

# Getting Greenwich Active

Royal Borough of Greenwich

Director of Public Health  
Annual Report 2022/23



  
ROYAL *borough of*  
GREENWICH

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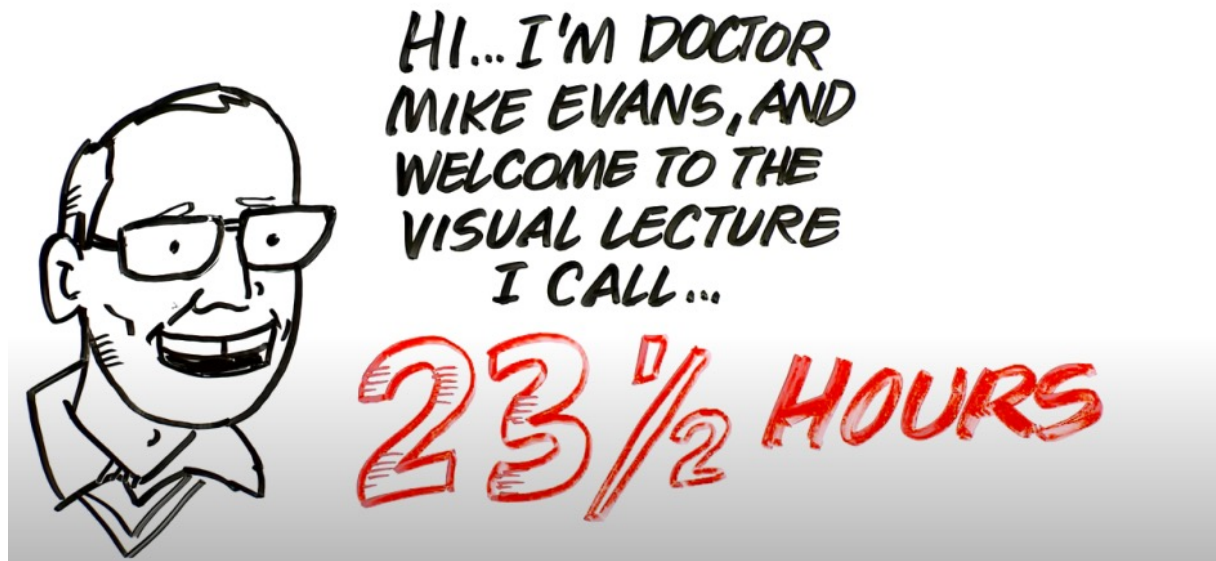


# 1. Twenty three and a half hours

Before reading this report, you might find it useful to watch the [video below](#).

Most of us are probably aware that factors such as eating a healthy diet, being active and limiting or eliminating alcohol or smoking, all have important impacts on our health. But which one makes the biggest difference to your health?

The below is one of a series of videos made by Dr Mike Evans. Dr Evans is a Canadian doctor who works at St Michael's Hospital Toronto and is a Professor of Family Medicine and Public Health at the University of Toronto. His videos are fun, easy to understand and only about 10 minutes long. They are used all over the world and are an excellent way to learn about your health.



## 2. Foreword from Councillor Denise Scott-McDonald, Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care

I am pleased to present our first Annual Report from our Director of Public Health since the COVID-19 pandemic hit in 2020 and presented such a huge public health challenge to people across the globe.

Since the pandemic, everyday life has shifted, giving us the opportunity to re-focus on some of the most important ways in which we can improve our mental and physical health and wellbeing. During periods of lockdown, many people who were previously active in their daily routines, for example by leaving the house to go to work or to take children to school, found themselves being more sedentary and spending increased time indoors. Despite encouragement to go outside for physical activity each day, not everyone was able to do so.

COVID-19 highlighted the opportunities and challenges around people being physically active. For some, it was an opportunity to build physical activity into their daily routine for the first time; it was, for many, one of the few reasons they could leave their homes during lockdowns. Some people developed a new or enhanced interest in gardening, others in spending more time in nature. Some learnt new skills, such

as experiencing the opportunities the digital world presents, enabling a form of social connection when physical contact was not allowed. Others lost their daily routines so became less active, and many became anxious about mixing with others or were advised that they must shield due to their clinical vulnerability to the threat from the virus. And for some, long-COVID continues to affect residents' lives, many of whom were previously more active.

It may not always be easy to be more physically active, but this report highlights why it is important and what we can do at no or low cost to move more and significantly improve our mental and physical wellbeing in both the short and long term. I encourage you to start by watching the video by Dr Michael, and hope that like me you will feel personally inspired by this report to take the first step to getting yourself and Royal Greenwich more active!

I welcome the recommendations that the Director of Public Health has outlined in this report.



### 3. Introduction by Steve Whiteman, Director of Public Health & Wellbeing

I am delighted to introduce my latest Annual Public Health Report, which focuses on the critical role of physical activity in protecting and enabling our mental, physical health and wellbeing.

The evidence is powerful that how much and how often we are active throughout our lives, from childhood to older age, is one of the most important determinants of our health and wellbeing.

Small changes in our activity levels can have a big impact on our health. Being physically active protects us against some of the major non-communicable diseases in our society, such as heart disease and stroke, cancers, poor mental health and type-2 diabetes. It helps us to keep our bones, muscles and joints strong and supple, protects us against common problems such as back and neck pain, hip and knee disorders. Physical activity can help us to maintain a healthy weight and to avoid falls and fractures as we get older. It helps us to recover and repair our health when we do develop illnesses and conditions. It can help us to keep connected to others as we get out and about, meeting friends and family, joining



groups and clubs, participating in sporting and leisure activities. We know that the reverse is also true and that being physically inactive at all ages, and especially spending long periods of time being sedentary, is harmful to our mental and physical health.

But how active we are is not simply a matter of personal choice. As with many behavioural determinants of health, how physically active we are is determined by a complex range of social, environmental, economic, cultural and commercial determinants. The neighbourhoods we live in will have a dramatic impact on how easy it is for people to walk or cycle to work and school, for children to play outdoors and to access green spaces. How safe people feel to be active

outdoors is also an important factor in many communities. The availability of an affordable and reliable public transport network is also important in allowing people to be more active, as we often build walking into our journeys to and between stations and bus stops. Not everyone has an equal access to the money needed to go to leisure facilities or participate in sporting activities. There are cultural and religious considerations in our communities regarding physical activity that need to be understood and acted on to ensure everyone has an equitable access to services or opportunities for physical activity.

**This report aims to help Royal Greenwich to be more active. I hope it will be of use and interest to a wide range of audiences, including:**

- **Policy makers**, who need to think about how to support people to lead more physically active lives as they plan and develop communities, transport infrastructure, buildings, parks and open spaces and community services and facilities.
- **Health and care professionals** as they advise and support patients and residents about the central importance of physical activity to health and wellbeing and help them to know what opportunities there are for them to act on that advice.
- **Employers, community and voluntary agencies** who also have a role to play in supporting their staff, and the residents who use their services, to get active.

- And **Greenwich residents**, who will find in this report the many opportunities in the borough to become more active, from structured opportunities through to simple steps that they could consider taking for themselves.

In recent years there has been an understandable focus on obesity as an important public health priority and on physical activity as one of the solutions to this challenge. Whilst physical activity undoubtedly does have an important role to play in helping us to maintain a healthy weight, it is an important health and wellbeing factor for us all in its own right, and supports the health and wellbeing of everyone whatever their size. Focusing too much on weight can lead to people feeling criticised and being stigmatised, which can result in people being less active, less connected and more isolated. Let's get Royal Greenwich more active, understanding the different roles we all have to play and putting the evidence of how important being active is at the heart of our policies and practice.

Throughout this report there are hyperlinks with further details and information.

I hope you find this report interesting and informative.





