

# Active people, healthy places

Councils and their partners leading sport and physical activity in their place



Case studies

**Cover photo:** A baby yoga session in Three Rivers District, Hertfordshire

# Contents

Forewords	3
Introduction	5
The national context	7
Key learning points	8
Achieving outcomes	10
Case studies – council in-house teams	
Broxbourne	17
Wirral	19
East Riding	21
Oxford	23
Three Rivers	25
Eastleigh	27
Case studies – outsourced providers	
Mendip	29
Kirklees	31
Hackney	33
Tameside	35
Stockton-on-Tees	37
Oldham	39
Further reading and contacts	41

# Forewords

## Local Government Association

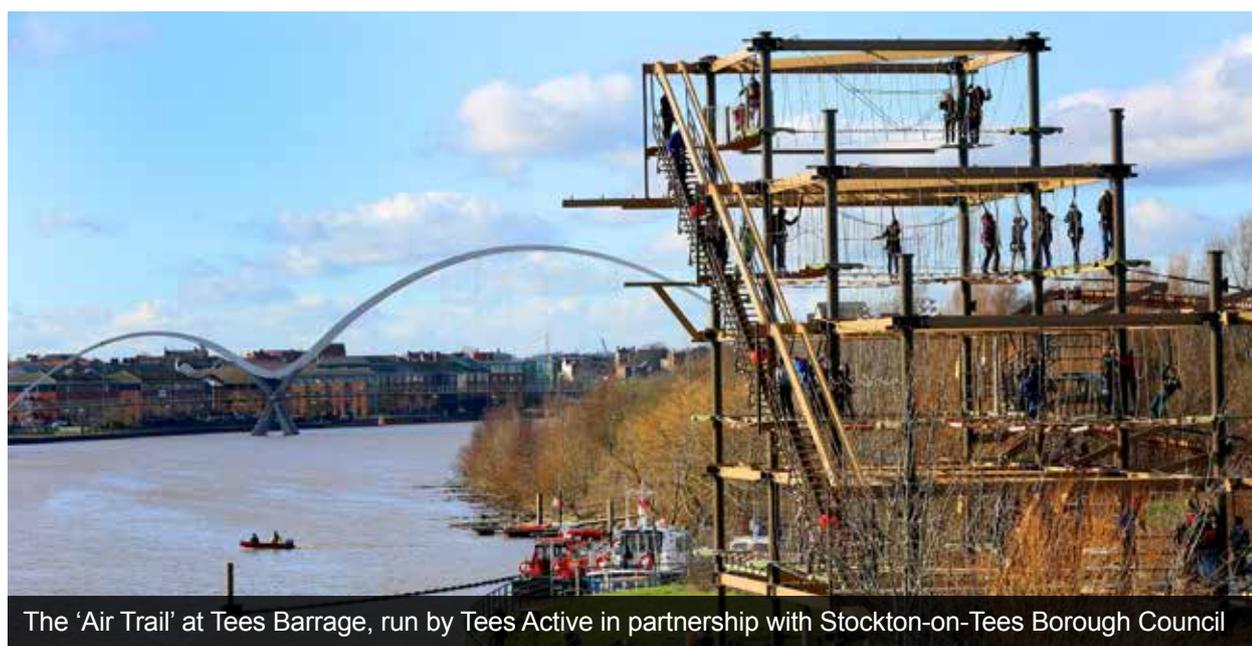
I am delighted to introduce this joint publication with Sporta and the Chief Cultural & Leisure Officers Association (°CLOA) on how councils, leisure trusts and their partners are helping communities to become more active, despite financial pressures.

Our sport and leisure provision is one of our most valued services, and has an increasingly important role to play in tackling rising levels of obesity and inactivity. Councils' role as strategic leaders of place has never been more important to achieving this. But as we continue to coordinate and deliver these services in the face of reducing budgets, we need to make sure that not only are they providing a good, cost-effective service, but that they are reaching the people that need it most.

Some councils have achieved these objectives by contracting with trusts or other providers, while others have retained the service in-house. There are merits to both approaches, and this publication aims to help councillors and decision-makers think through what the best approach might be for their area, and equip them with the information they need to frame the discussion.

Finally, what is clear is that in continuing to lead sport and physical activity in their places, councils and councillors will increasingly need to work effectively with partners locally and nationally. The Local Government Association (LGA) sees its partnership with Sporta and °CLOA as helping councils on this journey.

**Councillor Gerald Vernon-Jackson CBE**  
Chair, LGA Culture, Tourism and Sport Board



## Sporta

The landscape surrounding leisure services and facility management is changing, and is presenting a challenge to the survival of genuine public benefit operations. This landscape risks creating an unbalanced marketplace driven by lowest price and defaulting to standardised services which focus on those who can afford to pay. We are also seeing the loss of expertise and capacity within local authorities and the dilution of charitable tax benefits.

These factors place pressure on genuine public benefit operations. As a result, the special contributions which trusts can bring to policy objectives are put at serious risk. Charitable leisure trusts are underpinned by a sustainable, cross-subsidy model that enables their focus to be on the needs of the whole community. Sporta fundamentally believes that the ambitions within recent national strategies can best be served by a mixed marketplace which includes a healthy charitable trust/social enterprise sector.

Despite leisure, sport and physical activity being non-statutory services, the evidence of their public value and the preventative health impacts is stronger than ever before. These services can contribute to multiple public policy objectives. These include reducing health inequalities, upskilling and employing local people and being community spaces for social engagement and interaction. However, the pressures on this public infrastructure put the value of such services at significant risk.

These issues require collective action across local government, stakeholders and the leisure sector to ensure that the ethos and commitment to public benefit services survives for future generations. The need to fully capture, recognise and value the unique benefits of our delivery model is as vital today as it has ever been.

### **Stuart Lockwood**

Chairman, Sporta; Chief Executive Officer, Oldham Community Leisure

## °CLOA

Our vision as °CLOA is that every locality has a thriving, high quality and distinctive cultural and leisure offer – we achieve this by sharing best practice and providing an informed and coherent voice for the sector. As such, I am delighted that we have been able to support the development of this publication.

Today's leisure market offers a fantastic choice of activities for people to take part in. Budget gyms have boomed, our green spaces have been revolutionised by park runs and fitness trails, adventure races such as 'tough mudder' have grown rapidly and technology has broadened the appeal of outdoor activities. Over this time, councils have been grappling with austerity. This reduction in budgets, when combined with a rapidly changing leisure market, has broadened the variation and quality of local sport and leisure provision.

I believe these changes mean that local authorities need to increasingly take a local strategic leadership role in sport and leisure. This requires a solid understanding of residents' needs and the capacity to shape and coordinate the local offering. Sport and leisure must also be used to effectively support the delivery of wider agendas such as preventing ill health through innovative and inclusive programmes and activities.

These case studies show some excellent examples where councils and sector experts have moved beyond cost and the numbers of people using their services to maximising the strategic benefits of sport and leisure, alongside demonstrating the value this has on broader council and partner agendas.

### **Ian Brooke**

Chair, Chief Cultural & Leisure Officers Association; Head of Community Services, Oxford City Council

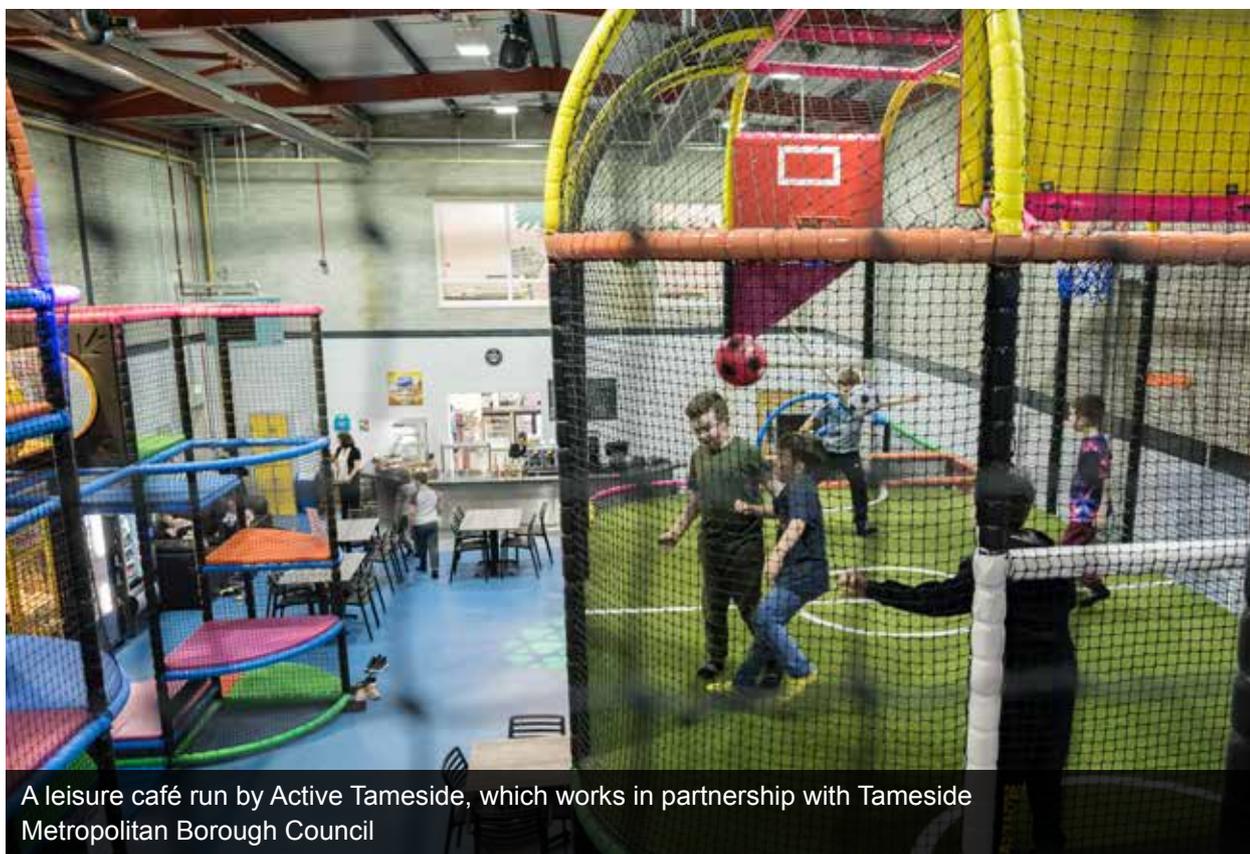
# Introduction

Local sport, leisure and physical activity services can help people to live longer, healthier and happier lives. This makes them fundamental to achieving councils' aspirations for the wellbeing of their communities.

Councils have a critical local leadership role for sport and physical activity in their places. In the current economic climate, and in the face of national challenges such as high levels of obesity and inactivity and an ageing population, it is more important than ever that councils and their delivery partners demonstrate strong evidence of impact, value for money and service excellence.

The Local Government Association (LGA), Sporta (the national association of leisure and cultural trusts) and °CLOA (Chief Cultural & Leisure Officers Association) have collaborated to produce this report, which looks at how councils, charitable leisure trusts and their partners are delivering sport and physical activity services in their localities.

The aim of this report is to share good practice and help decision-makers (primarily councillors and officers with an interest in/ responsibility for sport, leisure and physical activity) consider how their council can deliver on this agenda in the best way for local people and communities.



