting the marginalised to be more active. They noted that a systems approach will not only benefit the individual and community, but additional benefits will be seen across many other sectors including community safety, health and social care and education. Stakeholders felt that prioritising informal and everyday activities should remain a priority in supporting marginalised individuals and diverse communities to become more active along with family centred approaches.

Appendices 1 – Reference list of Supporting Strategies and information

Sport England Uniting the Movement - [Uniting the Movement | Sport England](#)

Active Together framework for physical activity - [How do we deliver? | Active Together \(active-together.org\)](#)

Leicester Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2019 – 2024 - [The Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2019-2024 \(leicester.gov.uk\)](#)

Leicester Physical Activity JSNA Chapter - <https://www.leicester.gov.uk/media/186429/physical-activity-jsna-chapter-2020.pdf>

Healthy Weight strategy – [Food Active | Local Authority Declaration on Healthy Weight](#)

Healthy pregnancy, birth and babies strategy - [strategy-to-support-healthy-pregnancy-birth-and-babies-in-leicester-leicestershire-and-rutland-2019-2024.pdf](#)

Connecting Leicester

Anti-poverty strategy - [Anti-poverty strategy \(leicester.gov.uk\)](#)

Youth Offending JSNA for CYP - [cyp-jsna-chapter-eight-offenders.pdf \(leicester.gov.uk\)](#)

Universities of Leicester Civic Agreement

Cycle City Action Plan is here [leicester-cycle-city-action-plan.pdf](#)

Leicester cycling & Walking Investment Plan is here [Leicesters-LCWIP-document.pdf \(choosehowyoumove.co.uk\)](#)

[Community Wellbeing Champions network - Live Well Leicester.](#)