## 4. The importance of physical activity

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

*UK Chief Medical Officers' Physical Activity Guidelines, 2019*



# Being physically active helps all people, no matter their age, to lead healthier lives

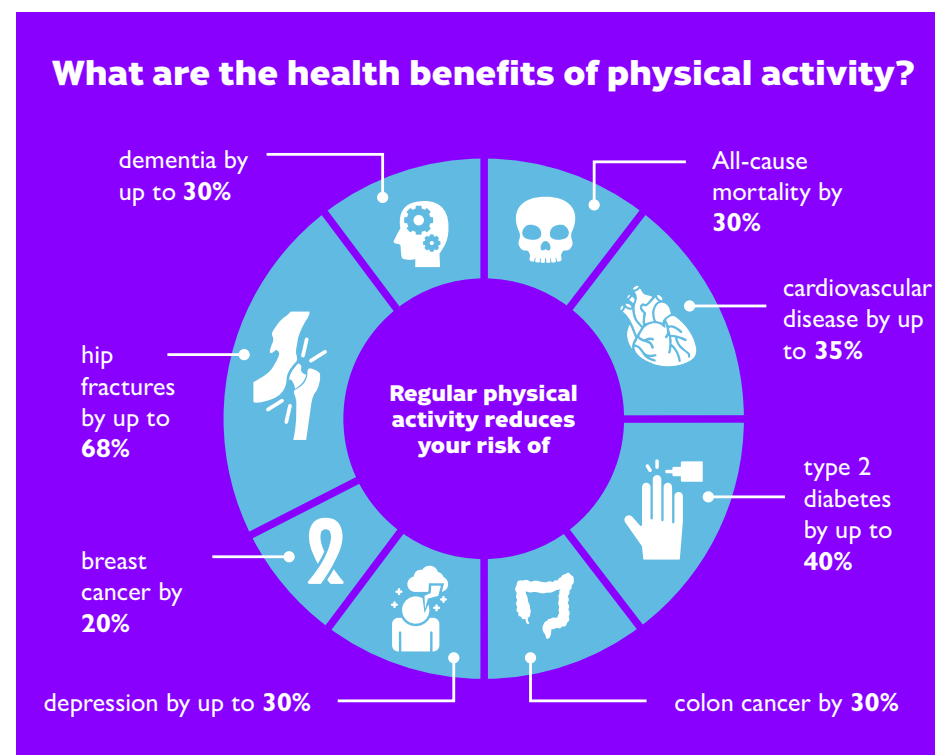
By being more active throughout the day in relatively simple ways, people can quite easily achieve the recommended activity levels.

Tackling inactivity is a priority at both a local and national level. Around one in three adults in Royal Greenwich are not achieving the recommended levels of physical activity each week (150 minutes of moderate activity, such as brisk walking) and around one in four adults are classified as inactive<sup>1</sup>. Only one in two children are sufficiently active (children are recommended to be physically active for 60 minutes a day<sup>2</sup>). The benefits of increased physical activity are enormous and would help improve a variety of health conditions, including mental wellbeing and bone strength as we age.

Embedding physical activity into our everyday lives will help to improve health outcomes and reduce the risk and impact of long-term conditions as we age. This will help to ensure independence and a better quality of life. It is not just about living longer – it's about living a healthier life for longer.

One important benefit of being more physically active, especially being active outdoors, is the improvement to mental health and wellbeing.

This in turn can impact on employment and productivity.



Sources:

<sup>1</sup> [sportengland.org/news/activity-levels-see-partial-recovery-covid-19](https://www.sportengland.org/news/activity-levels-see-partial-recovery-covid-19)

<sup>2</sup> [sportengland.org/news/childrens-activity-levels-recover-pre-pandemic-levels](https://www.sportengland.org/news/childrens-activity-levels-recover-pre-pandemic-levels)

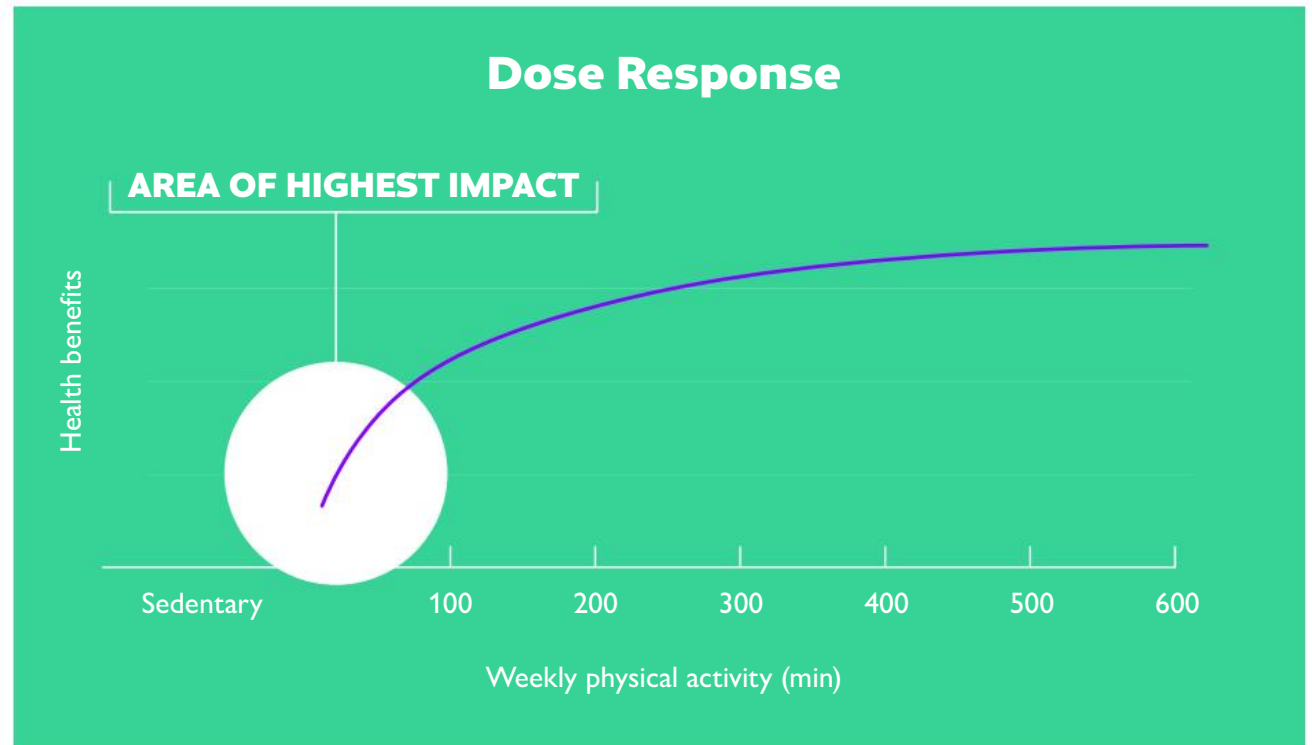


# Any movement is good for your health - the biggest impact is from doing something rather than nothing

## Some is good, more is better.

There are no absolute thresholds; benefits are achieved at levels both below and above the Chief Medical Officers' (CMO) guidelines. The more time spent being physically active, the greater the health benefits. Gains are especially significant for those currently active for fewer than 30 minutes per week as the improvements in health for each additional minute of physical activity will be proportionately greater.

We don't all need to be athletes or go to the gym to get more active. Building more activity into our daily lives by walking more, taking the stairs rather than the lift, doing housework and gardening are all great ways to move more.



# Every move counts

Being active has significant health benefits for hearts, bodies and minds, whether you are walking, cycling, dancing, doing sport or playing with your children (World Health Organisation).

How much time spent being active and the type of activity we do also matters. Aiming for a range of activities, including those that strengthen muscles and improve balance, will help us age well and more healthily.






# The health benefits of physical activity far outweigh the risks of being active

Physical activity can reduce your risk of major illnesses.

This includes coronary heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes and cancer and can lower your risk of early death by up to 30%.

