

Islington Active Together strategy

2022-2030

1. Foreword

I am delighted to endorse this strategy, as part of our ambition to build a fairer Islington. We are fortunate in having a wide-ranging and diverse physical activity offer in Islington, and have made significant investment into our leisure facilities, parks and open spaces, sports organisations and communities. However, many more residents could benefit from the powerful impact of being active. There are deep-rooted health inequalities in our borough, and these have been further impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis. Our Islington Active Together strategy outlines our determination as a borough to tackle these inequalities by focusing on our least active residents, supporting groups who are traditionally less likely to participate in physical activity, and maximizing the potential for physical activity in supporting mental health and preventing and managing long-term conditions.

We cannot though do this on our own. The council, NHS, Voluntary and Community Sector and local residents all have a part to play in influencing people to be more active. This strategy therefore provides a framework for bringing us together to work towards our shared goals and ambitions for Islington.

Cllr Nurullah Turan

2. Our vision and guiding principles

Our vision is to **empower our communities to be more physically active**.

We will use the following guiding principles to underpin the delivery of the Islington Active Together strategy:

- Focusing our resources on the **residents who are least active** and empowering them to become more active.
- **Challenging inequalities** in access to, and participation in, physical activity. We will focus on children and young people, and the groups who are traditionally less likely to be physically active, including people living with a disability or long-term health condition, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities, women and girls, older adults, and people living in areas of higher deprivation.
- Recognising the powerful impact that physical activity can have in preventing and managing a range of **long-term health conditions**, including supporting good mental health.

3. Introduction

3.1. The benefits of physical activity

“If physical activity were a drug, we would refer to it as a miracle cure, due to the great many illnesses it can prevent and help treat”

Academy of Medical Royal Colleges

Being regularly active has profound benefits for our physical health, our mental health and wellbeing, our quality of life, and our ability to live independently. It can also help connect and strengthen our communities and has huge value to our local and national economy.

In children and young people, regular physical activity is associated with improved learning and attainment, better mental health and cardiovascular fitness, and contributes to being a healthy weight^(Error! Bookmark not defined.).

In adults, there is strong evidence to demonstrate that physical activity can help to prevent or manage many common conditions such as type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease and some cancers⁽¹⁾. It also helps keep symptoms under control, prevents additional conditions from developing and reduces inequalities⁽¹⁾.

Having an active population benefits the health and care system and has wider social benefits for individuals and communities too^(Error! Bookmark not defined.). These include increased productivity in the workplace and reducing congestion and air pollution through active travel instead of driving^(Error! Bookmark not defined.).

3.2. How active should we be?

The UK Chief Medical Officers' (CMO) physical activity guidelines published in 2019 stated that **any activity is better than none, and more is better still**^(Error! Bookmark not defined.). Every minute counts and it's never too late to start. The amount of time being sedentary should be minimized, and when physically possible long periods of inactivity should be broken up with at least light physical activity.

- Under 1s should aim for at least 30 minutes of tummy time across the day
- Children aged 1-5 should aim for at least 180 minutes of activity every day
- Children and young people aged 5-18 should aim for an average of at least 60 minutes per day across the week
- Disabled children and young people are advised to aim for 20 minutes of physical activity per day, with strength and balance activities 3 times per week

- Adults and older adults should aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate intensity per week or at least 75 minutes of vigorous intensity per week (or a combination of both). They should also aim for muscle strengthening activities on at least 2 days a week.
- Disabled adults are advised to make physical activity a daily habit. For substantial health gains, the guidance suggests at least 150 minutes each week of moderate intensity activity and doing strength and balance activities on at least 2 days per week.
- Pregnant women should aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate intensity activity every week and do muscle strengthening activities twice a week.

UK Chief Medical Officers' physical activity guidelines

Doing some physical exercise is good and every minute counts so it's never too late to start.



Build strength and improve balance

keep **muscles, bones** and **joints** strong



Be active

including **moderate, vigorous** and **very vigorous** activities



Minimise sedentary time

break up periods of inactivity

3.3. The local Islington picture

Demographics

Islington has an estimated population of **245,636 residents**.



Over the next 5 years the population is projected to increase by 3%, with an increase in residents aged 35+.



Islington is one of the most densely populated local authority with 16,097 people per square Km. This is almost triple the London average.



71% of residents live in flats, often without access to green space

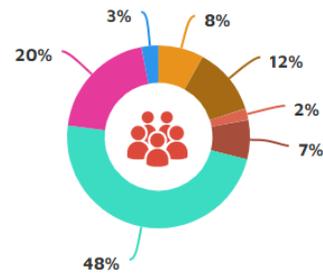


The greatest proportion of residents fall within the age group 25-34.