A leisure café run by Active Tameside, which works in partnership with Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council

The report reflects the fact that many services remain facilities based, but readers should note that whole systems approaches to promoting physical activity, with contributions from many other services and partners, are increasingly being promoted. Insight on how this can be done will be captured by Sport England's local delivery pilots programme, announced in 2016. Getting people more active is a complex issue which should engage a range of service areas – from public health to regeneration and housing, parks, highways, adult social care, education and others. It needs high-level leadership if change is going to be effective.

This report includes 12 case studies from different local authority areas. Six look at how councils are working with charitable leisure trusts to deliver services, facilities and activities (Mendip, Kirklees, Hackney, Oldham, Tameside and Stockton-on-Tees). The other six have a focus on in-house provision of sport and leisure or sports development teams by councils (Oxford, Broxbourne, Wirral, Three Rivers, East Riding and Eastleigh). While other delivery models are available to councils, this publication focuses on the in-house and charitable leisure trust models.

These councils are motivated by a desire to provide or procure good-quality services and interventions that meet community need and help to achieve a range of outcomes, particularly around health and wellbeing. They are using service development, new ways of working, a solid outcomes focus and strong partnership work to ensure that sport and physical activity services remain sustainable over the coming decades.

Councils have a crucial role in leading effective and productive working with all providers, partners and stakeholders to address key local challenges. Good practice involves bringing all the players together to maximise the health, economic and social outcomes that can be delivered through sport and physical activity – partners such as the broader public sector (particularly health and public health), the voluntary and community

sector, outsourced providers, the business community, schools, local sports clubs, county sports partnerships, national sports organisations and many more.

The concern is that ongoing pressure on council budgets can drive a 'race to the bottom', with price becoming the critical element in decision making. Effective commissioning and (where relevant) procurement can guard against this.

Through taking a local leadership role and bringing partners together around a shared vision of the potential for sport and physical activity to transform lives, councils can achieve three important ambitions at the same time:

- improved facilities and services for local people
- a reducing cost to the council, whether services are run in-house or through an external provider
- maintaining an overall focus on the council's strategic priorities and community outcomes.

Any publications, approaches, case studies or delivery models mentioned in this report are not necessarily endorsed by the LGA, Sporta and °CLOA. Councillors and officers should seek to gain independent advice and guidance on what solutions will best meet their local needs. The LGA, Sporta, °CLOA, Sport England and other councils can assist in this process. Full details of publications and strategies mentioned in this report, including web addresses, are provided in the 'further reading' section at the end.

# The national context

In recent years, a number of national strategies and reports have been published which provide a framework and context for the delivery of local sport and physical activity services.

The national physical activity framework, 'Everybody Active Every Day', was published in 2014 and highlighted four domains for action at local and national levels: Active Society to create social change; Moving Professionals to utilise professionals and volunteers; Active Environments to create places supportive of activity; and Moving at Scale to evaluate and adopt evidence-based practice.

In 2015, the Government published 'Sporting future – a new strategy for an active nation', which had a focus on five key outcomes: physical wellbeing, mental wellbeing, individual development, social and community development and economic development.

'Sporting future' set out the government's ambition, shared by local government, for all partners to work together to create a more physically active nation.

In 2016, Sport England published its national strategy for sport and physical activity, 'Towards an Active Nation 2016-21'. This set out how Sport England and its partners – including councils and charitable leisure trusts – would deliver the 'Sporting future' strategy. Local councils, working with their partners and providers, are critical in delivering on these ambitions. They are best placed to lead local activity to identify and address the key challenges and issues, setting local corporate or strategic objectives to improve the lives of local people and communities.

In 2017 the 'Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy' outlined the Government's ambition to make cycling and walking a natural choice by 2040. Key foci are increasing the number of travel stages undertaken by bike and foot, reducing cyclist fatalities and injuries, and increasing the proportion of children aged 5 to 10 that usually walk to school.

The LGA offers a broad range of programmes and tools to help councils and councillors tackle the challenges and take advantage of the opportunities for sport, physical activity and leisure. Details of this suite of resources are included in the 'further reading' section at the end of this report. It includes:

- 'Leadership essentials' courses for sport and physical activity portfolio holders
- A guide to developing a local outcomes framework for culture and sport
- Culture, tourism and sport improvement toolkit
- Engaging in commissioning: a practical resource pack for the culture and sport sector
- Putting culture and sport at the heart of commissioning: the role of local leadership
- Understanding commissioning: a practical guide for the culture, tourism and sport sector.

In September 2017, Sport England published guidance for councils considering the various delivery models for sport and leisure services. 'Leisure management options guidance' sets out the different delivery models (in-house management, outsourced management and establishing a new organisation) and explores the topic of commissioning for outcomes.

# Key learning points

The councils and leisure trusts featured as case studies in this report were asked to suggest 'key learning points' which could provide useful insights for other local areas. These comments are not necessarily endorsed by the LGA, Sporta or °CLOA but they reflect the experiences and opinions of councils and charitable leisure trusts in the 12 case study areas.

An edited summary follows, in two sections:

- learning points from councils providing sport and physical activity services in-house
- learning points from councils and outsourced providers working in partnership.

## Learning points from councils providing sport and physical activity services in-house

- In-house provision enables close alignment to the council's corporate objectives.
- Put customers and communities first, understand their needs and involve them at every stage.
- Councils cannot do it alone: look for where you can collaborate or develop existing/new partnerships around mutual priorities.
- Having strong councillor advocates/champions for health and wellbeing is important to achieve and maintain political backing.
- Demonstrate impact.
- Work to attract external and internal funding/commissioning where appropriate, linked closely with the council's corporate priorities.
- Ensure a clear, joined-up vision of where the council wants to be across sport, leisure and physical activity services and facilities.
- Encourage a culture of innovation.
- Embed continuous improvement at the heart of what the council does.
- Challenge and assess procedures to ensure best practice.
- Maintain a high profile with partners and stakeholders and align programmes to support the achievement of local, county, regional and national objectives.
- Capital investment in ageing stock, such as gym equipment, can drive revenue and membership sales.
- Rationalising membership types and categories can help to make the 'offer' simple to understand, communicate and sell.
- Reviewing all staffing levels can help to maximise income-generating opportunities and potential savings.

## Learning points from councils and their outsourced providers working in partnership

- Having an outcomes-based approach is critical: both partners need to commit to the outcomes and support their joint delivery.
- Good personal relationships across the organisations can help to keep the focus on service development and improvement.
- Councils should give outsourced providers the flexibility to engage with a range of partners as they see fit – making collaborative links, adding and receiving value and connecting programmes and services.
- Be innovative and proactive and enable creative-thinking.
- Listen to the needs of your community.
- Maintain and develop a culture and ethos which has social impact at its heart.
- Create a joint understanding of the value of preventative services, including among health and social care stakeholders/ commissioners.
- Don't be afraid to advocate a bold vision in order to take advantage of the opportunities for progressive, dynamic and agile leisure trusts, working with their voluntary sector and council partners.
- Build in an appropriate programme of reporting, review, discussion and outcome assessment involving managers, councillors, trustees and stakeholders.
- Take a joint approach to implementing national policy and good practice.
- The criteria for assessing tenders in a procurement process is critical: if the driver is to achieve the lowest price, the outcome will be a 'caretaker' operator with little interest in community outcomes.
- Contracts for leisure services should allow for a modest profit to be made. The trust delivery model is based on cross-subsidy: surpluses provide financial resilience and the ability to re-invest in facilities, services and programmes.
- Councils should be open to challenge and willing to challenge back when working with their partners to deliver outcomes.

The key themes of partnership working, choosing the right delivery model, in-house delivery, commissioning and procurement will be covered in more detail in the next section.

# Achieving outcomes

The case studies in this publication demonstrate that high-quality, well-planned sport and physical activity services, facilities and programmes can deliver on a range of local strategic outcomes.

There are many other examples of excellent practice across the country. This section will look at some of the essential elements that can help councils and their partners to achieve their ambitions.

## Strong partnership working

Councils cannot work in isolation to achieve their ambitions for local communities. Successful collaboration in sport, leisure and physical activity can lead to service and facility improvement, cost savings, a stronger local economy and – most importantly – improved health and wellbeing outcomes for local communities.

Whether a council delivers services and programmes in-house or through outsourced providers, strong and effective partnership working is important to the delivery of agile, quality services that meet local need. If services are outsourced, the partnership between the council and its outsourced provider is critical.

In **Hackney**, for example, Hackney Council and the charitable leisure trust GLL work with a range of partners to deliver programmes and projects that address local priorities. These partners include the voluntary and community sector, Age UK, Alzheimer's Society, Sport England, Amateur Swimming Association, England Netball, England Squash, Lawn Tennis Association, Homerton University Hospital NHS Trust and the South East Commissioning Unit.

In **Oxford**, the in-house sport and physical activity team works with partners including the Oxfordshire Sport and Physical Activity Partnership, Sport England, national governing bodies of sports, schools, sports clubs, charities and the voluntary and community sector to ensure sport and physical activity is accessible to everyone and meets local need.

## Choosing the right delivery model

There is no right or wrong delivery model – it is a choice for individual councils based on a range of factors including cost, service improvement, sustainability, increasing participation and generating capital investment. Councils can seek advice and information from Sport England, the LGA, Sporta and CLOA and other councils if they are considering any change to their leisure management delivery options.

The most common delivery options are:

- In-house management.
- Outsourced management to an existing operator. In most cases this involves a large contractor (trust/social enterprise or private sector) or it could be a trust which, although it is based in one main area, also takes on a small number of other contracts.
- Establishing a new partner organisation for the local authority's area. This is mainly achieved through creating an independent organisation, for example a charitable leisure trust (company or community benefit society) or other form of non-profit distributing organisation (such as a community interest company or charitable

incorporated organisation). In some cases, a local authority trading company or a joint venture company is chosen.

In the case of some facilities, a full or long-term asset transfer can be a good option. This can involve community asset transfer; the use of long-term leases with restrictions; or long-term leases without restrictions. Over the longer term, councils will also want to consider the greater role that outreach programmes and non-facilities based activities may play in their service provision.

In order to make the right choice, councils need to fully understand the range, benefits, potential problems and local 'fit' of each option. Outsourcing contracts can cover a long period of time, so it is important to get them right. The right delivery model can change over time: for example, a council with outsourced provision may decide to bring it back in-house. Councils and their partners are advised to seek independent advice on which options would be suitable to their circumstances.

Delivery models and contracts can evolve and adapt to changing priorities and circumstances. In **Tameside**, a remodelling of the existing local leisure trust began in 2011, led by Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council and in partnership with the trust. The trust was re-branded as Active Tameside and a top-to-bottom business redesign took place, which led to the co-production of a new outcomes-based contract in 2017.

**Stockton-on-Tees** Borough Council's leisure facilities are managed by Tees Active. When a contract extension was being considered, the council commissioned an external assessment which concluded that Tees Active provided good value for money and that its culture, ethos and values aligned with those of the council. As a result, Tees Active was awarded a 20-year contract extension.

## In-house delivery

In-house provision can deliver services which achieve outcomes, increase participation rates and reduce the overall cost to the council.

The case studies here include **Broxbourne**, where the sports centres service is making a trading budget surplus; and **Wirral**, where the sport and leisure service is on course to meet its ambition of a net investment requirement of zero by 2020. Both councils have improved their services and increased income and total user visits while delivering on corporate priorities.

Surpluses can be re-invested to improve facilities, increase the range of services on offer, target key community groups and increase participation. In-house provision can enable a particularly close alignment to the council's corporate and strategic objectives. Capital investment can bring long-term benefits: improved facilities can drive up footfall and increase membership sales.