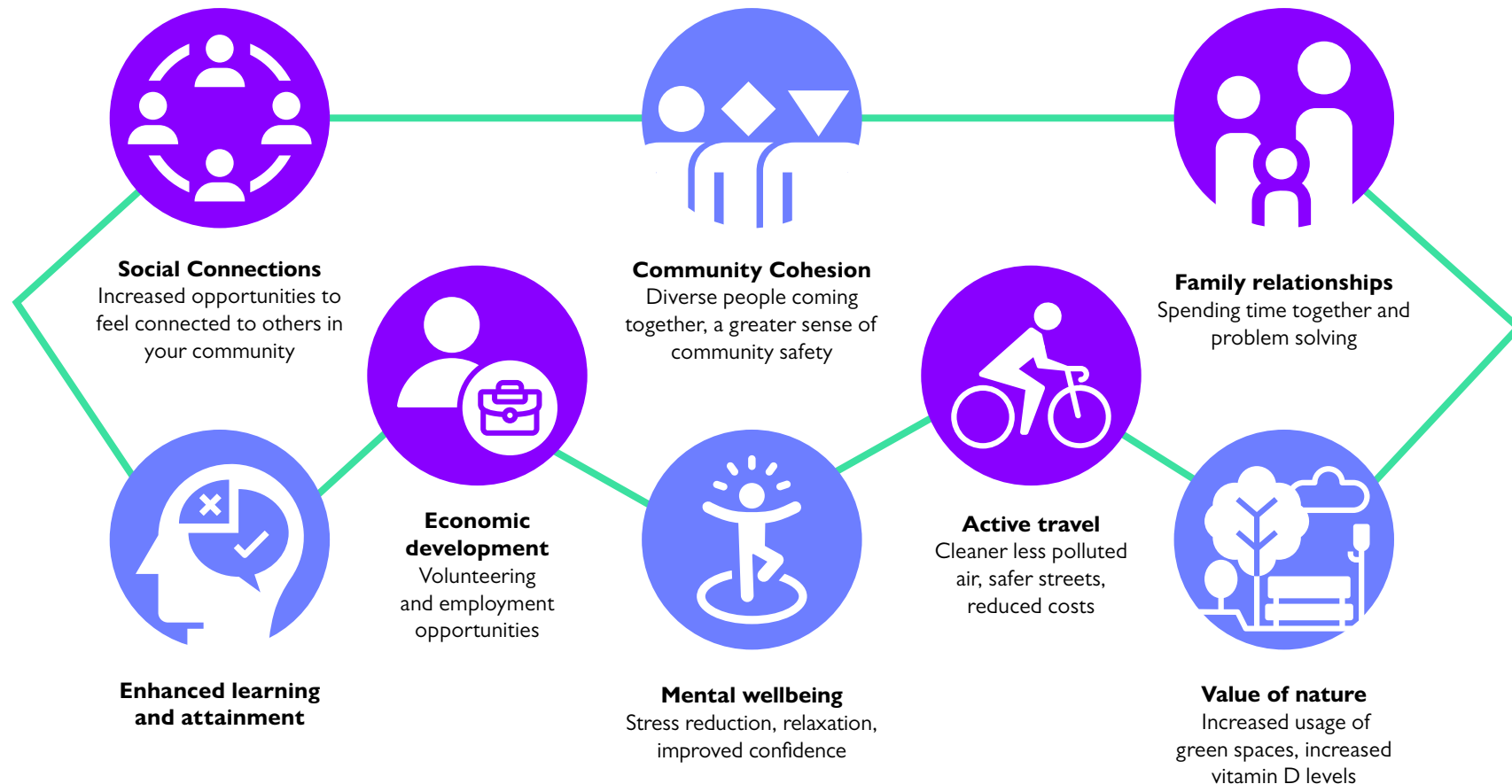
## Moderate or strong evidence for health benefit

Children	Adults	Older Adults
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bone Health</li> <li>Cognitive function</li> <li>CV fitness</li> <li>Muscle fitness</li> <li>Weight status</li> <li>Depression</li> </ul> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All-cause mortality</li> <li>Stroke and heart disease</li> <li>Hypertension</li> <li>Type 2 diabetes</li> <li>8 cancers</li> <li>Depression</li> <li>Cognitive function</li> <li>Dementia</li> <li>Quality of life</li> <li>Sleep</li> <li>Anxiety/depression</li> <li>Weight status</li> </ul> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Falls</li> <li>Frailty</li> <li>Physical function</li> </ul> 



# Physical activity isn't just about preventing illness

Physical activity provides numerous benefits to the individual and to their community. It builds:



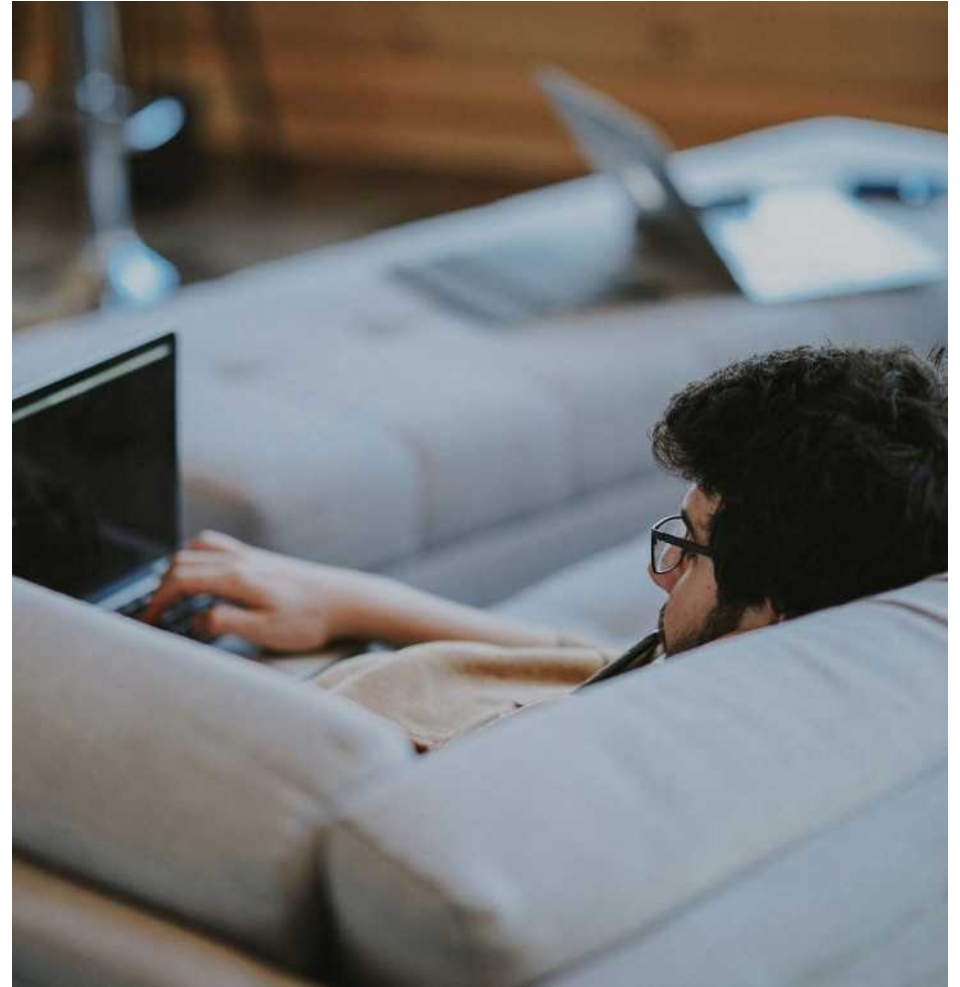
# The impact of sedentary behaviour

## What is sedentary behaviour?

Sedentary behaviour refers to a group of behaviours that occur whilst sitting or lying down while awake and typically require very low energy expenditure such as watching TV, using a computer, playing video games, sitting on the commute to work, and spending most of the day sitting at work. Many adults spend at least nine hours a day seated.

Sedentary behaviour is bad for our health even if we achieve the UK Chief Medical Officers' recommended amount of physical activity. Alongside their guidelines for recommended levels of physical activity, the UK Chief Medical Officers recommend minimising sedentary time and breaking up periods of inactivity – such as standing to take phone calls, standing on your commute, using the stairs rather than lifts, using standing desks at work, taking a break for a cuppa, going for a walk at lunchtime.