References

- 1 GLA 2020-based housing-led population projections
- 2 English Indices of Deprivation 2019
- 3 Islington Strategic Commissioning and Adult Social Care Market Position Statement 2021-2024
- 4 GLA 2016-based housing-led ethnic group population projections
- 5 Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government- Child Poverty, Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (2019)
- 6 Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government- Income Deprivation Affecting Older People Index (2019)
- 7ONS Population Estimates: Population density for the local authorities in the UK, mid-2001 to mid-2020

Islington Ethnicity Breakdown.



● Asian ● Black ● Chinese ● Mixed ● White British/Irish
● Other White Ethnic Group ● Other Ethnic Group

Deprivation

Islington is the **6th most deprived** borough in London. Deprivation varies across wards.



27.5% of children (under age 15) in Islington live in income deprived households.



33% of adults over the age of 60 are affected by income deprivation. This ranking is the **4th highest** in London.

Physical Activity Levels

Activity Levels in Young People.

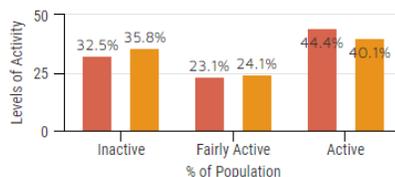
Physical activity measures in Young People:

Active: An average of 60+ minutes a day

Fairly active: An average of 30-59 minutes a day

Inactive: Less than an average of 30 minutes a day

Levels of Activity in Young People (16 and under)



- London Young People (Age 16 and under)
- Islington Young People (Age 16 and under)

91% of primary, and **74% of secondary** school pupils usually travel to school by walking, cycling, or scooting.

31% of primary, and **33% of secondary school** students reported that they **did not do 60 minutes of activity** on a single day in the 7 days before participating in the survey.

References

- 1 Active Lives 2020-2021
- 2 The Islington Children and Young People's Health and Wellbeing Survey 2021
- 3 Camden and Islington- Supporting Inactive Adults with a Long Term health Condition to be Physically Active (2021)
- 4 Camden and Islington Parks for Health Strategy 2022-2030
- 5 Islington Transport Strategy 2019-2041

Activity Levels in Adults.

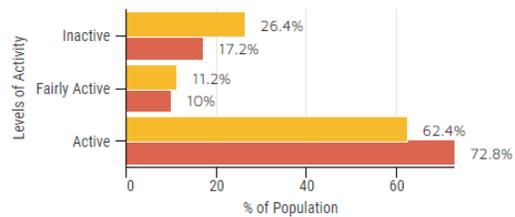
Physical activity measures in Adults:

Active: 150 minutes or more a week

Fairly active: 30-149 minutes a week

Inactive: Less than 30 minutes a week

Levels of Activity in Adults (Age 16+)



- London Adults (Age 16+)
- Islington Adults (Age 16+)

Islington has some one of the **highest levels of adult activity** in England. However, approximately **27.2% of the adult population** does not meet recommended physical activity levels.



More than **4 in 5 daily trips** for Islington's residents are made by walking, cycling, or using public transport. **Half of all trips** are made on foot or cycling.

Barriers to Activity.

Residents identified the following barriers:

- Cost of physical activities
- Challenge of incorporating activity into daily life
- Lack of knowledge of opportunities to be active

3.4. Inequalities in activity and overall health

Inequalities in Activity

Although activity levels in Islington are higher than the national average, there are persistent inequalities in the activity levels of certain population groups.

Ethnicity¹

Adults (16+) Meeting Physical Activity Guidelines in London

Ethnicity	% Meeting Activity Guidelines
White British	67.5%
White Other	68.6%
Asian (excluding Chinese)	53.2%
Black	52.9%
Chinese	60%
Mixed	70.2%
Other Ethnic Origin	54.4%

● White British ● White Other
● Asian (excluding Chinese) ● Black ● Chinese
● Mixed ● Other Ethnic Origin

Black, Asian and ethnic minority groups are less likely to be active compared to white ethnic groups.

Disability and Long Term Health Conditions.

Levels of Activity in Adults with or without a Long Term Health Condition in London

Levels of Activity	Adults with a disability or long term health condition	Adults without a disability or long term health condition
Inactive	39%	23.4%
Fairly Active	12.8%	11.2%
Active	48.2%	65.5%

● Adults with a disability or long term health condition
● Adults without a disability or long term health condition

Individuals with a disability or long term health conditions are **less likely to be active**, and **more likely to be inactive**.

Other Groups that Experience Inequalities.

Those in **routine/semi routine jobs**, and those who are long-term unemployed are less likely to be active.¹

Men in Islington are more likely to meet physical activity guidelines than **women**.¹

Individuals who are **age 75+** experience sharp declines in activity levels.¹

37% of secondary school girls reported that they had not completed 60 minutes of physical activity on any day during the week prior to the survey. This value is significantly higher than in boys (28%).²

* Please note that the data on inequalities is London Level data. Local data is not available due to small survey sample sizes.

References
¹ Active Lives Data 2020-2021
² Islington Children and Young People's Health and Wellbeing Survey 2021/22

Health

Due to high levels of deprivation, insufficient activity levels, and several other factors several populations throughout Islington experience health inequalities.