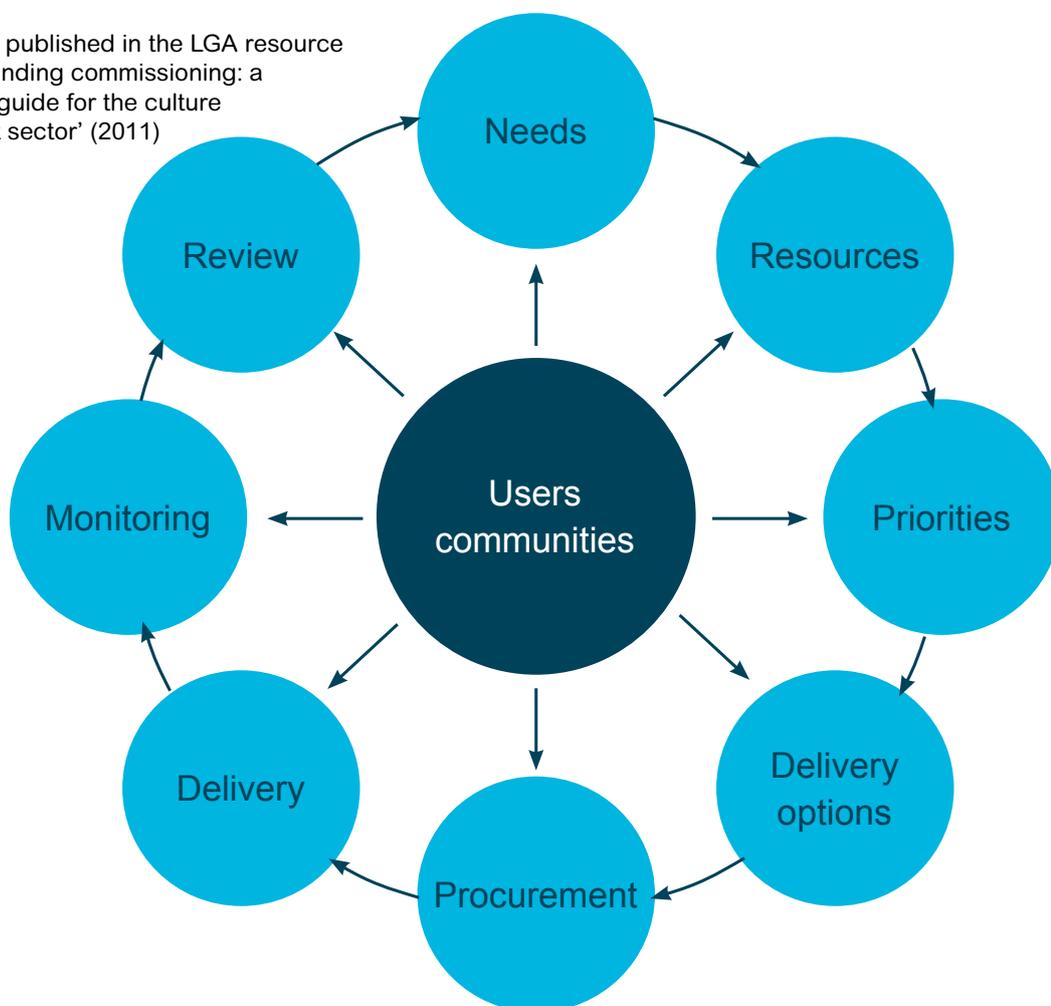
Factors behind **Three Rivers** District Council retaining an in-house leisure development team include the council finding it easier to respond to customer demand, easier to respond to changes in strategic priorities and easier to ensure that local councillors are involved in enhancing the local leisure offer.

## Effective commissioning

Commissioning offers a means of joining up resources to focus on improving outcomes for citizens and communities in the most efficient and effective way, both now and in the future. Detailed interpretations of commissioning vary but, broadly speaking, it involves four key activities that combine to achieve efficiency and maximise value:

- understanding needs and desired outcomes
- optimising resources (money, community and user resource, assets)
- targeting resources
- choosing the right mechanism to best achieve the desired outcomes.

Originally published in the LGA resource 'Understanding commissioning: a practical guide for the culture and sport sector' (2011)



Councils should follow a clear process of understanding need, strategic planning, delivery and monitoring of services to ensure outcomes are being met, keeping service users and communities at the heart of the process. The commissioning process can establish how sport and physical activity services can contribute to wider priorities and outcomes for the area and reach target audiences. These priorities often include:

- improving health and wellbeing and reducing health inequalities
- providing local economic benefit
- promoting community cohesion
- educating, protecting and providing opportunities for young people
- supporting and caring for vulnerable adults and older people, and keeping people independent for longer
- providing high-quality services.

Councils are increasingly commissioning other services, such as culture and tourism, alongside sport and leisure. This is becoming more prevalent in the commissioning space and can support public objectives, sustainability and place-based approaches.

Councillors' democratic mandate, accountability and knowledge of their place and residents make them uniquely placed to provide the political leadership required to focus on community-wide strategic outcomes around sport and physical activity. They can also ensure fair representation of different interests, community groups and local areas.

The LGA has developed a range of resources and tools on commissioning and developing an outcomes framework for sport, leisure and physical activity services. This includes publications produced specifically for councillors. Details can be found in the 'further reading' section at the end of this report.

In **Kirklees**, the partnership between Kirklees Active Leisure (KAL) and Kirklees Council is moving from 'council outcomes' towards 'partnership outcomes', with partners across the public, private and voluntary sectors looking at how they can collectively contribute. A new commissioning agreement is being developed which will set out the outcomes KAL is expected to deliver, with clear performance measures.

**Eastleigh** Borough Council, through its commissioning process, is working with two outsourced providers to address key local challenges such as a large gap between male and female participation rates. There is also a drop-off in participation by boys and girls at around 11 years of age, so Eastleigh's leisure centre is offering targeted activities for that age group.

**East Riding of Yorkshire** Council's in-house leisure service has attained a high level of commissioning from public health, currently about £800,000 each year. The council's separate sport, play and arts service is commissioned by public health via a service level agreement of £131,000 a year to deliver programmes that engage vulnerable and hard-to-reach groups.

## Effective procurement

In this context, procurement is the process of councils acquiring sport, leisure and physical activity services from third-party providers, such as charitable leisure trusts, and working with them through a contract. Procurement includes specifying the scope of services to be delivered, the outcomes wanted and the standards for service delivery. It involves tendering and selecting the preferred provider(s) through value analysis, risk assessment, quality and suitability assessment and through issues such as social value.

A useful resource is the LGA's National Procurement Strategy for Local Government in England (details are in 'further reading'), which sets out a vision for procurement and encourages all councils to engage with the delivery of outcomes in four key areas:

- making savings
- supporting local economies
- demonstrating leadership
- modernisation.

Procured services should contribute to, and be underpinned by, public policy objectives, rather than being determined purely on cost or efficiencies. However, cost savings for councils and achieving community outcomes can go hand-in-hand. The case studies in this report include examples where outsourced providers are working with councils to reduce the subsidy they receive (and not just through efficiency savings) while demonstrating improved outcomes for local communities.

When the leisure contract was up for renewal in **Oldham** in 2012, Oldham Council asked prospective operators how they planned to engage priority community groups in activities and services. Oldham Community Leisure (OCL) provided a financially competitive bid that was equally strong in terms of wider social impact and community benefit. This commitment to community-based provision was key to OCL securing the contract.

Since 2015, **Mendip** District Council has procured Fusion Lifestyle to deliver its leisure service. The engagement and support of councillors has been crucial to the development of this partnership, from commissioning and procurement through to contract management. Regular meetings taking place between Fusion, councillors and senior officers, which underpin the council's ongoing leadership role in improving the health and wellbeing of local residents.

## Questions for decision-makers

Questions that councillors and senior decision makers may want to consider/ask when deciding how sport and physical activity services should be delivered include:

- How have we identified needs?
- Do we know if service users and other stakeholders are satisfied?
- How good is the current service?
- What services are being provided by others, including the private sector?
- How can we protect, enhance and refocus our community assets (leisure and wellbeing centres)?
- What outcomes (results) do we want, and will we have the levers and influence to work towards them?
- What is the available budget?
- Have all the options and models been considered, explored and understood within the context of local priorities, targets and ambitions?
- Have we consulted the market – are there gaps in the market?
- Can we afford it?
- What service standards are we setting and how will they be measured?
- What social value will be delivered?
- How will we measure and review the outcomes?
- Have staff been consulted?
- How will we control risk?
- What incentives are there to perform well/ reduce costs?
- How flexible is our delivery model if local need and/or priorities change?

Young people in Tameside are introduced to climbing at a facility run by Active Tameside



# Case studies

The 12 case studies that follow reflect a range of council types, political control and location. Six of them focus on in-house delivery of sport and physical activity facilities and services and/or sports and physical activity development, and six look at how councils are working with outsourced delivery partners, primarily charitable leisure trusts, to deliver services.

All 12 case studies demonstrate the local government sector's ability to work with a broad range of partners to meet shared challenges and deliver the right outcomes for their people and places. They show how commissioners are securing health and wellbeing outcomes through good-quality facilities and appropriate services and programmes, whether delivery is in-house or external, to deliver their strategic priorities.

## Broxbourne In-house service delivery

Broxbourne Borough Council runs its own sports provision through the Broxbourne Sport service. Over the last 10 years the service has gone from an operating loss to a trading budget surplus, which is used to improve the facilities and increase participation. This has already saved more than £700,000 from the council's capital programme budget.

### Background

Broxbourne Borough Council externalised its sports centre services in 2002 but brought them back in-house two years later. The financial benefits of outsourcing the delivery service were not perceived as significant, and there was a recognition that efficient in-house performance would be beneficial for the council – both financially and in terms of achieving corporate priorities. The facilities include two leisure centres and a golf centre.

Back in 2006/07, the sports centres service was operating at a cost to the council of £386,000. By 2017/18, the trading budget surplus was £1.3 million. From that, Broxbourne Sport pays a management fee back to the council of £356,000 a year, rising to £506,000 in 2018/19. The council also receives a recharge payment for its central services of a similar value.

Broxbourne's corporate priorities for 2017-20 include 'enhancing the quality of life'. The objectives for this priority include helping residents to have a healthy lifestyle and encouraging a sense of community through events, leisure activities and volunteering.

### Impact and outcomes

Over the past 10 years, income from the sports centres has increased by £1.5 million (42 per cent) while usage has increased by 144,000 visits a year (34 per cent).

Broxbourne Borough Council has set itself the target of being financially independent by 2020 while protecting internal back-office services, and is on track to achieve this. The financial performance of the sports centres, along with the management fee contribution, are helping towards this goal.

This improved financial performance is attributed to a range of issues, including:

- enhanced membership practices
- streamlined fees and charges
- enhanced 'learn to swim' practices
- more efficient staffing (staffing costs have reduced year-on-year).

In 2013/14 the council invested £4 million to re-develop the Laura Trott Leisure Centre. Since then, usage has increased by 76,000 visits year (18 per cent) and turnover has improved by £900,000 (29 per cent). The cost of the investment will be paid back in just over four years.

Surpluses generated are put into a sinking fund/reserve account and used to fund equipment replacement or facility refurbishments – costs that would have previously been funded by the council's capital programme. To date (October 2017), this account has received £1.2 million and the improvement commitments from it total £715,000.

Broxbourne Sport represents the council at the borough's Health and Wellbeing Strategic Group forum. It has been involved with a successful bid to Sport England to match-fund a three-year GP referral scheme managed by a local 'get active' specialist. This collaborative working has so far helped around 500 inactive residents to take up a more active lifestyle. The sports centres facilitate many of the scheme's activities and have introduced a low cost gym membership package, which has been well received by residents. Partnership work is also underway with Herts Sports Partnership, Hertfordshire County Council's public health team, Lea Valley Health and local schools.