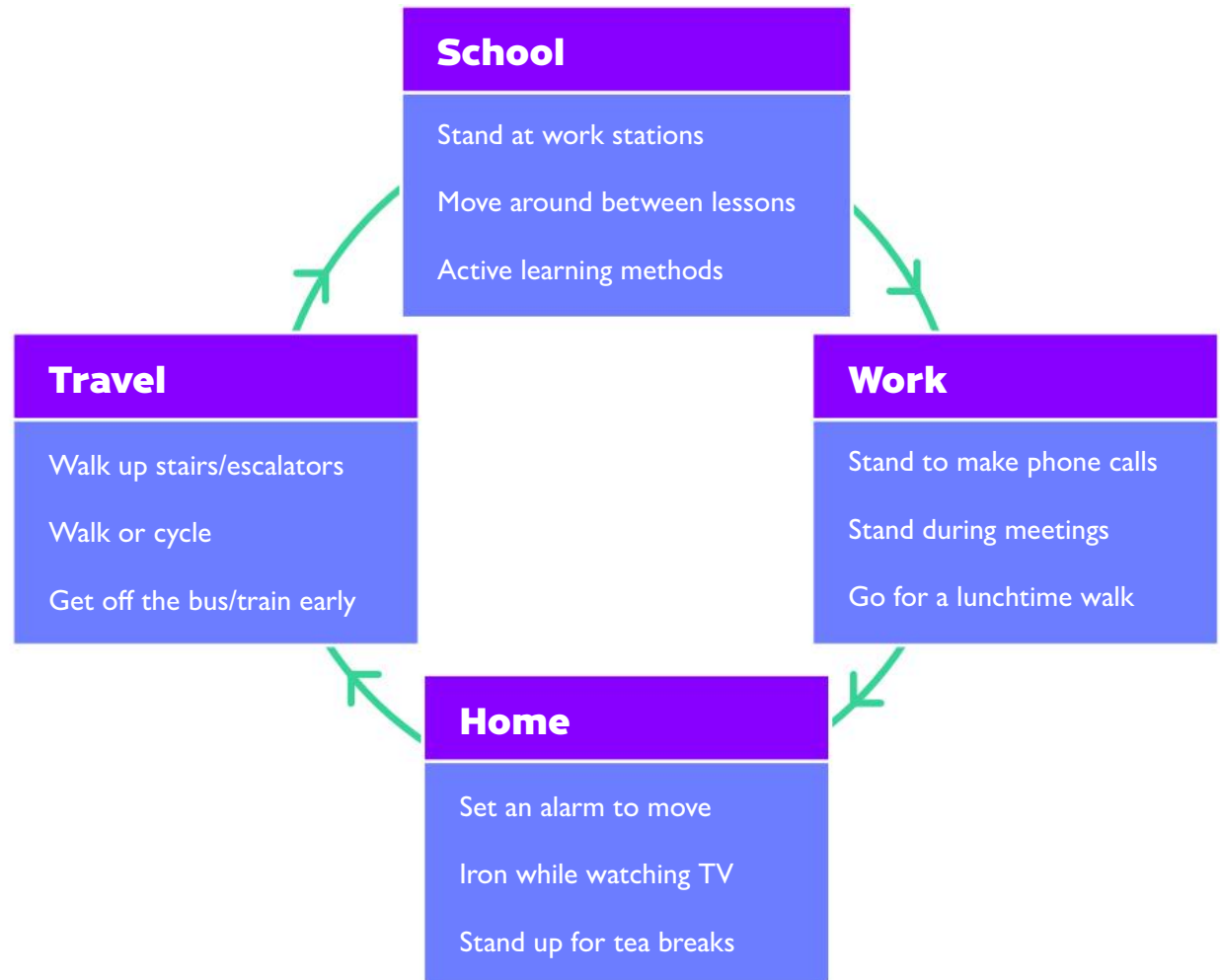
Sedentary behaviour damages health because of the way it affects circulation, breathing and lack of use of muscles and bones. Being inactive makes muscles and bones lose strength, increasing the risk of osteoporosis, falls and fractures.



**According to World Health Organisation Guidelines on Physical Activity and Sedentary Behaviour (2020), higher amounts of sedentary behaviour are associated with:**

- Increased all-cause mortality, cardiovascular disease mortality and cancer mortality and incidence of cardiovascular disease, cancer and type-2 diabetes in adults (18 to 64)
- Poorer fitness and cardio-metabolic fitness in children and adolescents (aged 5-17 years)
- Increased all-cause mortality, cardiovascular disease mortality and cancer mortality, and incidence of cardiovascular disease, cancer and incidence of type-2 diabetes in older adults (over 64).

**In short, we need to move more and be inactive less.**





## 5. Physical activity within the population

### How physically active are adults in Greenwich?

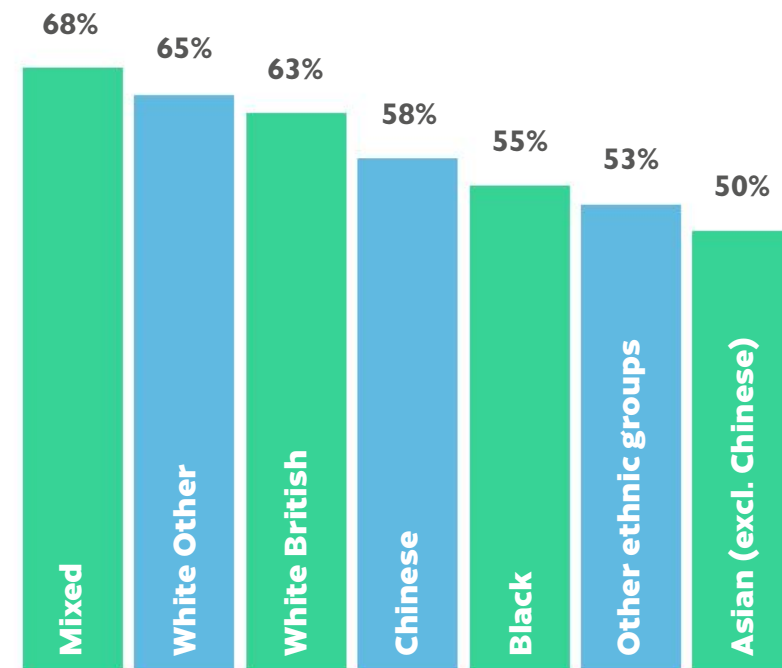
Local data identifies that some groups in the borough are more active than others. This led to specific target groups being identified in the 2019-2023 Greenwich Sport and Physical Activity Strategy.

These statistics presented here are taken from the Sport England Active Lives Survey and relate to Greenwich residents. The ethnicity data is taken from national data as this is not available at a local level. Our analysis has highlighted people on low-incomes, women, Black, Asian and ethnic minority communities, older adults, and those with a disability or long-term condition as having lower activity levels.

**There is an ongoing programme of work in place to reach these groups to support them to increase their activity levels.**

Limited participation in sport and physical activity is influenced by a complex range of factors in an individual's daily life.