44% of adults are estimated to be overweight or obese in Islington.¹

4.5% of adults in Islington have been diagnosed with diabetes.²

37% of children leaving Islington primary schools are overweight or obese.³

1,224 Islington residents have been diagnosed with learning disabilities.⁴

16% (38,952 individuals) of residents registered at a GP have been diagnosed with depression.⁵

1.7% residents registered at a GP have been diagnosed with serious mental illness.⁵

References
¹ Active Lives Data 2020/21
² Population Health HealthIntent Platform 2022
³ Islington National Child Measurement Programme 2019/2020
⁴ Camden and Islington Public Health Clinician Engagement Report- Supporting Patients to be Physically Active, and Shaping Future Services (2021)
⁵ Office for Health Improvement & Disparities- Public Health Profiles- Fingertips Data

Long Term Health Conditions.

22% of Islington residents registered at a GP practice have at least one Long Term Health Condition.

Top five Long Term Health Conditions that affect Islington Residents

Long Term Health Condition	Percentage of population
Depression	16%
Asthma	11%
Hypertension	9%
Diabetes	4.5%
Cancer	2.5%

Healthcare professionals Confidence in prescribing physical activity.

86% of healthcare professionals felt confident in discussing physical activity with patients. However, **only 59%** believed that these discussions lead to positive changes in behaviour and health.

Activity needs that patients present with:

- Support in finding suitable activity
- motivation to be active and sustain activity habits
- need for peer support
- advice on how to exercise safely with a long term condition.

3.5. Investing in local opportunities to play and be active

Islington has a range of opportunities to play and be active across the borough:

Islington's Opportunities to Play and be Active

8 Leisure Centres



Did you know... Sobell Leisure Centre is one of the largest in the country, and future projects include building a new Finsbury leisure centre!



Investing back into our facilities... Our leisure centre provider in Islington (GLL) has invested over £14 m into our facilities.



Generating income for local good... The money generated from our leisure contract is invested into subsidising pricing and community programmes for local Islington residents.

15 Swimming Pools



Making waves... This includes the council's four swimming pool venues, which have a strong community programme of free lessons, and a thriving swimming club.

More than 100 Parks and Open Spaces



Play for everyone... We are proud to offer free play sessions at our park sports facilities to ensure availability to everyone.

26 Artificial and 3G Pitches



Opportunities for younger people... Market Road football pitches host two of the most well-established leagues in London including Camden and Islington Youth League that has over 200 teams playing midweek football.

50 Sports Clubs



Did you know... Islington Tennis Centre has the highest usage in the country for a facility of its type.

21 Community Centres Offering Opportunities to be Active



Bringing physical activity to local estates... Islington Council, Arsenal in the Community, Access to Sport, and local community centres work together to offer a programme of physical activity on estates which is targeted towards inactive residents.

More than 60 Sports and Types of Physical Activity on Offer



Benefiting from our local premier league football club... Arsenal in the community delivers activities and education training programmes to thousands of local young people and adults. It has invested into more than 20 local facilities like Elthorne Park and Harvist Estate.



Enabling young people's futures... Access to Sports run coaching courses that support Islington's young people to become employable sports coaches.

>400 Cycle Hangars on Residential Streets



Did you know... Islington has an ambitious programme of cycle training for both children and adults. The council is also committed to supporting schools to participate in the STARS programme which encourages walking, cycling and scooting to school



Investing in local children... Islington primary schools receive £1m every year from the government to deliver a range of extra-curricular physical activity programmes. The council's PE, school sport, and physical activity team supports the delivery of sport in schools

Facilities also include: 8 outdoor gyms, 29 sports halls, 12 adventure playgrounds, 7 low traffic neighbourhoods, and X miles of cycle routes.

Investments in Islington's Physical Activity Infrastructure

The council and wider community partners invest into People Friendly Streets, cycleways, adventure play, estate and physical activity infrastructure.

Capital investments planned for the Strategy time period:

-  £2.5 million investment from GLL into the leisure centres over the remaining life of the leisure contract (£11.5 million invested to date)
-  £2.52 million council capital investment into centre infrastructure including a refurbishment of Caledonian pool
-  £7.5 million investment into our parks and open spaces
-  £1.5 million investment into green infrastructure investment into the public realm
-  £10 million investment into Thriving Neighbourhoods (a portion of this to be invested in infrastructure to support physical activity including new play, pitches, cycle facilities, and food growing)
-  £20 million investment into People Friendly Streets and cycle lanes
-  £0.5 million each year of investment into the roll out of on-street residential bike parking (bike hangars)
-  New Finsbury Leisure Centre residential homes, a medical centre, and a new energy centre

Partnership Programmes that are jointly funded and commissioned across Leisure, Public Health, Homes and Communities, GLL and Arsenal in the community:

-  Islington Football Development Partnership provides a programme for young people across the borough
-  Active Estates Partnership targets older adults, families, and children on estates
-  School Sports Team supports schools and early years settings in their whole school/setting approach to health and wellbeing through the Healthy Schools and Healthy Early Years programmes

Please note: This does not capture all the investment and activity taking place but is intended to provide a sense of the scale of resources that supports and underpins the commitments of the strategy

Leisure Contract revenue that is invested into borough-wide physical activity services

-  GLL Sports Development Team- £400,000 per annum
-  Subsidy to support operation of Caledonian Pool- £200,000 per annum
-  Grants to sports clubs and voluntary groups- £26,500 per annum
-  London Youth Games (regional sports competition)- £47,000 per annum
-  Free swimming lesson programme- £54,000 per annum
-  Get Active Specialists (supported coaching for those with long term health conditions)- £100,000
-  Active Travel promotion through school travel plans, cycle training, and the operation and management of the council's bike hangar network, made up of a mixture of revenue and capital- estimated at £400,000 per annum

4 key voluntary sector and community partners that provide a significant physical activity offer funded through the council and grant funding:

-  Camden & Islington Youth League – 220 Community Teams from 55 different sports clubs with 14 players registered per team. Generates over 3000 players, 220 football coaches, over 10 referees, and hundreds of volunteers
-  Anaconda Swimming Club - 180 Squad Members and 450 Learn to swim members. Generates over £150k per annum, employing teachers and operating across our pools predominantly at Cally and Beacon High School
-  Access 2 Sports - 6 FTE staff and 40-50 sessional coaches with over 5000 individual participants last year. Over two thirds of this funding is directed to Islington via community estate-based delivery programmes and coach education programmes. They operate coaching courses and activity programmes. They are an active employer that supports young people in becoming sports coaches and leaders.
-  Arsenal in the Community – They invest £2.55m per annum. They have a Community team that consists of 27 FTE community staff and approximately 50 sessional coaches. They manage educational training programmes for young people, gap year programmes, targeted adult programmes, and they deliver 3 grant giving strands to the local community via The Arsenal Foundation. Most programmes are free to users and 85% of their expenditure is directed towards Islington programmes.

3.6. The impact of Covid-19 on physical activity

The Covid-19 pandemic had a profound effect on our residents. Social distancing, restrictions on movement, and the intermittent closure of early years settings, schools, leisure centres and physical activity providers all had an impact on people's physical activity habits. The pandemic led to a reduction in the activity levels of both children and adults, with particular groups more affected than others⁽²⁾. National figures demonstrated that inequalities were particularly exacerbated for the least affluent, Asian people, disabled people, and people with a long-term health condition⁽³⁾.

At the same time, the leisure and physical activity sector in Islington reported widespread disruption to their ability to deliver physical activity opportunities during the pandemic⁽⁴⁾. Although the provision of virtual physical activity led to unexpected positive outcomes, 60% of local providers who responded to the survey said that their organisation had suffered a financial burden due to the pandemic⁽⁴⁾.

Having emerged out of the pandemic, we now face a cost-of-living crisis which brings additional challenges for residents and deliverers of sport and physical activity in the borough. Initial insights from London Sport has highlighted that half of adults have reported making difficult choices and cutting back on spending on sport and physical activity due to the rising cost of living⁽³⁾. Meanwhile, physical activity providers face unprecedented challenges from utility price rises, which has a disproportionate impact on high energy consuming facilities such as swimming pools. Despite the challenges of the cost of living crisis, it is important to recognise that many of the most effective activities that can be built into people's daily lives are free or low cost.

4. Our priorities

4.1. Priority areas

We will seek to achieve this vision through the following five priority areas for action:

1. **Active facilities:** Maximizing the impact of, and access to, our physical activity venues and facilities, including leisure centres, swimming pools, Multi-Use Games Areas, and school sports centres.
2. **Active communities:** Strengthening the role of communities in delivering physical activity, including sports clubs, community groups, schools, early years settings, businesses and workplaces.
3. **Active environments:** Ensuring that our high streets, neighborhoods', parks and open spaces are appealing, promote active travel and encourage residents to move more.
4. **Active health and social care:** Connecting with health and social care systems to embed physical activity as a key pathway for the prevention and management of long-term health conditions and promoting good mental health.
5. **Finding ways to be physically active:** Working with partners to improve information and access to where and how residents can be active.

4.2. Action plan

Each priority will be guided by an action plan which will be updated on an annual basis to respond to the needs of residents, physical activity delivery partners and other key stakeholders. This will help us to be flexible; maximising on new opportunities and responding to the latest evidence and insight relating to physical activity.