In 2017, Broxbourne Borough Council won the Local Government Chronicle award for 'entrepreneurial council of the year' in recognition of its financial resilience, its ambition and its robust plans to bridge the funding gap.

Councillor Dee Hart, Cabinet Member for Leisure and Culture, said: "The council recognises the role that it plays in providing community leadership in matters of health and physical activity. We are proud of the services and facilities that we offer in-house that help to make a positive difference to people's health and wellbeing, such as our leisure facilities, parks and open spaces and cultural facilities.

**"The quality and scope of our 'offer' has improved in recent years through a combination of sound management and investments made on the strength of robust business cases. We look forward to working with our community partners going forward to help tackle the key health issues, in collaboration and partnership."**

#### **Key learning points**

- In-house sports service provision can provide an opportunity for councils to generate income which can be re-invested to improve the facilities and increase participation.
- It can also enable a closer alignment to the council's corporate objectives, such as helping residents to have a healthy lifestyle and increasing community cohesion through events and leisure activities.

For further information contact

#### **Wesley Hutchins**

Head of Broxbourne Sport, Broxbourne  
Borough Council  
wrh.leisure@broxbourne.gov.uk

## Wirral In-house service delivery

Wirral Council runs its own sport and leisure provision and has an ambition for the service to be self-sufficient by 2020. Ahead of that, investment is underway to improve the facilities, increase participation, improve the health of local people and generate greater income from the sports facilities.

### Background

Wirral Council's sport and leisure provision consists of eight leisure centres, four golf courses, a sailing centre and a sports development team. The service employs about 290 staff and 140 sessional coaches. Alongside the comprehensive sport offer there are seven gyms and over 380 exercise classes each week. Total footfall is just over three million visits each year.

The council's leisure strategy and sports development team have a focus on hard-to-reach community groups, such as young people not in education, employment or training. The 'Active Wirral' campaign targets increased activity across the borough, including in areas of deprivation, using sport as the 'hook'. Over the years, various funding streams have contributed to this work including Sport England, the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund, Big Lottery Fund, Positive Activities for Young People and the Early Intervention Grant.

Wirral has an ambition for its leisure facilities to be fully inclusive and accessible, offering a broad range of activities, programmes and facilities. Within the leisure facilities programming there is a mix of disability sessions and tailored programmes. The development of capital funding streams is underway for a sensory room and changing places to aid access.

### Objectives and outcomes

The sports development team's work feeds into a number of key themes in the council's 2020 vision. These include:

- people with disabilities live independently (through provision of accessible facilities and activities)
- workforce skills match business need (through apprenticeship schemes and staff progression opportunities)
- assets and buildings are fit for purpose (capital projects to increase footfall, revenue development opportunities and improved access)
- leisure and cultural opportunities for all (through a diverse range of activities that cater for all residents)
- Wirral residents live healthier lives (for example through partnership working with health to implement intervention schemes)
- Wirral neighbourhoods are safe (through delivery of programmes in areas of high anti-social behaviour).

The council offer is wide-reaching and involves many other organisations, including over 400 sports clubs that use council facilities, schools and colleges, community groups, local businesses, the Wirral Tourism Network and training providers. The relationships with health are strengthening and a number of initiatives are now in place around cancer (with Macmillan), cardiac rehab and diabetes exercise on referral. Local and regional partners include NCS (National Citizens Service), Doorstep Street Clubs (Sport England) and the Merseyside Sports Partnership.

### Looking to the future

A strategic review of leisure services, parks, culture and libraries is underway, with a Cabinet decision on the future delivery model due in late 2017. Ahead of this, the council has adopted a more commercial approach to these services, with the aim of reducing the net investment requirement to zero by 2020.

Over £3 million has been invested into improving the leisure facilities, which has helped to drive growth in membership from 9,500 to over 15,500 in two years.

Significant developments around IT and marketing are underway with the aim of increasing customer interaction and improving membership retention rates. The golf facilities have been restructured, with 'footgolf' introduced at three courses to increase participation.

Councillor Phillip Brightmore, Wirral's Cabinet Member for Environment, said: "In times of prolonged austerity, when financial difficulties may discourage poorer or at-risk residents from accessing private sports and leisure facilities, it is vital that local authorities maintain a quality, affordable and accessible alternative. Not to do so risks exacerbating health inequalities and necessitating costly interventions by councils, and their partners, at a later date.

**"Members, especially lead members, must be mindful of the impact of accessibility upon those they represent, lobbying government to properly fund that which our communities so desperately need. Through targeted investments, working with partners and delivering differently, councils should seek to enable and encourage physical activity and wellbeing."**

#### Key learning points

- Capital investment in ageing stock, such as gym equipment, can drive revenue and membership sales.
- Rationalise membership types and categories to make the 'offer' simple to understand, communicate and sell.

- Reviewing all staffing levels can help to maximise income-generating opportunities and potential savings in the operation of all delivery areas.
- Utilise the services of specialists to develop innovative solutions to attract broader user groups. For example, using a leisure marketing specialist means the service now embraces social media and digital campaigns and has a more targeted approach.

For further information contact

#### **Simon Bellamy**

Leisure Operations Manager, Wirral Council  
simonbellamy@wirral.gov.uk



A bowling session run by Wirral Council

## East Riding of Yorkshire In-house service delivery

East Riding of Yorkshire Council provides its sport, play and arts service and its leisure service in-house. Other models have been considered and trialled in the past, such as outsourcing, but the services demonstrate high levels of success under the in-house mechanism.

### Background

East Riding of Yorkshire Council's leisure service is successfully reducing its overall cost and increasing the number of participants and overall service income levels. It makes a significant contribution to the local health and wellbeing agenda and works with a broad range of partners.

The council's separate sport, play and arts service enables and supports the targeted development of quality sport, play, physical activity and arts opportunities. It works to address a range of cross-cutting agendas that fit with the council's priority outcomes, particularly 'promoting health, wellbeing and independence' and 'supporting vulnerable people, reducing inequalities'.

Partnership working has been crucial to the success of both service areas. Several key partnerships have helped drive them forward:

- Public health: the leisure service has attained a position with healthcare providers that has resulted in high level of commissioning and awareness of what it can offer. Leisure is currently commissioned to about £800,000 each year and covers areas such as the NHS Live Well programme, GP referral, health checks and health optimisation.
- The sport, play and arts service is commissioned by public health via a service level agreement (£131,000

annually) to deliver a range of programmes to engage vulnerable and hard-to-reach groups.

- Hull University provides high-level research that helps develop the health schemes and also measurements that show the impact of the leisure service on health and wellbeing. This work is due to be published.
- The sport, play and arts service is a key partner within Active Humber, the county sports partnership for the sub region.
- The sport, play and arts service is commissioned by School Sports Partnerships to deliver a high-quality coaching and teacher training package for primary, secondary and special schools in the East Riding, with a focus on non-traditional sport such as outdoor adventure skills, healthy lifestyle workshops and play leaders.
- The sport, play and arts service supports sports clubs to develop and improve and provides advice and support on gaining accreditation, funding, recruiting volunteers and starting a junior section. It also manages the East Riding Club Accreditation Scheme.

### Impact and outcomes

The cost of East Riding's leisure service has reduced by about £1.2 million over the past nine years, while the number of visits to leisure facilities has increased dramatically – from 3,569,009 in 2008/09 to 5,371,013 in 2016/17.

The approach of the sport, play and arts service is to promote prevention, early intervention and co-production using a community asset model. The service influences positive behaviour change by consulting, empowering and working with individuals and groups to develop their skills, knowledge and confidence to make positive changes.

The sport, play and arts service had a core budget of £661,000 in 2017/18. Due to planned savings, this will reduce to £561,000 in 2018/19.

The service levered in a substantial amount of external funding and commissioned work. In 2017/18 this is £364,000 which is used to fund fixed-term contracts and other programme delivery costs. There are currently 12 different funders, of which public health is the largest, which commission the service to deliver against a wide range of cross-cutting outcomes.

Councillor Jonathan Owen, Chairman of the East Riding Health and Wellbeing Board, said: “We have been very innovative in our approach to sport and leisure services through focussing on customers and building service provision. This has generated the momentum to bring together many local partners to improve the customer journey whilst making the most of the resources available. So, for example, we know that the health interventions we have with customers create a healthy community as well as saving long-term costs for the NHS.”

### **Looking to the future**

Future plans include:

- Continuing with capital investment in the leisure facilities to ensure that the council has a strong sport and leisure portfolio.
- Ensuring the level of health commissioning remains high and the outcomes and effects on the community are measured and articulated.
- Striving to make any further savings required, to maximise commissioning opportunities and to seek ways of becoming more commercial and bring in additional income.

### **Key learning points**

- Keep as close to the customer as possible to enhance each and every customer journey.
- Councils cannot do it alone – partnerships make it happen.
- Make efforts to attract external and internal funding/commissioning linked closely with the council’s corporate priorities.

For further information contact

#### **Ian Rayner**

Interim Head of Culture and Customer Service, East Riding of Yorkshire Council  
[ian.rayner@eastriding.gov.uk](mailto:ian.rayner@eastriding.gov.uk)

## Oxford

# In-house sports and physical activity development

Oxford City Council's award-winning sport and physical activity team works with a broad range of partners, including an external provider which operates the city's sport and leisure facilities. Targeted programmes, projects and events are helping to increase participation among key community groups.

### Background

Oxford City Council recognises the value of leisure in supporting community cohesion, cutting across social divides and improving physical and mental health. The council takes a local leadership role, knitting together all the providers into a coherent offer to maximise value for local residents.

In 2009, a charitable leisure trust won the contract to operate and manage Oxford's sport and leisure facilities, which include three leisure centres, an outdoor pool and an ice rink. At the time, there was discussion around whether the council's sports development function should also transfer. This option was not taken up, due to the value and impact the in-house team was demonstrating within the city.

The sport and physical activity team is made up of six officers (one externally funded) who deliver programmes, projects and events to help Oxford's residents become more active and lead healthier lives. Much of this work is aimed at target groups such as younger and older people, black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) people, disabled people and residents of deprived neighbourhoods.

The team costs approximately £220,000 each year but works hard to bring in additional revenue, for example through activities

delivered to schools and fitness classes in parks and green spaces. External funding of almost £1.5 million has been brought in over the past eight years.

To ensure an effective joined-up offer within the city, the team works closely with the outsourced provider to improve and develop the leisure facilities and services. Sports development is a key agenda item at the monthly council/client meetings. Objectives and priorities are agreed through an annual service plan.

The team also works with a wide range of partners, including the Oxfordshire Sport and Physical Activity Partnership, Sport England, national governing bodies of sports, schools, sports clubs, charities and the voluntary/community sector, to ensure sport and physical activity is accessible to everyone.

### Outcomes and impact

Strong partnership work between the council and its partners is bearing fruit. The past eight years have seen:

- year-on-year increases in regular adult participation in sport, reaching 31 per cent in 2016
- over 6,700 disadvantaged young people have participated in the council-run 'Youth Ambition' programme
- evaluation using Social Return on Investment (SROI) methodology showed a gain of £13 million through Youth Ambition in 2015/16
- more than 116,000 attendances at activities and events organised by the sport and physical activity team
- approximately 1,000 women engaged in the council-run 'Active Women' sport and physical activity programme
- a £13.18 return on investment for every £1 spent on the social rounders league
- a 53 per cent increase in participation at leisure centres, from 896,000 (2009/10) to 1,370,000 (2016/17), and a 40 per cent increase in visits by the target groups.