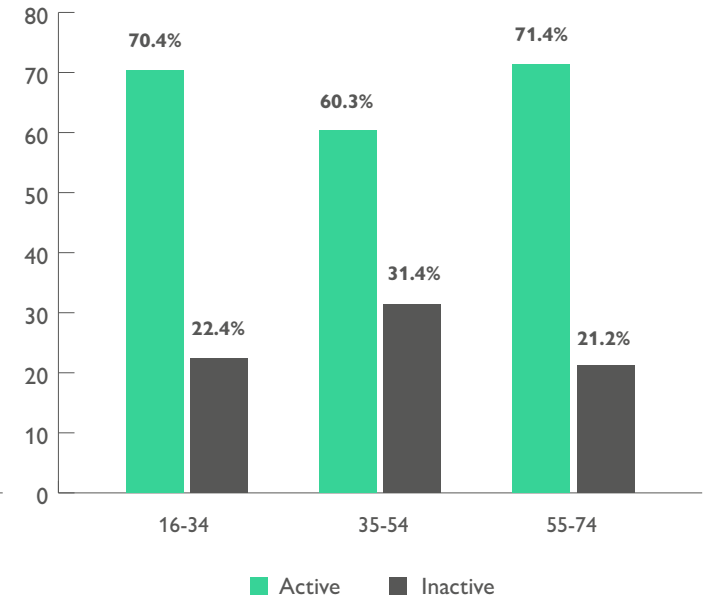
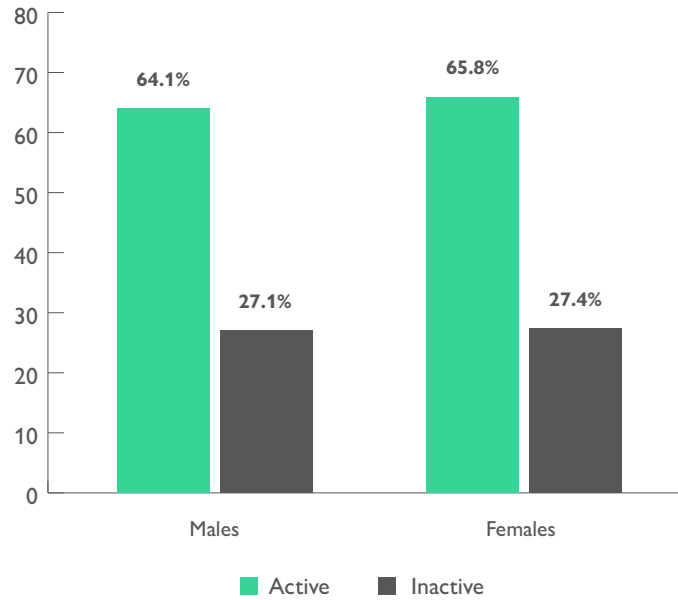
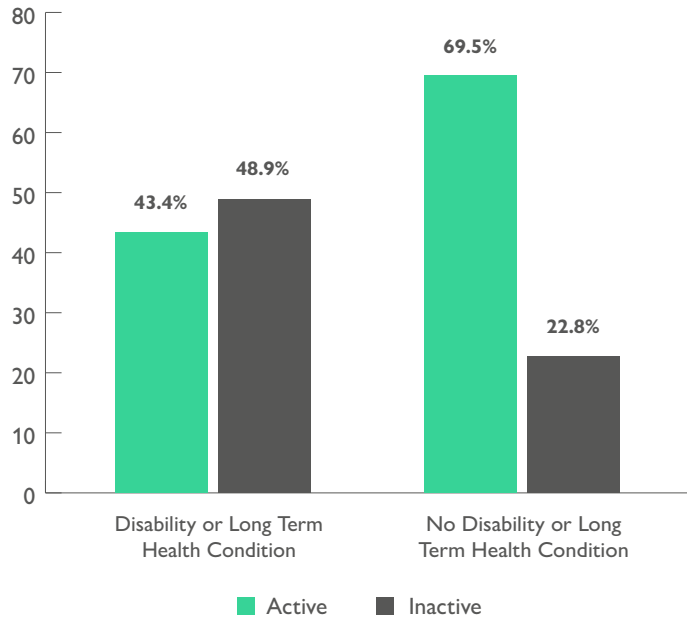
**Ethnicity:** The percentage of people reaching the CMO recommended amounts of activity per week differs between ethnic backgrounds.



**Disability or long-term health condition:** activity is less common for disabled people or those with a long-term health condition (43.4%) than those without (69.5%)

**Gender:** Men (64.1%) and women (65.8%) have very similar levels of activity in Greenwich. Likewise, for the proportion of inactive adults

**Age:** activity levels generally decrease with age with a larger drop off at 75 years and over (seen nationally and in previous years)



## Our understanding is limited by a lack of data

The level and quality of data in relation to participation by income level, gender, ethnicity and disability is limited at a national and local level. In reviewing the available data, it has not been possible to undertake a deeper dive into health inequalities for children, young people and adults.

For children and young people, the most recent Active Lives survey (2020-2021) had a very low number of participating schools due to the pandemic. A more recent survey has been completed and analysis will be available shortly.

For adults, for those years where a local boost to the Active

Lives survey was not included, the scope of the demographic data is very limited, with significant gaps especially around ethnicity, age and disability. The most recent more comprehensive data for Greenwich was for 2016/17.

Based on what national data is available through the Active Lives survey, we have modelled the Greenwich picture based on the demographic profile for 2021 and referenced findings from Sport England's *Sport for All* report in 2020 (however, this was based on 2018/19 pre-pandemic data). The trend data in this survey highlights areas where black, Asian and ethnic minority populations are under-represented and captures some of the barriers that black, Asian and ethnic minority populations face.

## 6. Factors affecting physical activity levels

Three main factors allow people to become more physically active. People need:

### Capability

- To be confident and be able to move their bodies to participate in a variety of activities
- To develop physical literacy and be confident that physical activity will not be harmful or cause injury, particularly for those who are not regularly active or disabled

### Opportunity

- The built environment to be safe e.g. good quality pavements, lighting and positive perceptions of safety
- To have access or be aware of local opportunities
- To have safe spaces, where residents are welcomed and not shamed for lower ability level or size
- To have the time and money to pay for or get to a session

### Motivation

- To want or need to be physically active; and this can be heavily influenced by weight stigma
- To be able to prioritise physical activity, even if dealing with other needs, such as housing and food costs
- To understand and place a high value on the benefits of physical activity

A coach reflecting on barriers for families -

***"They haven't got a garden so when trying to play games at home the space is limited; thinking about activities they can play indoors is a struggle, especially if the weather is not good. This demotivates them to want to work out. Also finding time to work out, being exhausted after a long day of work and looking after the children."***



# The built and social environment does not always allow us to be physically active

## Improved technology may have contributed to us developing a more sedentary lifestyle, both at work and at home.

The barriers to engaging in physical activity can be numerous and complex but it's clear that they include opportunity and accessibility. So, ensuring that we provide appropriate environments for physical activity is crucial.

If we improve built environments and open spaces to make healthier choices easier, then we can increase the opportunity for people to move more and be more physically active.

Environments that allow for better access to physical activity could encourage residents of all ages to move more. Although children and young people have access to more formal and structured physical activity through PE in schools, it is vital that opportunities are there to maintain their participation in physical activity in the transition from school to adulthood. School PE is only statutory for schoolchildren between the ages of 4 and 16.

## Local planning for health-promoting environments could include:

- Safer walking and cycling routes
- Green gyms
- Support for community groups whose activities are based on physical activity, such as gardening groups
- Well-maintained woodlands and green spaces, with facilities and appeal for multi-generational users
- Public toilets

The enforced lockdowns due to Covid-19 may have forced people to stay at home but also highlighted people's desire to be physically active. The use of parks and open spaces at the time and the popularity of online exercise sessions illustrated the importance of creating an accessible 'environment' in which people could be active.

An increased cost of living may have reduced access for some to organised physical activity, such as gym membership or swimming pool sessions.

# Case Study: Physical Activity in the Superzone

**The Thamesmead Superzone is a health improvement zone in the Thamesmead Moorings area in the east of the borough.**

A key element of the Superzone action plan is to develop safe places for families to play and be active, an ambition recognised by local stakeholders and Superzone partners including Peabody Housing Association, local schools and community organisations.

Waterways Children's Centre and Hawksmoor Youth Club are two examples of settings in the zone committed to supporting local families. Both settings are important hubs providing services and support for children and families. Waterways Children's Centre offers wraparound support for early years children, providing childcare and services for the whole family, including play and learning sessions, antenatal and postnatal health care, parenting support, swimming, keep fit, pilates for parents, and adult education. Each of their programmes has a key focus on physical activity and food, with a particular emphasis on all play for children being outdoors – all day and in all weather.