4.3. Consultation and engagement to inform the Islington Active Together strategy

The Islington Active Together strategy has been informed by evidence and insight on physical activity levels in Islington and developed in consultation and partnership with colleagues from across the Council, Voluntary and Community Sector, and NHS. Feedback gathered from local residents and community representatives has shaped our priorities and commitments, including:

- Surveys, focus groups and interviews with secondary school girls and PE teachers to understand barriers faced by teenage girls' in being physically active, and how to create experiences that girls would want to engage in - *Islington Health Improvement Team & Camden and Islington Public Health, September 2020*⁽⁵⁾

- Survey of GPs and other local health professionals to understand practitioners' confidence and current practices on advocating physical activity with patients - *Camden and Islington Public Health, July 2021*⁽⁶⁾
- Survey of local sports and physical activity organisations to understand the impact of Covid-19 - *Islington Leisure Team, September 2021*⁽¹⁴⁾
- Survey of inactive adults with a long-term health condition, to explore barriers faced to being active and understand what support individuals would like to have - *Camden and Islington Public Health, December 2021*⁽²¹⁾
- Resident feedback from the Let's Talk Islington engagement work, which included themes on the green spaces, infrastructure for pedestrians and cyclists, community connectedness, opportunities for young people, and making better use of community resources - *Islington Council, 2022*⁽⁷⁾

4.4. Linking to other relevant strategic work

Our focus will be underpinned by Islington Fairer Together⁽⁸⁾, ensuring that physical activity has an important role to play in ensuring that everyone – whatever their background – has a decent chance for a long and healthy life.

A wide range of strategies are already contributing to the Islington Active Together vision, including:

- Camden and Islington Parks for Health strategy 2022-2030⁽⁹⁾
- Islington Transport Strategy 2019-2041⁽¹⁰⁾
- Giving Children the Best Start in Life: Islington Children and Families Prevention and Early Intervention Strategy 2015-2025⁽¹¹⁾
- Islington Housing Strategy 2021 - 2026⁽¹²⁾

Islington Active Together will also make a key contribution to future areas of strategic work, including the upcoming carers strategy and dementia strategy.

Outcomes and impact

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Focusing our resources on the residents who are least active

Challenging inequalities in access to, and participation in, physical activity

Recognising the powerful impact that physical activity can have in preventing and managing a range of long-term health conditions

OUTPUTS

Active Facilities

- Islington's leisure centres and sports facilities are well used by local children, young people and adults.
- Residents can swim confidently.

Active Communities

- Groups who are traditionally less active meet physical activity guidelines (Black, Asian and Ethnic Minority groups; women and girls; older adults; people living with a disability or long-term condition; residents living in areas of higher deprivation).
- Residents volunteer within the sport and physical activity community

Active Environments

- Children and young people walk, cycle or scoot to school.
- Residents travel around the borough by walking or cycling.
- Children have the space and freedom to play.

Active Health and Social Care

- Individuals with a long-term health condition or disability know how to be active with their condition.
- Health and social care professionals are confident in encouraging patients to be physically active as an effective way of preventing or managing long term health conditions.

Finding ways to be physically active

- Residents and professionals find it easy to find opportunities to be active in Islington.

OVERALL OUTCOME

Islington's least active residents are more active, more often

IMPACTS

Start Well

Children and young people achieve their potential at school.
Children and young people are happy, healthy and resilient.
Children and young people are a healthy weight.

Live Well

Residents are a healthy weight.
Long term health conditions are prevented, or well managed.
Residents experience good mental health.
Communities are socially connected.

Age Well

Older adults live independently in their own homes for as long as possible.
Rates of hospital admissions due to inactivity are low
Residents experience a good quality of life
Reduced health and social care costs

Contributing to building a fairer Islington

Priority area 1: Active Facilities

Maximising the impact of, and access to, our physical activity venues and facilities, including leisure centres, swimming pools, Multi-Use Games Areas, and school sports centres.

Why is this important?

Islington already has a range of facilities and infrastructure that directly contribute to enabling residents to be active, from the provision of swimming pools to the iconic Emirates Stadium. It has a history of providing facilities for its communities and places high value on ensuring that these are accessible to local people. The council owns facilities including leisure centres, parks, sports pitches, adventure playgrounds, outdoor gyms, and schools.

The sport and physical activity sector is a very competitive marketplace, from private boutique gyms to new shopfront studios. The commercial reality relies on our facilities providing health and fitness facilities to subsidise our swimming pools. The private sector does not provide these as they are expensive to operate. It is imperative that the council can therefore provide facilities that can compete with the quality afforded by the private sector but makes these available and appealing to all. Every customer that attends one of our facilities supports our ability to ensure a varied programme and affordable prices for our local communities. The Council will continue to work with our Leisure partner to continue to drive the business to maximise the commercial opportunities to ensure we are able to navigate through the current economic challenges.

The leisure offer generates a significant income stream for the Council which in turn subsidizes other development work and enables the Council to have a comprehensive range of prices and programmes for all its community ensuring subsidy is targeted at those in need.