The work of Oxford's sport and physical activity team has been recognised by Quest accreditation, a continuous improvement tool and quality scheme for sports development overseen by Sport England. In 2017, they were the first in the country to achieve an 'excellent' Quest for Active Communities score. The team won the 2014 Association of Public Service Excellence award for the best sport, leisure and cultural service team of the year.

Councillor Linda Smith, Portfolio Holder for Sport, Leisure and Parks, said the in-house team plays a critical role in raising activity levels. "Participation rates in Oxford are high thanks to their work on attracting inward investment and their ability to work closely with colleagues from across council departments, and wider external partners, to provide affordable and inclusive opportunities for physical activity."

### Key learning points

- Ensure a clear, joined-up vision of where you want to be across leisure services and facilities, sport and physical activity.

- Work together as an effective team and encourage a culture of innovation.
- Put customers and communities first and understand their needs and priorities.
- Embed continuous improvement at the heart of what you do.
- Look for where you can collaborate or develop existing/new partnerships around mutual priorities.
- Demonstrate impact: this will put you in a stronger position to make your case, whether it is for internal or external funding, partnership work, promotion of what you do or quality assurance.

For further information contact

### Hagan Lewisman

Active Communities Manager,  
Oxford City Council  
hlewisman@oxford.gov.uk



Nordic walking in Oxford

## Three Rivers In-house sports and leisure development

Three Rivers District Council has an in-house leisure development team and contracts out the management of its leisure venues. The team works with a range of partners to meet strategic targets around increasing the health and wellbeing of local people, including those with additional needs, mental health issues and vulnerable young people.

### Background

Three Rivers District Council delivers its leisure development programme through an in-house service team of eight officers. The team works with partners across a range of projects, including leisure venues, schools, Hertfordshire Sport and Physical Activity Partnership, public health, parish councils, the voluntary and community sector (such as MIND), libraries and others. They also work with internal teams such as planning and housing.

The factors behind the council retaining an in-house leisure development team include finding it easier to respond to customer demand, to respond to changes in strategic priorities and to work with local councillors to enhance the local leisure offer. The total budget for the team is £467,150 and it has also received public health funding.

Councillors are supportive of the work the leisure development team delivers and will assist on projects wherever possible. There are two lead members (one covers leisure, community and wellbeing, the other covers health) who are fully briefed on work programmes and support a number of projects across the team. Formal processes are in place where recommendations for the department are presented to the Leisure, Health and Wellbeing Committee and debated by councillors.

Three Rivers contracts out the management of its leisure venues, which include three leisure centres and a public golf course. The new contract currently being developed for this partnership will include a sports development element, with the aim of it being complementary to the council team's work programme.

### Impact and outcomes

The leisure development team works with a number of vulnerable groups alongside mass participation activities such as Parkrun. This includes work to increase the health and wellbeing of those with additional needs, mental health issues and vulnerable children and their families.

The council's objectives for healthier communities are:

- develop and improve access to good quality housing
- create prosperity for all and access to opportunities
- support the most vulnerable people in the district
- provide a healthy and safe environment
- reduce health inequalities, promote healthy lifestyles and support learning and community organisations.

Performance indicator data for 2016/17, which demonstrates performance against the targets set within the council's strategic plan, includes:

- just under 400,000 attendances by adults at leisure venues and activities
- over 200,000 attendances by young people at leisure venues and activities
- 100 per cent of older people taking part in an activity scheme for people in sheltered housing reported specific health benefits
- 193 new customers on the exercise referral programme
- children's play activities rated 'outstanding' by Ofsted
- 1,255 attendances by children from low-income families at holiday play schemes

- 83 per cent of vulnerable children were satisfied with the leisure projects offered to them.

### Looking to the future

Three Rivers District Council has a forward focus on innovation, best practice and increasing income generation. This includes sourcing external funding to enhance existing projects, working with partner organisations and continually assessing procedures to ensure value for money for the local community.

Examples where external funding has been/is being sourced include:

- Heritage Lottery Fund: funding application submitted for a large heritage project within Leavesden Country Park
- Sport England: funding to support the development of an all-weather pitch in partnership with Rickmansworth Hockey Club
- Sport England: funding to support the development of a watersports facility at Rickmansworth Aquadrome, in partnership with Bury Lake Young Mariners
- Sport England: funding to build a new 3G pitch and multi-use games area, in partnership with the YMCA, at Leavesden Country Park

- supporting local clubs to access funding from Sport England to develop facilities (for example Evergreen Football Club).

Councillor Chris Lloyd, Lead Member for Leisure, Community and Wellbeing, said: “The council is proud of its achievements and is committed to delivering quality leisure services that enhance the health and wellbeing of our communities.”

### Key learning points

- Embrace innovation.
- Continually challenge and assess procedures to ensure best practice.
- Involve the local community at every stage: delivery must meet their needs.
- Maintain a high profile with stakeholders and make sure programmes are aligned to support the achievement of local, county, regional and national aims and objectives.

For further information contact

#### Charlotte Gomes

Leisure Development Manager,  
Three Rivers District Council  
charlotte.gomes@threerivers.gov.uk



Young people set off on a 'parkrun' in Three Rivers

## Eastleigh

### In-house sports and physical activity development

Eastleigh Borough Council's sport and active lifestyles team works with its two outsourced leisure providers, and other partners, to help people lead healthier lives. Local priorities include getting women and girls more active and addressing a drop-off in participation as young people approach their teenage years.

#### Background

Eastleigh Borough Council outsources the management of two leisure facilities: The Hub, a sports hall and pavilion used for sports groups, clubs and community facilities; and Places Leisure Eastleigh, a brand new, £28 million leisure centre, which opened in 2017 to replace an outdated facility.

The in-house sport and active lifestyles team delivers an extensive range of opportunities for people to take up active and sporting habits. Eastleigh's Corporate Plan 2015-25 has a key aim of promoting thriving and healthy communities. The council is working to achieve this by improving the places in which people live and work, meeting the challenge of the ageing population and promoting cultural and physical activity.

Eastleigh's sport and active lifestyle strategy identifies four strategic aims:

- to increase and sustain regular participation in sport and physical activity
- to support and develop a quality delivery structure of clubs, coaches, volunteers and officials
- to promote a healthy lifestyle by making the case for sport and physical activity, building an evidence base and advocating

the benefits

- to protect and provide quality active environments and facilities which are accessible to local communities.

#### Impact and outcomes

The council works with its outsourced providers and a broad range of other partners – including health and the voluntary and community sector – to address key local challenges. For example, the borough suffers from high levels of inactivity and obesity and there is a large gap between male and female participation rates. There is a drop-off in participation at around 11 years of age, so the leisure centre offers activities for young people such as 'teen gym', gymnastics, street dance and trampolining. The Hub has been encouraged to have a particular focus on working with children and adults with a disability.

Eastleigh's sport and active lifestyles team has a long-standing community school network in place and works with secondary schools to provide facilities that local communities can use. It also works with local sports clubs to understand their needs and develop new facilities. For example, work is underway with the Football Association, Football Foundation and Premier League to develop 'Parklife' football hubs in the borough, which could attract up to £6 million in external funding if successful.

#### Looking to the future

Eastleigh's former leisure centre was an outdated 40-year-old facility. Options to update it were fully explored, with extensive community consultation. It was funded through a combination of prudential borrowing (funded by additional revenue savings generated by the new facility), the New Homes Bonus, a £90,000 grant from Netball England (reflecting strong partnership working) and a £2 million Sport England grant. The outsourced provider has a 20-year contract which guarantees significant revenue savings for the council through a large surplus annual management fee, to repay the capital borrowing and enable ongoing council budget savings.

The council raised additional income by selling the naming rights of the new leisure centre, following two years of discussions with interested commercial organisations. The additional income from this 10-year agreement will be used to deliver the council's HealthWorks exercise referral scheme.

Councillor Alan Broadhurst, Eastleigh's Cabinet Member for Wellbeing, said: "The work that is done by our sport and active lifestyles team is fantastic. We have a great story to tell about how many women and inactive adults we have interacted with over the last few years through a range of projects, and more importantly how we have kept them active over time.

**"Officers will inform and consult with me and other councillors about any new proposed activities on the horizon. Members can input where these activities could best take place and help to promote them in their communities."**

**The opening of the fantastic new leisure centre will help the people of Eastleigh become more active, healthier and happier through excellent facilities, new technology and a better understanding of user trends and their needs."**

#### Key learning points

- Having strong councillor advocates for health and wellbeing is important to ensure that political backing is achieved and maintained.
- Councils should be open to challenge and willing to challenge back when working with partners to deliver outcomes. If all parties listen to and learn from each other, initiatives are more likely to maximise their potential.

For further information contact

#### **Ross McClean**

Strategic Lead (Health and Wellbeing),  
Eastleigh Borough Council  
ross.mcclean@eastleigh.gov.uk



A kayak group in Eastleigh

## Mendip

Mendip District Council's sport and leisure services are delivered in partnership with Fusion Lifestyle. Since the contract began in 2015, participation has increased significantly, facilities have been improved and the long-term sustainability of the service is now secure.

### Background

In 2014, Mendip District Council advertised an opportunity to enter into a long-term leasehold agreement on its five leisure facilities. The decision to go out to tender was driven by a desire to ensure the sustainability of good-quality facilities for local communities and increase participation. At the time, the facilities received an annual subsidy of more than £850,000. There was a backlog of maintenance liabilities of around £5 million.

The council established a leisure transformation board with the objective of finding a financially sustainable future for the facilities. There was strong cross-political support from the start, both for the ambition and the approach. Tender applications were received from a range of operators. In June 2015, Fusion, an experienced charitable leisure trust, entered into a 50-year lease for each of the five facilities.

The contract included all repair and maintenance liabilities being passed to Fusion at that point. The annual subsidy from Mendip District Council was reduced significantly in the first year and will be zero by 2018/19. From then on, Fusion will pay a small rental fee to the council for the five leisure facilities.

### Impact and outcomes

There were four key objectives at the heart of the partnership.

1. Capital investment: the first two years focused on Fusion's planned capital investments – principally to address the maintenance liabilities and make improvements. To date there has been £3.2 million of capital investment in the facilities, with significant improvement projects at two leisure centres.
2. Participation: community participation is a mutual agreed objective. Almost 800,000 visits were recorded in 2016/17, up from about 490,000 in 2015/16.
3. Customer satisfaction: each of the nine customer satisfaction areas has shown significant increases since the start of the partnership.
4. Target-group participation: there is a specific focus on increasing participation among six demographic groups, aligned with the council's priorities and Fusion's charitable objectives:
  - under 16s (participation increased by 158 per cent in two years)
  - 16-19 year olds (increased 112 per cent)
  - older adults aged 60-plus (increased 34 per cent)
  - black, Asian and minority ethnic communities (increased 225 per cent)
  - disabled people (increased 225 per cent)
  - women (increased 78 per cent).

Fusion has listened to local communities and, as a result, has been able to provide successful new activities. Examples include 'Parkour' at Wells Leisure Centre, which targets 12-19 year olds in engaging sessions of high-intensity activity on Saturday afternoons, with 20-40 young people attending each week.

For older adults, their timed swimming sessions are now protected during the school holidays. In the past, these sessions were cancelled as they had become impractical to operate.