Hawksmoor Youth club, located in the heart of Thamesmead is a well-known focal point for residents, regularly hosting community events and is home to Young-Greenwich youth

services providing opportunities for all 8–19-year olds and extended to 25 years old with SEND. It is a safe place for young people to meet new friends, learn new skills, take part in physical activities within Thamesmead's green and blue spaces, learn about a healthy lifestyle, and fulfil their potential. They offer a holistic roster of regularly changing sports, dance, gymnastics and outdoor physical activity. With physical health being one of the four pillars of youth service, Hawksmoor work closely with local residents groups, schools and sports facilities to complement the active opportunities offered elsewhere in the Moorings area.



# Factors that might influence people's physical activity

## Ethnicity

Key findings from the data and Sport for All report highlight under-representation of Black, Asian and ethnic minority populations in low cost, accessible physical activities such as walking for leisure, active travel, cycling and swimming – all activities that are at the forefront of what is promoted locally as ways for people to become more active and reducing sedentary behaviour. Swimming is particularly effective in the management of many long-term conditions as it supports increased cardio-vascular action combined with low muscular-skeletal impact.

## Religious practice

Some religions have requirements and norms regarding dress, and gender segregation, which may impact on participation levels and access. These requirements and norms need to be understood and considered when thinking about equitable access for all to physical activity opportunities.

## Children and Young People who have special educational needs or disability (SEND)

Research has shown that students with special educational needs and disabilities sometimes disengage from PE due to a range of issues, many caused by what is often a fast-paced

and competitive environment. A physical and / or learning disability, for example, can lead to children feeling excluded in a context where winning is more important than taking part, and equipment and activities may not be accessible.

## Social isolation

A lack of social networks might reduce people's confidence to take up an activity where they may not know anyone. However, “those who are active are less likely to feel lonely than those who are fairly active, who in turn are less likely to feel lonely than those who are inactive. Many forms of sport and physical activity include a social element, so this is perhaps not surprising” (Sport England Active Lives Survey 2021)

## Cost of living

There is a risk that paying for sports sessions, gym memberships and coaching qualifications could fall victim to the rising cost of living, as people reassess their priorities when money is tight. When surveyed in 2018, 22% of secondary-aged pupils in Royal Greenwich said that they do not attend a sports/physical activity club because of cost (Greenwich SHEU Survey, 2018).

# 7. Getting people moving

Participation in physical activity is important for health and wellbeing throughout life.

The UK Chief Medical Officers' guidelines over the life course are:

[gov.uk/government/publications/physical-activity-guidelines-pregnancy-and-after-childbirth](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/physical-activity-guidelines-pregnancy-and-after-childbirth)

[gov.uk/government/publications/physical-activity-guidelines-pregnancy-and-after-childbirth](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/physical-activity-guidelines-pregnancy-and-after-childbirth)

## Pregnancy

### Physical activity for pregnant women

Helps to control weight gain

Helps reduce high blood pressure problems

Helps to prevent diabetes of pregnancy

Improves fitness

Improves sleep

Improves mood

**Not active?**  
Start gradually

**Already active?**  
Keep going

Throughout pregnancy aim for at least

# 150

minutes of moderate intensity activity every week

**Out and about**

**Leisure**

Do muscle strengthening activities twice a week

Every activity counts, every minute counts, more is better

**No evidence of harm**

Listen to your body and adapt

**Don't bump the bump**

UK Chief Medical Officers' Physical Activity Guidelines, 2019

## Post-natal

### Physical activity for women after childbirth (birth to 12 months)

Time for yourself - reduces worries and depression

Helps to control weight and return to pre-pregnancy weight

Improves tummy muscle tone and strength

Improves fitness

Improves mood

Improves sleep

**Not active?**  
Start gradually

**Active before?**  
Restart gradually

aim for at least

# 150

minutes of moderate intensity activity every week

**Out and about**

**Leisure**

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

Build back up to muscle strengthening activities twice a week

**Home**

It's safe to be active. No evidence of harm for post partum women

Depending on your delivery listen to your body and start gently

**You can be active while breastfeeding**

UK Chief Medical Officers' Physical Activity Guidelines, 2019





# Birth to 5 Years

## Physical activity for early years (birth – 5 years)

Active children are healthy, happy,  
school ready and sleep better



BUILDS  
RELATIONSHIPS  
& SOCIAL SKILLS



MAINTAINS  
HEALTH &  
WEIGHT



CONTRIBUTES TO  
BRAIN DEVELOPMENT  
& LEARNING



IMPROVES  
SLEEP



DEVELOPS  
MUSCLES  
& BONES



ENCOURAGES  
MOVEMENT  
& CO-ORDINATION

### Every movement counts

Aim for at least  
**180**  
Minutes  
per day  
for children 1-5 years



**Under-1s**  
at least  
30 minutes  
across the day



### Get Strong. Move More. Break up inactivity

UK Chief Medical Officers' Physical Activity Guidelines, 2019



# Children and Young People

## Physical activity for children and young people (5–18 Years)

BUILDS CONFIDENCE & SOCIAL SKILLS	MAINTAINS HEALTHY WEIGHT
DEVELOPS CO-ORDINATION	STRENGTHENS MUSCLES & BONES
IMPROVES CONCENTRATION & LEARNING	IMPROVES SLEEP
IMPROVES HEALTH & FITNESS	MAKES YOU FEEL GOOD

### Be physically active

Spread activity throughout the day

Aim for an average of at least **60** minutes per day across week

All activities should make you breathe faster & feel warmer

PLAY	RUN/WALK	BIKE	ACTIVETRAVEL
SWIM	SKATE	SPORT	PE
SKIP	CLIMB	WORKOUT	DANCE

Activities to develop movement skills, and muscle and bone strength **ACROSS WEEK**

INACTIVITY

### Get strong

### Move more

Find ways to help all children and young people accumulate an average of at least 60 minutes physical activity per day across the week

UK Chief Medical Officers' Physical Activity Guidelines, 2019

[gov.uk/government/publications/physical-activity-guidelines-children-and-young-people-5-to-18-years](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/physical-activity-guidelines-children-and-young-people-5-to-18-years)

# Disabled Children and Disabled Young People

## Physical Activity for Disabled Children and Disabled Young People

### Getting and staying active is about

Equality	Inclusivity	Finding what's fun	Exploring what activities make you feel good
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### Benefits of physical activity



### How much physical activity should I do?

<p>When starting build up slowly</p> <p>Ask: Can you do this today?</p> <p>Do <b>bitesize chunks</b> of physical activity throughout the day</p>	<p>For good health benefits do <b>20 mins</b> of physical activity per day</p>	<p>Do <b>challenging but manageable</b> strength and balance activities 3 times per week</p> <p>Small amounts of physical activity are good for you as well</p>
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UK Chief Medical Officers' Physical Activity Guidelines for Disabled Children and Disabled Young People 2022. This infographic was co-produced with disabled children, disabled young people, parents and carers.

[gov.uk/government/publications/physical-activity-guidelines-disabled-children-and-disabled-young-people](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/physical-activity-guidelines-disabled-children-and-disabled-young-people)

# Adults and Older Adults

## Physical activity for adults and older adults

Benefits health	Reduces your chance of	Type II Diabetes	-40%
Improves sleep		Cardiovascular disease	-35%
Maintains healthy weight		Falls, depression etc.	-30%
Manages stress		Joint and back pain	-25%
Improves quality of life		Cancers (colon and breast)	-20%
Some is good, more is better		Make a start today: it's never too late	Every minute counts

### Be active

at least **150** minutes moderate intensity per week  
Increased breathing, able to talk

OR

at least **75** minutes vigorous intensity per week  
breathing fast, difficulty talking

or a combination of both

**Build strength**  
to keep muscles, bones and joints strong  
on at least **2** days a week

**Minimise sedentary time**  
Break up periods of inactivity

**Improve balance**  
For older adults, to reduce the chance of frailty and falls  
2 days a week

Activities: Swim, Brisk walk, Cycle, Gym, Yoga, Carry heavy bags, Stairs, Sport, Bowls, Tai Chi, Dance

UK Chief Medical Officers' Physical Activity Guidelines 2019

[gov.uk/government/publications/physical-activity-guidelines-adults-and-older-adults](http://gov.uk/government/publications/physical-activity-guidelines-adults-and-older-adults)