We therefore need to:

- Ensure that our Leisure contract returns to maximum full service and rental
- Make continued investment into the council's leisure centres. They are very popular but have been hit by Covid with usage dropping from 2.2m to 1.68m visits per year.
- Ensure our swimming pools appeal to a more diverse audience by providing a more targeted approach to break the cycle of low cultural uptake in swimming for some communities.
- Provide an offer which is targeted to those who are more likely to be inactive.
- Use our facilities as routes into employment and career opportunities, particularly for young people in the borough.
- Operate our facilities efficiently and contribute to the borough's net zero carbon policy and develop Energy efficiency and reduction strategies
- Promote the council's non-traditional facilities for physical activity including parks, adventure playgrounds, school sports facilities, and some sports club buildings.

Our commitments:

- We will work with our leisure provider to increase membership levels, keep the cost of membership low, and provide an offer which targets population groups which are more likely to be inactive.
- We will invest in the development and refurbishment of our leisure facilities, including rebuilding a new Finsbury Leisure Centre and the redevelopment of Caledonian Pool.
- We will invest and attract inward investment in community-based facilities, including parks, sports pitches, adventure playgrounds, outdoor gyms and schools.
- We will work to ensure that our facilities are contributing to Islington's net zero carbon policy through improved energy efficiency.
- We will reinstate facilities at Sobell, Ironmonger Row Baths Spa and Archway Leisure Centre post flood, fire and storm damage

Priority area 2: Active Communities

Strengthening the role of communities in delivering physical activity, including sports clubs, community groups, schools, early years settings, businesses and workplaces.

Why is this important?

Islington has a strong and diverse network of community groups, sports clubs, early years settings, schools, businesses and workplaces which use sport and physical activity as tool to improve the lives of residents and strengthen our communities.

Positive childhood experiences of sport and physical activity help to lay the foundations for an active and healthy life. However, many children and young people are not active enough which impacts on their physical literacy and enjoyment of being active. This is particularly true for girls, disabled young people, young people with a long-term health condition, young people from Black and Asian ethnic groups, and those from less affluent families⁽¹³⁾. Our early years settings, schools and sports clubs are continuing to address these inequalities, driving change for children and young people through initiatives such as The Daily Mile, Healthy Early Years Programme, Healthy Schools Programme, and much more.

Adults face similar inequalities in participation in physical activity, and our community centres, estate-based activities, leisure centre concessionary schemes, and opportunities through local clubs and workplaces, provide important opportunities to enable more people to be active.

Our clubs, community organisations, schools and settings know their communities and understand where inequalities lie on a hyper-local level. These include Arsenal in the Community, Access to Sports, Islington Play Association, GLL, community centres and grassroots organisations. The ProActive Islington partnership aims to bring together these key stakeholders to influence the sport and physical activity landscape across the borough, making further progress on tackling inactivity.

Our commitments:

- We will support early years' and schools' delivery of physical activity opportunities to improve health, wellbeing and educational outcomes for pupils, with a particular emphasis on the least active children and girls.
- We will collaborate with residents to promote the role of local estates in encouraging positive physical activity habits.
- We will expand opportunities for swimming (including lessons), with a particular focus on supporting Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic groups to access the available provision.
- We will enable employment and work experience opportunities within the local sport and physical activity sector.
- We will work in partnership with local physical activity providers to increase community participation and break down barriers for inactive residents.
- We will evolve our sports development offer to increase work with inactive residents and create more partnership programmes with VCS groups

Priority area 3: Active Environments

Ensuring that our high streets, neighborhoods, parks and open spaces are appealing, promote active travel and encourage residents to move more.

Why is this important?

The places and spaces around us can have a positive or negative impact on whether, how, when, and where we move. Evidence suggests that environments which promote walking, have quality parks and playgrounds, and provide infrastructure for active transport, are likely to generate positive impacts on activity in children and adults⁽¹⁴⁾. Active design is about inspiring and informing the layout of cities, neighbourhoods, streets and open spaces, to promote sport and good physical activity habits⁽¹⁵⁾. With 26,000 council owned properties in Islington estates also provide a wealth of opportunities for creating active environments, from spaces to play and bike storage, to community gardens and opportunities for food growing.

Active travel – which is the everyday journeys we make through walking or cycling – has a major part to play in increasing physical activity levels. It can offer a convenient, accessible and affordable way to move more⁽¹⁶⁾, whilst also contributing to better air quality⁽¹⁷⁾. For those with busy lives, it may be one of the few opportunities to create a regular habit. While walking and cycling are already the most popular ways to get around Islington, continued changes to the environment can support residents to incorporate these activities into their routines. As outlined in our Transport Strategy⁽¹⁰⁾, the introduction of low traffic neighbourhoods, School Streets and cycleways in Islington are already creating even more space for those who want to enjoy the borough as they walk or cycle. We want to build on this success, so more residents are engaged in active travel.