Simple attention to detail during the refurbishments has also helped to increase participation, such as adding hand rails to assist the less mobile and lower-level hand weights in the gym to suit the less able. Fusion maintains discounts on fees and charges for certain demographic groups as part of the partnership arrangements.

### Looking to the future

Two years into the contract, the delivery outcomes are strengthening and the facilities improving. A solid working relationship has been established between Fusion and Mendip District Council. Crucial to this has been the positive engagement and support of councillors, with regular strategic management board meetings taking place between Fusion, councillors and senior officers. These meetings underpin the council's ongoing role as a local leader in improving the health and wellbeing of residents, as well as fostering a service of community.

From the council's perspective, there have been three key achievements:

- the financial outcome, in terms of supporting long-term sustainable leisure services while reducing subsidies, has been achieved

- significant risks and liabilities have been transferred to Fusion, both in terms of operational and capital investment
- the leisure offer to local communities, particularly those from the target groups, has been materially improved.

### Key learning points

- Be innovative and enable creative-thinking.
- Ensure there is a close-knit team committed to working hard to overcome obstacles and pursuing the project to a successful conclusion.
- Listen to the needs of your community.
- Legal advice from a lawyer who understood the drivers and embraced the ambition of the project was important.
- Commit to a long-term vision for the partnership.

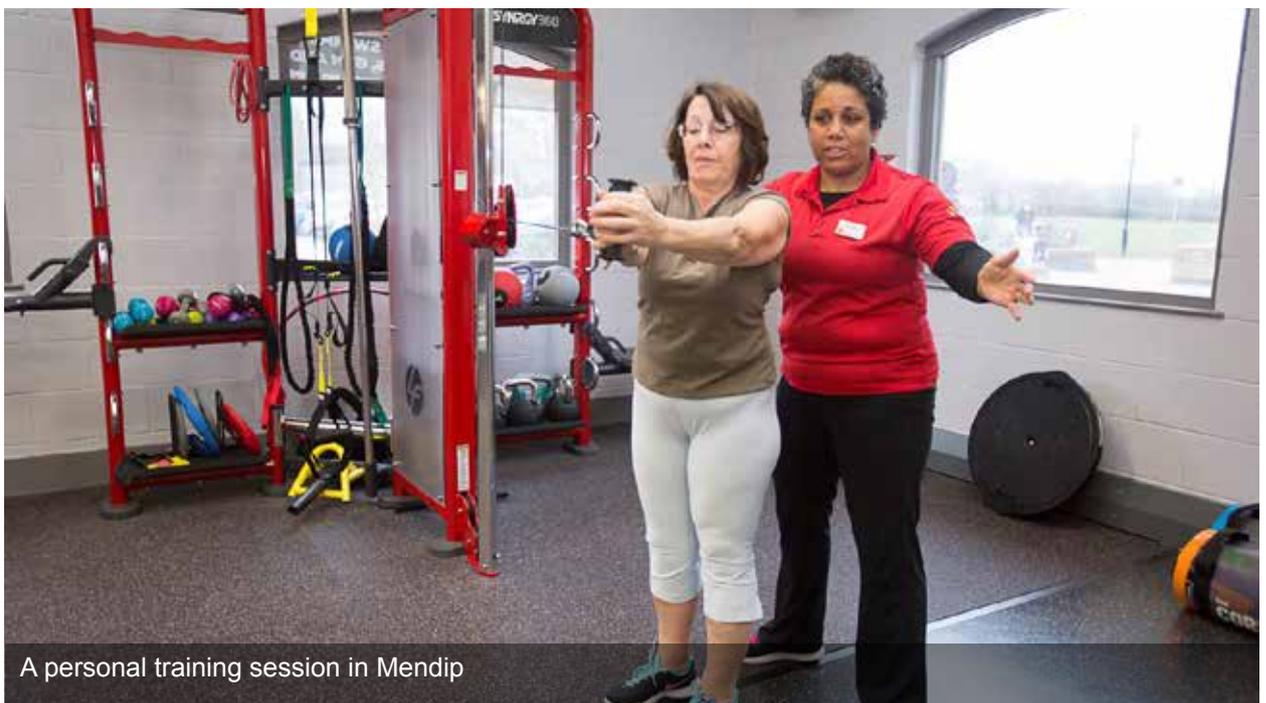
For further information contact

#### Tim Mills

Director of Business Development, Fusion Lifestyle  
tim.mills@fusion-lifestyle.com  
or

#### Donna Nolan

Deputy Chief Executive, Mendip District Council  
donna.nolan@mendip.gov.uk



A personal training session in Mendip

## Kirklees

Kirklees Active Leisure was established by Kirklees Council in 2002. Both organisations work together to provide, develop and protect good quality leisure services for local people. The leisure trust is committed to social and community development and contributes significantly to the local partnership agenda.

### Background

Kirklees Active Leisure (KAL) was established by Kirklees Council in 2002 as an independent charitable leisure trust. This was seen as the best way to secure investment in the council's leisure facilities and ensure that communities could access sustainable and good quality provision. The original 10-year agreement has since been extended to 2032.

KAL manages 12 leisure facilities owned by Kirklees Council. In broad terms, the council owns the assets and is responsible for most of the development and maintenance; KAL manages each site and develops and delivers the services and activities. Both are committed to partnership working in order to provide, develop and protect good quality leisure services for local communities. The partnership is based on a statement of understanding, which outlines the overall outcomes and partnership approach, along with a funding agreement and facility leases.

Kirklees Council has an in-house sport and physical activity team which leads on strategic and spatial planning, supports the voluntary and community sports sector and delivers targeted physical activity schemes for people with long-term conditions, many of which are delivered in KAL centres and subsidised by KAL (for example through discounted membership and free use of space).

### Impact and outcomes

The partnership has yielded strong outcomes. KAL has invested in providing, maintaining and improving leisure provision across the borough, leading to significant growth in customer numbers – from two million annual visits in 2008/09 to over three million in 2016/17.

Financially, there has been a significant reduction in the funding subsidy provided by Kirklees Council whilst KAL's turnover has increased. The ratio of funding to overall turnover has fallen from 35 per cent in 2009/10 to a projected eight per cent in 2017/18. The facilities have benefitted from capital investment from KAL, paid for through a combination of the trust's own reserves and prudential borrowing. These capital projects include invest-to-save schemes such as energy saving programmes, invest-to-grow projects and general facility maintenance.

The trust contributes significantly to the local partnership agenda, working with the council on a range of strategic matters which are far broader than straightforward leisure provision. This includes involvement with the Kirklees Third Sector Leaders group, the Healthy Child integrated commission, a collaborative youth offer, the local children and young people's partnership, Kirklees Active Schools and other initiatives benefitting local people. These have been delivered as part of KAL's commitment to social and community development, at no additional cost to the council – but providing lots of added value.

### Looking to the future

The partnership is moving from 'council outcomes' towards 'partnership outcomes', with partners across the public, private and voluntary sectors looking at how they can collectively contribute. A commissioning agreement is being developed which will set out the outcomes KAL is being commissioned to deliver, with clear performance measures. There is regular contact between KAL's chief executive and Kirklees Council's client officer. Quarterly liaison meetings take place which focus on finance, partnership performance and capital matters.

Councillor Viv Kendrick, Cabinet Member for Adults and Public Health, said: “We at Kirklees Council still take a local leadership role in relation to sport and leisure. KAL operates the facilities and, in so doing, provides universal access to sport and physical activity opportunities for the people of Kirklees. It is being proactive in ensuring that facilities and services reflect changing public demands and trends.

“Sport and physical activity impacts on multiple agendas and so four Cabinet members oversee this area. KAL engages us in discussion about proposals to develop the leisure centres and provides regular performance updates. Our partnership is going from strength to strength and we have confidence in KAL being able to contribute to the outcomes we want to achieve and look after our stock of leisure facilities.”

### Key learning points

- Having an outcomes-based approach is key. Both partners need to commit to the same outcomes and support their joint delivery.
- Achieving a balanced skills and personality mix is essential. It works best if there are councillors, trustees and senior managers who are prepared to invest time and effort in a long-term partnership approach.
- Enable the trust to have flexibility to engage with a range of partners as they see fit – making collaborative links, adding and receiving value and connecting programmes and services.

For further details please contact

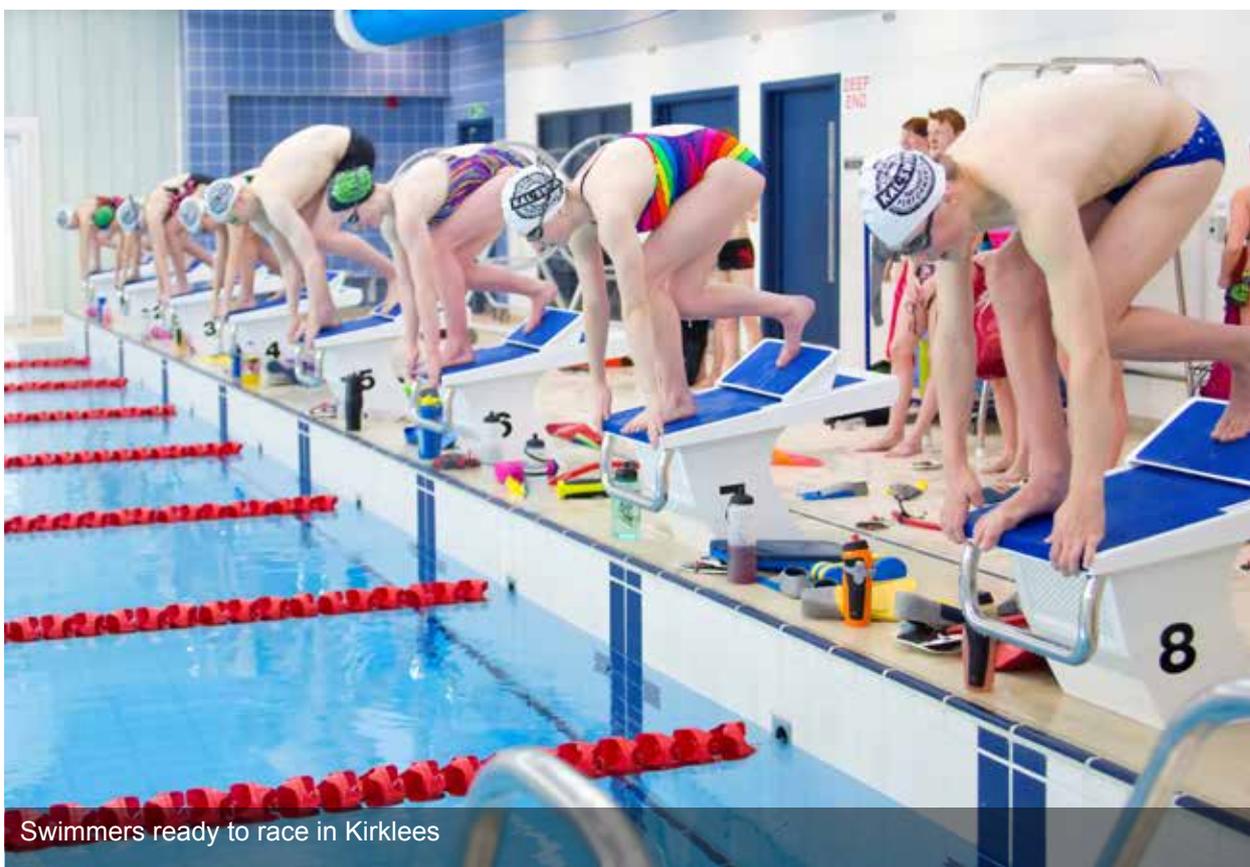
**Alasdair Brown**

Chief Executive, Kirklees Active Leisure  
alasdair.brown@kal.org.uk

or

**Adele Poppleton**

Head of Active and Creative Communities,  
Kirklees Council  
adele.poppleton@kirklees.gov.uk



Swimmers ready to race in Kirklees

## Hackney

GLL, a charitable social enterprise, manages sport and leisure facilities and services for the London Borough of Hackney under a contract which runs to 2029. The partners are working together to raise participation rates and improve the health of local people, while reducing the cost to the council over time.