# Disabled Adults

## Physical Activity for Disabled Adults

Make it a daily habit

**Disabled adults**

Physical activity makes you feel good  
Give things a go and enjoy what you do

Being inactive is harmful to health

Don't be still for too long  
Even a little movement is better than nothing

Improves mental health and quality of life

Makes maintaining a healthy weight easier

Makes daily tasks easier and increases independence

Strengthens muscles and bones

Improves fitness

Improves mobility and balance

Helps to prevent chronic disease

Creates opportunities to meet new people and feel part of the community

Do strength and balance activities on at least two days per week

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

Remember the talk test:  
Can talk, but not sing = moderate intensity activity  
Difficulty talking without pausing = vigorous intensity activity

UK Chief Medical Officers' Physical Activity Guidelines, 2019

[gov.uk/government/publications/physical-activity-guidelines-disabled-adults](http://gov.uk/government/publications/physical-activity-guidelines-disabled-adults)

# Physical Activity throughout life

## People of all ages and abilities can take part in physical activity

**Physical activity is often confused with physical exercise.**

- Exercise is a specific and organised form of physical activity – to maintain or improve one or more aspect of physical fitness.
- Physical activity involves bodily movement as part of any aspect of daily life e.g., walking to and from school or work, or taking the stairs instead of a lift or escalators.

**Throughout the course of our lives, physical activity can take place in a variety of ways and in formal or informal settings.**



## Early Years

Physical play in early years is any type of game or activity that gets children moving around and expending energy. Physical play is valuable and necessary in the early years as children need to develop both their fine motor skills and gross motor skills. To do this, children need to regularly practice a range of physical movements, both big and small! This can include sports where the child uses their whole body to move around, like running or hopscotch, but it also includes play that only uses smaller physical movements and specific muscle groups or body parts, like tummy time (for babies), Finger Gym Activities or Cutting Skill Activities.

**Play is very important** to a child's development. It is an integral part of a child's learning journey from birth through childhood and into adulthood because it helps to develop language skills, cognitive skills, emotions, creativity and social skills. Formal play can take place in the home, nursery or childcare setting but it's also important to remember the value of informal play in helping young children to be physically active.



## Children and Young People

Children of school age may be physically active in both formal and informal settings. It is important to allow children of all ages to access informal settings for physical activity e.g. parks, playgrounds, opportunities for active travel, and lots of everyday activities that can take place at home (such as playing active games, helping with housework and gardening) as this may help the continued development of language, cognitive and social skills, emotional wellbeing and creativity. Alongside these informal opportunities for physical activity, it is important for children and young people to have access to formal opportunities such as school PE and sports. Being physically active in a variety of ways gives children and young people the confidence, ability and understanding to continue to make physical activity a part of their lives as they move into adulthood.



## Adults and Older Adults

Playing sports and using the gym are great ways to take part in physical exercise but adults of all ages can benefit from being physically active in more informal settings such as dancing, leisure walks, active travel, DIY/housework and gardening. Keeping physically active as an adult is important for maintaining cardiovascular health, bone health, strength and balance, and plays a crucial role in healthy ageing. Being physically active also has a positive effect on mental health and wellbeing and can aid recovery from illness. National physical activity strategies such as Everybody Active Every Day have highlighted the important role that GPs and practice nurses have in recommending and referring people into physical activity.



# Case Study: Netball at Shooters Hill Sixth Form College

**Charlotte, 35, lives in Greenwich and started going to the weekly Pay and Play netball sessions at Shooters Hill Sixth Form College.**

Before going to the sessions, she did not know very much about the game and did not know many people in her local community.

“I was a little lost, post-Covid, and wanted to expand my friends and connections within my community.”

We asked Charlotte some questions about the benefits she felt.....

**Were you physically active before taking part in this programme? Completing 150 minutes of moderate exercise a week/75 minutes of vigorous activity?**

“I did running, cycling and walking. Just nothing with people, which netball facilitates. The social connection I get from playing netball far outweighs the physical benefits. During the session we laugh and joke about our success and disappointments on the court.”

**What did you like or dislike about the programme?**

“I continue to attend regularly and am getting to know even more people. I’ve managed to join the local netball team and play regularly with them as well now. I was always a little

nervous about getting injured and some members did pick up some injuries. However, the team is a great support group and we step up and support each other. When I was injured once, all the girls send me texts, to check in how I was, and this made me feel very positive. I’m playing netball regularly now, throughout the week, and I really love the social side of the game.”

**Has anything prevented you from taking part?**

“Travel. It’s difficult to get back from work sometimes but then I remember that the girls are waiting for me to get involved. That gives me the motivation to get off the sofa and join them.”

In the future, Charlotte would like more opportunities for women to play netball or other sports within the community. She would recommend that people go and try different activities until they find the one which gets them off the sofa and moving the most. Finally, Charlotte says, “I love netball and am grateful for the opportunities it’s given me to improve my social wellbeing.”





# Case Study: The Back In Swimming programme

**Phillip, 74, was an avid swimmer in his younger days but unfortunately, due to the onset of Parkinson's and a lack of help, he stopped swimming and barely exercised.**

He is part of a supported living service in Greenwich and he and his group took part in the Black and Ethnic Minority swimming sessions at Shooters Hill Sixth Form College.

We asked him about the physical benefits of the activity he is taking in part in.

**Were you physically active before taking part in this programme? Completing 150 minutes of moderate exercise a week/75 minutes of vigorous activity?**

“No - I just used to do stretching exercises with my group, which did help in terms of mobility but was nothing that would get me breathing heavily or moving about.”

**What benefits are you getting from taking part in the programme?**

“Due to my Parkinson's, my shoulders would freeze up and I could barely get my arms above my head. After a few weeks of swimming, the pain has been eased as well as my mobility being better, and I can move my arms a bit more freely.”

**Has anything prevented you from taking part?**

“No - nothing has stopped me from coming to the session! I've started to investigate swimming at the local pool now as it's really helped with my physical and mental health.”

**We then asked about his overall experience and feedback and if anything could change...**

Phillip most definitely enjoyed the experience of classes, as well as the socialising aspect of them. He was grateful for the opportunity to be swimming again. Because of his Parkinson's, he finds it hard to go out and exercise unless he receives help. So, if there was an opportunity to do something other than swimming, then he would like to be able to use the gym with the help of a personal trainer.



# Case Study: Table Tennis at the Waterfront Leisure Centre

Dolma, aged 45 and from Thamesmead, showed huge interest in attending the table tennis sessions at the Waterfront. She had played table tennis a lot in the past and saw this as a great opportunity to play something she loved, get even healthier and socialise with people from different backgrounds.

She said, “I honestly get so happy when I meet new people and they are just having a great time, no matter the age or skill set.”

After she had been attending the sessions regularly, we asked her more questions about the physical benefits of the activity she was taking in part in.

**Were you physically active before taking part in this programme? Were you completing 150 minutes or more of moderate exercise/75 minutes of vigorous activity a week?**

“Yes, I have been playing a lot of table tennis over the couple of years but never joined a club. I joined a club last year in order to get fitter, as I’d got bored of the gym! The Waterfront sessions are very relaxed and a great atmosphere. Regardless of age or ability we all learn to improve our skills in table tennis.”

**What benefits are you getting from taking part in the programme?**

“I have always seen an improvement in health when playing table tennis. At the Waterfront we end up playing for at least three hours, so you can imagine the amount we sweat! My social life improves every time and, most importantly, during and after the session I notice my stress is significantly reduced.”

**Has anything prevented you from taking part?**

“No. I do prioritise playing games to keep my rating up.”

**We then asked about her overall experience and feedback and if anything could change...**

“At my club and usually wherever I play, we all tend to use Joola tables, as they are high quality and makes playing so much easier and fun. It's quite hard for us to settle in using other tables. The turnout is amazing here and the range of people you meet is amazing. There's never been a problem between us. In the past, I have also taken part in badminton but table tennis seems to be the sport for me!”