Parks and green spaces offer a wide range of benefits to health and wellbeing, and populations with access to a park are 24% more likely to meet physical activity recommendations⁽¹⁸⁾. Islington is the UK's most densely populated local authority area, making access to parks and green spaces an essential way for residents to connect with nature, be active, and connect with the wider community. Our Parks for Health strategy outlines plans to improve the overall quality and accessibility of our parks and open spaces to support the health and wellbeing of Islington residents, with a particular focus on our most inactive communities⁽⁹⁾.

Play is an essential part of the wellbeing, social and emotional development of children, and is enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child⁽¹⁹⁾. Despite Islington being a densely populated borough, children should have safe and attractive play spaces within walking distance of their homes. In line with the Mayor of London's ambition to make London a child-friendly city, Islington has good quality and stimulating play provision through adventure playgrounds and is working to ensure that developments and the wider public realm promote opportunities to play across the borough.

Our commitments:

- We will develop and improve Islington's infrastructure to make it easier and more accessible for residents to walk and cycle, as outlined in the borough's transport strategy.
- We will invest in our parks and open spaces to encourage residents to use them as places which support health and wellbeing.
- We will invest in our estates' physical activity infrastructure through the Thriving Neighbourhoods programme including developments to support play, sports facilities, and community gardening.
- We will encourage residents to use active travel, through supporting the schools, providing affordable bike purchase schemes, delivering cycle training and promoting walking.
- We will enable children to explore nature and play freely, recognising the benefits this can have on health, wellbeing, physical development and positive educational outcomes.

Priority area 4: Active Health and Social Care

Connecting with health and social care systems to embed physical activity as a key pathway for the prevention and management of long-term health conditions and promoting good mental health.

Why is this important?

Physical activity has been described by the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges as “The Miracle Cure”. Being regularly active can have such a vital role in preventing and treating a wide range of long-term health conditions, and will promote independence as well. But taking the first steps to being more active can be challenging for people in poorer health, and people living with a long-term health condition or disability are less likely to be active⁽²⁰⁾. A recent survey⁽²¹⁾ of local adults in Camden and Islington living with a long-term health condition or disability highlighted the following barriers to being active:

- Having the strength and stamina to be active
- Affordability of the physical activity opportunities they want to do
- Having enough opportunities to be active in the local area
- Feeling motivated to be active
- Feeling anxious or worried about being active

Resident quote: “I am not far away from my 80th birthday so there are limitations as to what I can manage to do. I need to be able to access guidance/activities that are appropriate to my age and condition”.

We also need to support unpaid carers to be active. Insight from Carers UK has highlighted that unpaid carers over the age of 55 are less likely than other adults to be active, leaving them in poorer health than the general population⁽²²⁾. This research highlighted particular challenges in finding the time to be active, not being motivated, activities not being affordable, and not having anyone to go with.

We have worked in partnership with the health and social care sector in Islington to explore how we can promote physical activity and tackle inequalities faced by residents. This will include working with

- **Healthcare professionals:** Health professional-led physical activity interventions are very effective⁽²³⁾, and evidence shows that 1 in 4 people would be more active if advised by their GP or Nurse⁽²⁴⁾. However, a recent survey of local health professionals in Camden and Islington highlighted that a lack of time and competing priorities were barriers to discussing physical activity with patients. Health professionals suggested that additional training and information about the local physical activity offer would be helpful to support their role in championing physical activity.
- **Social Prescribing Link Workers:** Islington has social prescribing link workers within primary care teams. They support patients with long-term conditions and complex needs and are well placed to promote the benefits and opportunities for being

physically active in Islington. This will build on the work that has been undertaken to promote the benefits and opportunities offered by Islington parks through green social prescribing as part of the Parks for Health strategy.

- **Adult Social Care:** Currently, 3,456 individuals access long-term adult social care services in Islington⁽²⁵⁾, and the Council works to ensure that residents can live healthy, fulfilling, and independent lives. Being physically active can make a significant contribution to this aspiration, and evidence suggests that physical activity interventions to maintain mobility and prevent frailty have the potential to improve quality of life for older people at any age⁽²⁶⁾. With anticipated future growth in demand for Adult Social Care and an ageing population, physical activity provides an important opportunity for early intervention and prevention.

Our commitments:

- We will support health and social care professionals to promote physical activity more easily and effectively in their daily contacts with individuals. Access to tailored training will be a key part of this, to help further embed physical activity as a key option in helping to prevent and manage people's long-term health conditions.
- We will also ensure that it is easier to signpost residents (including patients, service users and carers) to appropriate, accessible and affordable physical activity opportunities, such as the local leisure centre offer, community physical activity providers, and the Parks for Health offer.
- We will work closely with schemes that can help connect less active people to local opportunities to be active - including well established social prescribing schemes. We are also piloting a new Get Active Specialist behaviour change programme in primary care.
- We will work with social care services and providers (for children, young people and adults) to maximise opportunities for physical activity within contract specifications and service delivery.
- We will engage with residents with a disability, long-term health condition and/or mental health condition to promote the benefits and opportunities for being active in Islington.