### Background

Hackney has a growing, diverse and young population, with a quarter of residents aged under 20. GLL has been working with Hackney Council for over 12 years, managing facilities and services including leisure centres, a water sports centre, a lido and the famous Hackney Marshes, with 82 football, rugby and cricket pitches. GLL and the council work closely together to raise participation rates, improve the condition of the leisure facilities, target key community groups and generate increased income.

The partnership employs over 160 permanent staff and more than 300 sessional staff, mainly from local communities, and pays the London Living Wage. GLL has an apprenticeship programme based in Hackney offering young people paid employment, training and career opportunities.

### Impact and outcomes

GLL has made significant improvements to the services provided to communities and in terms of participation. Total participation rates have increased from 1.1 million visits in 2009 to 1.9 million in 2016.

The relationship has also yielded increased revenue and service standards. GLL reported a £4 million increase in revenue generated up to 2015 over a six-year period. As a leisure trust it utilises a cross-subsidy model, using this revenue to subsidise investments,

services and activities, particularly targeting people most in need. The improvements in service standards have been evidenced by a 68 per cent reduction in complaints, achievement of the Quest Plus standard and the Customer Service Excellence award.

Examples of how the partnership work is supporting council priority objectives include:

- Free family swimming lessons: in partnership with Hackney Council, GLL delivers free swimming lessons at Kings Hall Leisure Centre during school holidays. In 2017 there were 1,386 visits to the programme, from all ages, with many teenagers and adults progressing from being non-swimmers to being able to swim 25 metres.
- Dementia swimming: GLL delivers a dementia swimming programme, which has had 30 individual participants in the first two years.
- Activities for older people: March 2017, with funding from Hackney Council, a project began aimed at developing community-based opportunities for older people. To date, four chair-based exercise sessions have been set up with housing and care providers. An average of 26 participants attend per week. All the participants have housing, support and care needs, with around 50 per cent living with dementia.
- Hackney Cup for Health: in 2016 GLL's Community Foundation supported Hackney Wick Football Club to deliver a seven-a-side football tournament. The event was attended by 487 people, with 170 becoming engaged with grassroots football for the first time. It was repeated in 2017.

Hackney Council and GLL work with a range of local and national partners to deliver programmes and projects, including local voluntary and community sector organisations, Age UK, Alzheimer's Society, Sport England, Amateur Swimming Association, England Netball, England Squash, Lawn Tennis Association, Homerton University Hospital NHS Trust and the South East Commissioning Unit.

## Looking to the future

Given the successful performance of the partnership and the context of financial pressure on local authorities, GLL and Hackney Council entered into discussions on the future management of the facilities. The aim was to achieve:

- continued delivery of health and social outcomes and priorities
- the provision of planned investment and improved performance of the existing centres
- financial savings for the council.

As a result of these discussions, the key changes included a five-year contract extension for GLL to 2029; a reduced cost to Hackney Council through decreasing subsidies towards a zero-based management fee; the council investing capital to redevelop two existing facilities during the contract term; and a capital investment of £3.5 million by GLL in two other centres, to complement the council's investment plan and ensure continued increases in participation.

## Key learning points

- Ongoing discussions and reviews are important. This includes monthly operational meetings with facility managers, quarterly meetings at head-of-service level and strategic review meetings every six months. This continual relationship at all levels allows for a consistent and positive partnership.
- A joint, proactive approach to implementing national policy and good practice. For example, both organisations are committed to being London Living Wage employers.
- A culture of proactivity across the whole contract has been important in delivering the outcomes.

For further information contact

### **Adrian Ballington**

Head of Development and Partnerships, GLL  
adrian.ballington@gll.org

or

### **Ian Holland**

Head of Libraries, Leisure and Green Spaces,  
London Borough of Hackney  
ian.holland@hackney.gov.uk



Open water swimming in Hackney

## Tameside

Active Tameside manages leisure facilities for Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council. It provides a range of community services with the aim of engaging people in active lifestyles. The trust has been re-modelled in recent years, with a shift to co-production and a new outcomes-based agreement.

### Background

Tameside Sports Trust was formed in 1999 as a single-contract trust serving Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council, with a contract to manage 10 facilities and provide a range of community services involving voluntary and community sector partners. A re-modelling of the trust began in 2011, led by the council and in partnership with the trust, with the twin aims of:

- maximising the role of sport and leisure in reducing demand on the health and social care system
- reducing the leisure contract management fee in order to meet spending reduction targets.

The trust was re-branded as Active Tameside and a top-to-bottom business redesign took place, which led to the co-production of a new outcomes-based contract in 2017. Progress is shared and reviewed at quarterly management meetings which involve the lead executive member and senior officers from the council and trust.

This partnership work has positioned Active Tameside as a prime provider under new locality health and social care integrated commissioning arrangements. It is heavily involved in 'GM Active', which brings together 13 Greater Manchester leisure providers with a focus on working together to improve healthy life expectancy through physical activity. Tameside Council provides proactive

local leadership, and both organisations are involved in the Greater Manchester devolution of health and social care.

### Impact and outcomes

Active Tameside developed a strategy for 2016-24 setting out how it would deliver the outcomes within the partnership agreement. The trust now runs 18 services that span the life course, including services for schools, people with disabilities and older people. Many of these services reach into the community and to areas of disadvantage. For example, the trust supports 1,500 people with long-term conditions into an active lifestyle each year, helping to reduce their dependence on the health and social care system.

In parallel to the service development, Active Tameside's revenue has grown from a turnover of circa £6 million (2011) to an anticipated £10 million (2018). A joint trust/council capital investment programme is underway. The trust has delivered efficiencies leading to a 20 per cent reduction in the management fee relative to turnover, with aspirations for further reductions in the future. The new relationship and charitable service model have enabled leverage of a range of external grants.

### Looking to the future

The outcomes-based partnership agreement will continue to evolve in order to maximise opportunities to improve healthy life expectancy. The partners are looking at other opportunities, such as voluntary sector partnerships, to ensure that the trust can thrive in the longer term as the provider of high-quality sustainable services. Both partners are committed developing the evidence base to demonstrate broader social value, economic impact and social return on investment.

Councillor Ged Cooney, Executive Member for 'Healthy and Working', said: "I'm proud that Tameside commissioners, providers and stakeholders are working so closely together to ensure we can provide leading leisure, sport, physical activity and wellbeing services for our residents.

“Together we are co-designing and investing in services to respond to the challenge of increased demands in health and social care, much of which is down to an increasingly inactive society, in a climate of reduced government spending. This response includes radical new approaches to upgrade and sustain early intervention and preventative services to help get people more active and lead healthier lives.

“This work is an absolute priority and we meet regularly to share and review Active Tameside’s progress. Some of this work also feeds through to, and is monitored by, the Health and Wellbeing Board. Our offer is now one of the most diverse and inspirational across Greater Manchester, with both traditional venues and cutting-edge facilities that appeal to

younger people, and should continue to make a difference for years to come.”

#### Key learning points

- Build consensus with stakeholders around the need for capital investment to reduce costs, gain efficiencies and develop/sustain assets and services.
- Create a joint understanding of the value of preventative services and delivery by leisure, including among health and social care stakeholders and commissioners.
- Don't be afraid to advocate a bold vision in what is a challenging time for public services in order to take advantage of the opportunities for progressive, dynamic and agile leisure trusts, working with their voluntary sector and council partners.

For further details contact

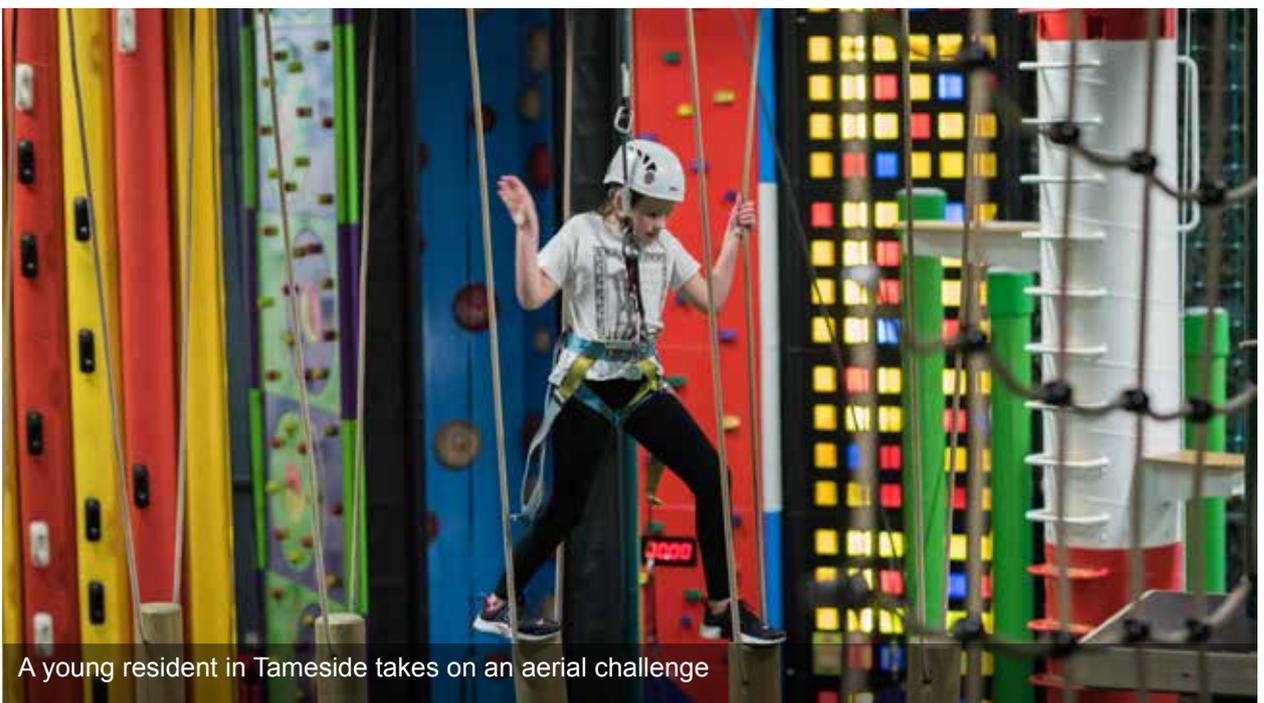
#### **Mark Tweedie**

Chief Executive, Active Tameside  
mark.tweedie@activetameside.com

or

#### **Angela Hardman**

Director of Population Health, Tameside  
Metropolitan Borough Council  
angela.hardman1@nhs.net



A young resident in Tameside takes on an aerial challenge

## Stockton-on-Tees

Tees Active is a charitable leisure trust established by Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council in 2004. As well as providing cost-efficient management of council facilities, it delivers a range of commissioned services that contribute to the local health strategy.

### Background

Tees Active was formed in 2004 with the transfer of services in leased buildings from Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council. The core contract includes four leisure facilities, a theatre, gym facilities, an indoor bowling venue, childcare services, a climbing wall and an ice arena. The initial contract has been extended by 20 years to 2039.