# Getting people moving - national physical activity campaigns

People get active in different ways so it's important for everyone to find what works best for them. Every little bit of activity helps and adds up. There are many campaigns and apps to support people in being physically active. Some examples include:

## [We Are Undefeatable](#)

A national movement supporting people with a range of long-term health conditions to find ways to be active that work with their conditions, not against them.



## [Healthier Families \(formerly known as Change4Life\)](#)

Healthier Families promotes easy ways to eat well and move more



## [Couch to 5k and London Sport](#)

NHS app to support adults in taking up running.



## [This Girl Can](#)

This Girl Can celebrates active women who are doing their thing no matter how they do it, how they look or even how sweaty they get.



## [Daily Mile](#)

The Daily Mile is a social physical activity, with children running, jogging or wheeling— at their own pace – in the fresh air with friends. Children can occasionally walk to catch their breath, if necessary, but should aim to run, jog or wheel for the full 15 minutes.



# Getting people moving in the Royal Borough of Greenwich

As well as national support to be physically active there are lots of local programmes that residents can access in Greenwich, including:

## Pre- and Post-Natal

There are pre- and post-natal exercise sessions held at selected Greenwich Children's Centres, including: pilates, dance fit, the Mason Mile, and a buggy run in Greenwich Park

## Holiday Food and Fun (HAF Programme)

Holiday provision for school-aged children from reception to year 11, who receive benefits-related free school meals. The HAF supports children to eat healthily and be active during the school holidays

## XPLORE

XPLORE is a family-based weight management service delivered by Better to support children and young people aged over 4 years old on referral. The 12-month programme provides families with nutritional education, support around behaviour change and physical activity.

*"We have run a consistent session each week at times families can join in and attend. We have made the sessions fun and energetic, so the families want to come back each week and we keep regular contact with the families though the week. We have adapted our sessions to suit each family's needs and tried to keep each week different, so families don't get bored and want to return. I hope that the project has given families the confidence to do more exercise outside of our program."*

HAF/Families Fund  
Family activity coach

## STARS

STARS is TfL's accreditation scheme for London schools and nurseries. STARS inspires young Londoners to travel to school sustainably, actively, responsibly and safely by championing walking, scooting and cycling. STARS schools can make a real difference to our city and support the Mayor's vision for Healthy Streets.

## Street Tag

Street Tag is a free child and family-friendly mobile phone app that uses virtual tags to encourage schools, communities and families to become more physically active and boost mental health.

## Physical Activity in School

Physical Education (PE) is a compulsory subject in schools, for children aged 4 to 16. Guidance from the DfE recommends that pupils should be provided with a minimum of 2 hours of curricular PE a week, although how schools organise that is up to the individual setting. In addition to PE, schools try to ensure that the school day is as physically active as possible, including opportunities for active travel, breaktimes and before/after school clubs.

## Greenwich Get Active

Greenwich's one stop shop for all things physical activity and sport around the borough.

## Cycling

Royal Greenwich has a network of [cycle routes](#) and quiet ways with new routes being developed where TfL investment permits. There are 440 secure cycle parking spaces on housing estates and 48 on-street hangars. Free [Bikeability](#) cycling lessons are available across the borough.

## Parkrun

Free, weekly community events all around the world for children and adults who want to take part by walking, jogging or running a distance of 5k. These take place in local parks and open spaces. Greenwich currently has three adult Parkruns and one junior Parkrun.

## Greenwich Leisure Ltd (GLL) sports development programme

There are over 40 weekly sessions happening across the borough. The programme uses a range of leisure centres, community centres and local parks and open spaces to deliver sessions at low or no costs.

## Give it a Go

This targets community groups and inactive residents within proximity to leisure centres, providing free access to all exercise classes and sport activities for adults for 6 weeks.



## Fun and fitness

Fun and fitness activities are group exercises and sporting opportunities tailored to the needs of people with a learning disability. Activity Trackers are also being provided to help people keep a track of their progress.

## Healthwise

Healthwise is a 12-week programme that enables individuals with an established long-term condition and/or a chronic disease, or who are at high risk of developing diabetes or cardiovascular disease, to improve their health and wellbeing by increasing their personal level of physical activity. Healthwise is a long-established GP referral programme, delivered by Better.

## Health Walks

A healthy walks scheme run by Charlton Athletic Community Trust (CACT) which connects local residents with a wide range of walking opportunities within the borough of Greenwich, to improve physical and mental health and wellbeing Activity Hub

## Walking Football

Local groups run by CACT are aimed at men aged 50+. It is a non-contact version of the game, which helps to maintain healthy lifestyles whilst also creating a social atmosphere that people from all walks of life can enjoy.

***“It is a lot easier for me to move around and transfer from my wheelchair. I can walk 1500 meters now without a walking aid. I feel more motivated, stronger and can do more housework with less help from my carers”.***

Female, aged 31

***“Healthwise has given me the confidence to use the gym which I never did before, I have never even owned a pair of trainers. I am very happy with the service, my daughters are very happy and surprised that I am continuing and enjoying my exercise. I can now walk for 20 minutes without stopping on the treadmill.”***

Female, aged 72

## 8. Recommendations from this Report

This report has set out the importance of physical activity and its impact on health and wellbeing. To further raise the profile of physical activity in the Royal Borough of Greenwich, I would like to make the following recommendations:

### Insight and understanding

1. Fund a boost to the 'Active Lives' survey to improve the quality and completeness of local data, including providing a better understanding of the inequalities in physical activity within our communities
2. Undertake analysis in early 2023 on the 'Active Lives Child and Young People Survey' and identify local priorities and potential responses / actions

### Communicating and working with the population

3. Engage and work with under-represented populations to co-design effective communications and social marketing to increase participation, identifying and addressing barriers to participation that the Council and physical activity providers can address locally
4. Undertake a refresh of the 'Greenwich Get Active' (GGA) digital platform, working with physical activity providers to maximise engagement with GGA and to keep messaging current and relevant
5. Ensuring that the GGA digital platform links effectively to regional and national campaigns and the new Greenwich Community Directory



## Utilising existing interventions and developing and improving services where needed

6. Ensure we are fully utilising national and regional social marketing, such as 'We Are Undefeatable' and 'This Girl Can', to support participation
7. As physical activity services are re-commissioned, act on health inequalities data and best evidence of impact to target services at populations facing the biggest barriers to being active, to support inactive people into some activity



## Influencing and supporting policy makers and professionals

8. Produce guidance for employers on reducing sedentary behaviour and supporting staff to be more active (in line with existing similar guidance on alcohol and healthy food)
9. As the council's 'Local Plan' is developed, ensure a strong focus on maintaining and extending open and green space, safe walking and cycling routes, playground provision and legibility/wayfinding, including guidance to involve residents in co-designing smaller scale environmental improvements
10. Continue to support Primary Care and wider health and care professionals to build skills and knowledge to recommend and refer to physical activity opportunities and to give effective advice on the importance of physical activity to health and wellbeing
11. In partnership with physical activity providers, ensure that there are relevant training opportunities in place, particularly in relation to healthy ageing and promoting activity in older people, across the system

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## Aideen Silke

Head of Live Well

## Alain Lodge

Senior Public Health Manager  
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## Alison Willows

Healthy Workplace Programme  
Manager

## Catherine Hannafin

Senior Public Health Manager  
(Healthy Weight)

## Christina Milette

Public Health Programme Manager  
(Determinants)

## Claire Bennett

Senior Public Health Manager  
(Food and Health)

## Jane Connor

Acting Assistant Director of Public  
Health

## Louise Barnett

Health Improvement Specialist  
(Physical Activity)

## Michele Holmes

Senior Public Health Manager  
(School-Aged Health and Wellbeing)

## Nicola Nzuzza

Health Improvement Specialist  
(Food & Health)

## Paul Farthing

Partnerships and Programme Officer

## Rebecca Layng

Public Health Programme Manager  
– Population Engagement and  
Communications

## Sally Church

Senior Public Health Manager  
(Knowledge and Intelligence)

## Stephanie Turner

Sport Development Officer