Priority area 5: Finding ways to be physically active

Working with partners to improve information and access to where and how residents can be active.

Why is this important?

We have a strong physical activity offer in Islington with a wide variety of activities being delivered through a range of physical activity providers. However, residents and professionals in Islington say that it is difficult to know what opportunities are available to be active in the borough. As part of the Let's Talk Islington engagement, residents felt that we are "miss[ing] a trick" in promoting local opportunities⁽⁷⁾. Having surveyed local residents living with a long term condition, three-quarters of respondents said that having information about free and low cost physical activities locally would be helpful in enabling them to be more active⁽²¹⁾. Similarly, health professionals have told us that a lack of up-to-date information about the community physical activity offer is a real barrier to discussing physical activity with their patients⁽⁶⁾. A national survey commissioned by Sport England found that people also find it twice as easy to order takeaway food online than to book a sport or fitness class⁽²⁷⁾.

Making it easier to find ways to be physically active will therefore benefit residents and referrers, whilst also boosting and promoting the work of local physical activity providers.

Our commitments:

- We will support and grow the number of physical activity providers promoting their offer.
- We will improve residents' awareness of the local physical activity offer, making it easier for people to access these opportunities.
- We will increase engagement in physical activity uptake through digital platforms
- We will support the growth and success of the main leisure provider to underpin the other priority areas and increase engagement of inactive communities

5. Governance and measuring our outcomes

The Islington Active Together strategy will be accountable to the Council's Leisure Recovery Board (N.B. name may change), which will monitor deliverable actions and progress on physical activity outcomes for residents.

The ProActive Islington partnership will bring key physical activity stakeholders together to support the implementation of the strategy. The partnership is chaired and organised by Public Health and the Leisure Team, and consists of the following members:

- *Greenspace and Leisure*
- *Public Health*
- *Active Travel*
- *Schools Health and Wellbeing*
- *Community centres*
- *GLL (leisure centres)*
- *Arsenal in the Community*
- *Access to Sports*
- *London Sport*
- *Adventure Playgrounds*
- *Islington Play Association*

How we will monitor progress against our outcomes

The Strategy will be supported by a more detailed action plan that sets out the specific actions around each theme that will support the delivery of our outcomes. This action plan will be reviewed on annual basis using the governance mechanism set out above. Those plans are being developed and consulted on.

The overall outcome is that Islington's least active residents become more active. This is about achieving a fundamental sustained behaviour change in people. There are several measures that can help us to monitor this change. The most **important measure** is the Sport England Active Lives survey which we will pay close attention to, particularly as it enables benchmarking and comparison. It is vital to note however that the low number of Islington residents in the sample for the Active Lives survey, meaning that this participation estimate is not very precise and the true value every year could be within a broad range, preventing any meaningful short-term year on year comparison.

To give a sense of scale of the ambition of the Strategy if we are to achieve a 1% shift in the activity levels of Islington.

- According to the Active Lives survey, 17.2% (36,376 individuals) of Islington's adult population (above age 16) is inactive (less than 30 minutes of activity a week). The

ambition of a 1% shift per year means that approximately 364 adults in Islington would have to move from being inactive to active per year.

- 35.8% (36,084) of young people (under age 16) are less active (less than 30 minutes a day). For a 1% shift, approximately 258 young people would need to move from being less active to active per year.

These numbers are based on the ONS population housing projections and the Active Lives activity data.

Over the 7-year life of the Strategy that relates to supporting 2,548 adult residents and 1,806 young people to change and sustain their activity levels, moving from being inactive to regularly active. To achieve this, many more inactive residents would need to be reached and supported in different ways – research has consistently found that up to half of those starting an exercise programme may drop out over 6 months.

Of course, many more people will engage in a range of different physical activities through the actions delivered through the Strategy.

Indicator	Current baseline
Overall percentage of Islington children and young people who meet the national physical activity guidelines. <i>Source: Sport England Active Lives survey</i>	40.1% <i>(2020-21 academic year data)</i>
Overall percentage of Islington adults who meet the national physical activity guidelines. <i>Source: Sport England Active Lives survey</i>	72.8% <i>(November 2020-21 data)</i>
Percentage of children and young people who usually walk, cycle or scoot to school. <i>Source: Health Related Behaviours Questionnaire</i>	90% primary aged children 74% secondary aged young people <i>(2021-22 academic year data)</i>
GLL membership numbers and activity, broken down by demographics <i>Source: GLL</i>	2019 Pre-Covid Membership Levels and usage to reflect demographic profile of Borough 15,200 Memberships 50% Usage from Concessionary usage

Number of residents referred to physical activity by an Age UK Islington social prescribing link worker	489 <i>(2021-22 financial year data)</i>
Number of residents referred to a park by an Age UK Islington social prescribing link worker through green social prescribing	141 <i>(2021-22 financial year data)</i>

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