From the outset, there was a strong alignment of the trust objectives to those of the council, particularly on social impact. Tees Active has seven strategic aims:

- to deliver a high-quality, innovative, customer-focused service
- to maintain a high-quality, sustainable stock of facilities
- to ensure the service appeals to all aspects of its communities
- to maintain a motivated, well-trained, focused and engaged workforce
- to reduce the cost to client authorities of operating the service
- to expand the company reach
- to achieve year-on-year increases in visitor numbers.

Within a year, both organisations had made capital investment into the facilities. Tees Active has also invested in services over and above the contract with the council, such as the exercise on prescription scheme and local sports academy.

Both of these investments are seen by councillors and officers as evidence of the positive impact of the trust model.

Maintaining positive working relationships between officers, councillors and Tees Active has been critical to the partnership's success. This has been underpinned by Tees Active's commitment to inform and involve people, consult on developments, listen to feedback and liaise with councillors and community groups. When Tees Active was successful in gaining an external contract, it kept the council informed and assured that the focus on Stockton would not be affected. In fact, this contract has enabled additional revenue to be invested in services and facilities for Stockton-on-Tees communities.

To support the long-term objectives of the partnership, Tees Active proposed an option to progressively reduce the need for subsidy. In order to meet the twin aims of saving costs and service development, it provided options based on investment, service expansion and consequent revenue savings: in essence, a series of invest-to-save options and a reduction in the management fee paid by the council.

### Impact and outcomes

The partnership has led to positive impacts financially, to service quality and community participation. Due to the strong partnership and clear achievement of the original objectives, the council was happy to use prudential borrowing to invest £14 million in facility development, repaid by Tees Active through increased revenue. The council also invested capital to complement the trust's contributions, leading to a total of almost £30 million to transform the original facilities.

The council's subsidy to Tees Active is gradually being reduced. The approach has been to take a long-term view of service development, investment and subsidy reduction while expanding the range of services. By 2018 the subsidy will have reduced by almost 60 per cent while participation has increased by 45 per cent (since 2004).

Tees Active has developed a strong relationship with colleagues in public health, delivering a range of commissioned services to contribute to the local health strategy.

### Looking to the future

Both organisations have a strong sense of partnership, shared ownership and responsibility for growth and efficiency in the sports and leisure sector. When the contract extension was being considered, the council commissioned an external assessment which concluded that Tees Active provides good value for money and that its culture, ethos and values align with those of the council.

The trust's new business plan sees a sharper focus on community engagement and health interventions, both of which make key contributions to council objectives, prioritising those people most in need. This will see Tees Active working more closely with other local services and organisations, including the voluntary and community sector, further cementing its role in supporting the delivery of local strategies.

### Key learning points

- A close working relationship is essential in order to align priorities, maintain a focus on development/improvement and ensure colleagues and communities feel that the trust 'belongs'.
- Good personal relationships help to maintain a positive partnership. Tees Active is succession planning to ensure this continues into the future.
- Maintain and develop a culture and ethos which has social impact at its heart.
- Identify issues early and provide solutions: there is an evidenced link between being solution-focussed and long-term sustainability.

For further details contact

#### Steven Chaytor

Managing Director, Tees Active  
steven.chaytor@teesactive.co.uk

or

#### Neil Russell

Leisure and Sports Development Manager,  
Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council  
neil.russell@stockton.gov.uk



White water rafting in Stockton-on-Tees

## Oldham

Oldham Community Leisure was formed as an industrial and provident society in 2002. Its partnership with Oldham Council is successfully delivering on a range of community outcomes. The leisure trust delivers health interventions and services as well as running leisure centres and sports facilities.

### Background

Oldham Community Leisure (OCL) formed as an industrial and provident society and moved out from Oldham Council in 2002. During the initial 10-year contract it was supported by a subsidy of around £1.7 million a year. When the contract was up for renewal in 2012, Oldham Council was looking for invest-to-save options in order to deliver a fit-for-purpose portfolio of facilities and services.

The council opted to invest £23 million of capital into building two new facilities to replace four that were outdated and operationally inefficient. Much of that capital investment was to be repaid through a significant reduction in future subsidy payments, from about £1.7 million a year to an average of less than £400,000. OCL remained keen to bid for the new contract. To meet the council's priority of providing attractive, efficient and financially sustainable public facilities, its business plan included a streamlined delivery model and a focus on maximising community engagement and participation.

### Impact and outcomes

The partnership is achieving record attendances in most areas, including overall admissions and membership. Critical to this success has been Oldham Council's recognition that investment was key to raising participation levels, increasing efficiency and subsequently reducing the operational subsidy.

By opting for a contract specification which separated the design and build elements from the operation and management elements, Oldham was more likely to receive tender submissions from charitable trusts. OCL provided a financially competitive bid that was equally strong in terms of wider social impact and community benefit. This commitment to community-based provision was key to securing the contract. As a charitable trust, OCL can balance commercial viability and efficiency with community and social outcomes. It is actively involved in collaboration and partnerships to improve the health, wellbeing and activity levels of local residents.

OCL is a single-contract operator, meaning that decisions are made locally, purely to benefit the Oldham community and economy. Surpluses are reinvested into initiatives which benefit local people. To date, it has secured over £2 million in external funding for capital investments into facilities and the delivery of health interventions and services, such as programmes/interventions on healthy cooking, long-term conditions, drug and alcohol dependency and childhood obesity.

Neil Consterdine, Oldham Council's Head of Service for Public Health, Youth and Leisure, said: "As a leisure trust, OCL supports the council's and Oldham's wider outcomes around delivery of the health and wellbeing agenda and corporate priorities. This is also supported through the delivery of a performance framework that is monitored by the council. The trust has a position on the Health and Wellbeing Board and the borough's Leadership Board."

### Looking to the future

Future priorities are based on partnership and mutual benefit, with the ambition of a healthier Oldham population. Examples of this work include:

- Oldham Council recently ran a health project focused on the wellbeing of its own workforce, delivered in partnership with OCL

- OCL is supporting the local priority of reducing worklessness, for example by hosting engagement sessions in leisure centres for unemployed people, providing an opportunity to encourage people to become more active and improve their physical and mental wellbeing
- OCL is progressing partnership work to support several of Oldham Council's community centres to make them more resilient, efficient and ready for asset transfer into their own independent organisation.

### **Key learning points**

- Separating the design and build components of a contract from the operation and management components increases the likelihood of bids from charitable trusts, meaning a focus on community and social outcomes, rather than profit generation.
- The criteria for assessing tenders in a procurement process is critical. If the driver is to achieve the lowest price, the outcome will be a 'caretaker' operator with little interest in community outcomes. Ask prospective operators how they plan to engage priority community groups in activities and services.
- Contracts for leisure services should allow for a modest profit to be made. The trust model is based on cross-subsidy: surpluses provide financial resilience and the ability to re-invest in facilities, services and activities.
- Local councillors sit on the trust board, strengthening the partnership and the alignment of objectives and outcomes.

For further information contact

**Stuart Lockwood**

Chief Executive, Oldham Community Leisure  
stuart.lockwood@ocll.co.uk

or

**Neil Consterdine**

Head of Service – Public Health, Youth and Leisure, Oldham Council  
neil.consterdine@oldham.gov.uk

# Further reading and contacts

Sporting Future – A New Strategy for an Active Nation, HM Government, 2015:  
[www.gov.uk/government/publications/sporting-future-a-new-strategy-for-an-active-nation](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sporting-future-a-new-strategy-for-an-active-nation)

Towards an Active Nation Strategy 2016-21, Sport England, 2016:  
[www.sportengland.org/media/10629/sport-england-towards-an-active-nation.pdf](http://www.sportengland.org/media/10629/sport-england-towards-an-active-nation.pdf)

A suite of LGA resources and tools on sport, physical activity and leisure can be found at [www.local.gov.uk/our-support/our-improvement-offer/culture-and-sport-improvement](http://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/our-improvement-offer/culture-and-sport-improvement) and includes:

- a guide to developing a local outcomes framework for culture and sport
- culture, tourism and sport improvement toolkit
- Engaging in commissioning: a practical resource pack for the culture and sport sector
- Putting culture and sport at the heart of commissioning: the role of political leadership
- Putting culture and sport at the heart of strategic commissioning: councillor briefing note
- Understanding commissioning: a practical guide for the culture, tourism and sport sector.

The LGA also offers free 'Leadership Essentials' training for councillors with responsibility for sport and physical activity:  
[www.local.gov.uk/our-support/highlighting-political-leadership/leadership-essentials](http://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/highlighting-political-leadership/leadership-essentials)

Leisure management options guidance, Sport England, 2017:  
[www.sportengland.org/facilities-planning/further-guidance/leisure-management-options-guidance](http://www.sportengland.org/facilities-planning/further-guidance/leisure-management-options-guidance)

National Procurement Strategy for Local Government, LGA, 2014:  
[www.local.gov.uk/national-procurement-strategy](http://www.local.gov.uk/national-procurement-strategy)

A councillor's guide to procurement, LGA, 2013:  
[www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/councillors-guide-procure-4b2.pdf](http://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/councillors-guide-procure-4b2.pdf)

LGA: culture, tourism, leisure and sport news and resources:  
[www.local.gov.uk/topics/culture-tourism-leisure-and-sport](http://www.local.gov.uk/topics/culture-tourism-leisure-and-sport)

°CLOA:  
<http://cloa.org.uk/current-issues>

Sporta's resources on engaging in commissioning for sport and physical activity can be found at:  
[www.sporta.org](http://www.sporta.org)

Procurement toolkit, Sport England:  
[www.sportengland.org/facilities-planning/further-guidance/procurement-toolkit](http://www.sportengland.org/facilities-planning/further-guidance/procurement-toolkit)

Everybody Active, Every Day - a framework to embed physical activity into daily life, PHE, 2014:

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/everybody-active-every-day-a-framework-to-embed-physical-activity-into-daily-life](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/everybody-active-every-day-a-framework-to-embed-physical-activity-into-daily-life)

Childhood obesity: a plan for action, HM Government, 2016:

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/childhood-obesity-a-plan-for-action](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/childhood-obesity-a-plan-for-action)

Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy, HM Government, 2017:

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/cycling-and-walking-investment-strategy](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cycling-and-walking-investment-strategy)

Sport England resources at

[www.sportengland.org/research/resources/](http://www.sportengland.org/research/resources/)

- understanding how to target under-represented population groups through insight (eg disabled people, inactive people, youth, women)
- evaluation of funding streams and projects
- to interrogate data sets and undertake economic modelling.

The Public Health England Physical Activity Fingertips tool brings together local data on physical activity and associated health and wellbeing outcomes to help support benchmarking, commissioning and service improvement:

<https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/profile/physical-activity>

Contact details:

### **Local Government Association**

[www.local.gov.uk](http://www.local.gov.uk)

[cts@local.gov.uk](mailto:cts@local.gov.uk)

### **Sporta**

[www.sporta.org](http://www.sporta.org)

[info@sporta.org](mailto:info@sporta.org)

### **CLOA**

[www.cloa.org.uk](http://www.cloa.org.uk)

[info@cloa.org.uk](mailto:info@cloa.org.uk)



**Local Government Association**

18 Smith Square  
London SW1P 3HZ

Telephone 020 7664 3000

Fax 020 7664 3030

Email [info@local.gov.uk](mailto:info@local.gov.uk)

[www.local.gov.uk](http://www.local.gov.uk)

© Local Government Association, December 2017

For a copy in Braille, larger print or audio,  
please contact us on 020 7664 3000.  
We consider requests on an individual basis.

REF 12.8