

# Trying to change behaviour through working with less active communities Insight

[activederbyshire.org.uk](http://activederbyshire.org.uk)

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# The strategies recognised a need to work across the system to get people active

*“To bring about major change, we need a transformative, co-ordinated action across a wide variety of sectors, many outside the sport and physical activity sector”*

Notts: Getting Active Together 2017-2021

*“**Systems** are composed of multiple components of different types, both tangible and intangible. They include, for example, people, resources and services, as well as relationships, values, and perceptions. Systems exist in an environment, have boundaries, exhibit behaviours, and are made up of both interdependent and connected parts, causes and effects”*

Source: Lankelly Chase/NPC, 2015

We have been building our experience of working alongside partners to try to take a systems-based approach to addressing inactivity that builds on strengths and is led by insight.

Across Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire this work has taken many forms and has been aimed at building a better understanding of:

- The lived experience of local residents
- The strengths (assets) of the local neighbourhoods and how to mobilise them
- The state of the system ‘at play’ in neighbourhoods that is making inactivity a more common experience for people within them
- The experience of working in a way that enables a strengths-based, systems-led approach to creating change

# Social outcomes like getting people active are complex



Outcomes are created by many different factors interacting in complex ways

The factors which produce outcomes interact in ever-changing ways

The factors which produce an outcome, and the experience of that outcome, is different for each person

The systems which produce outcomes are beyond the control of any of the actors in that system

# Context to the neighbourhoods

## Identification of many of the neighbourhoods was based on:

- High inactivity levels
- Higher levels of deprivation (based on IMD scores)
- A greater proportion of people from lower socio-economic groups (NS SeC 6-8)
- Lower healthy life expectancy

## Other factors (not part of the selection process) common to the neighbourhoods

- Predominantly urban
- Predominantly White British populations (except Sinfin and St Ann's)
- Limiting illness and disability appears to be surprisingly prevalent, given the younger age profile of the urban areas

## But each of these neighbourhoods is unique

- The places themselves
- Their culture and history
- The background to the work
- The partners involved

## Petersham: Part 1 - Building strong triangles between community and wider system



Community builder begins connecting with the community to understand place and assets



Community builder begins to identify existing and potential community leaders



Strong relationship triangles begin to form between the Community Builder and community leaders



Community builder begins connecting with partners in the community facing layer of the system already working within the community



Active relationship building leads to formation of a strong relationship triangle and cross organisational partnership working begins



Community builder becomes the key connection between the community and the wider system



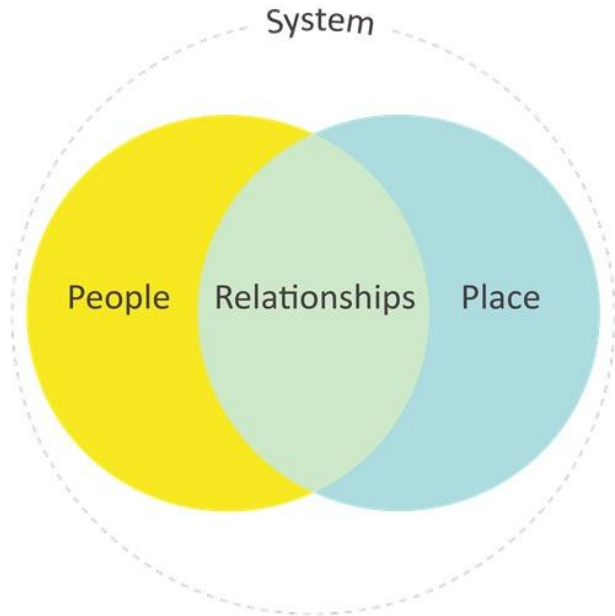
Two way conversation between the community and the system to understand needs and wants



Community and system begin working together to enable community driven activity

# Example journey of the work

# Four lenses for analysing resident's voice



**Impact on physical activity** – There is a brief summary of the potential impact of these findings on physical activity behaviour

- **People** – Identifies themes of findings from residents' voice from across these neighbourhoods about what it's like living and trying to be active there.
- **Place** – Identifies findings within these themes that help understand resident's perceptions on the state of the local neighborhood and its places, spaces and opportunities to be active.
- **Relationships** – Explores findings around how people relate with each other and to the places they live, along with perceptions about the local organisations that might be offering support.
- **System** – A short exploration of how these findings may have implications for the system in these neighbourhoods.

# What we've heard and found in the neighbourhoods

## Patterns that are emerging...

*"People have had their confidence knocked so many times they just believe it now. They believe that what they have is all there is for them, years and generations of unemployment and being classed as the lower end of society not knowing what else there is"*

Poor neighbourhood environments inhibit physical activity

**Feeling unsafe in the neighbourhood**

**Managing complex lives**

**Limited infrastructure directly in the neighbourhoods**

Limited local opportunities

Poor health perceived to get in the way

Different communities within a neighbourhood

It's hard to break social norms...

Enabling greater social connections

*"the area is neglected, run down and dirty"... "the council don't really give a shit"*

*"These young people have nothing, they are forgotten about"*

*"People become their disability or health problem, it's the ailment or deprivation that defines them"*

*"It is impossible to know about things going on in this place because the advertisement of activities is so poor"*

*"Geographically it's an electoral ward not a place. Separate areas that don't mix, Breadsall, Derwent Heights and top and bottom of the hill"*

This helps us to better understand what might **need to change**, what **strengths** there are to **build upon**, and what work might be required **across the system to support this**

# Feeling unsafe in the neighbourhood

## People

- **Behaviour of others:** Perceptions or reality, either way it has an impact. Ranges from minor problem behaviour (generally youths hanging around), to anti-social behaviour, crime and intimidation.
- **Drug and alcohol** use and drug dealing in public spaces is prevalent and blatant
- Theft, burglary and other **crime** appears to be high
- Examples of residents now accepting these behaviours as **the norm**

## Place

- Residents' feel that neighbourhood has a **poor reputation**
- **Visible mess:** Drug paraphernalia, broken glass, rubbish, dog fouling and fly tipping in public spaces is the most commonly voiced concern from all ages
- **Broken equipment,** vandalism, graffiti common
- **Poor street lighting** evident (often not replaced following vandalism)
- Uncontrolled dogs

## Relationships

- Examples of residents' **not reporting crime** for fear of reprisal
- **Level of connectedness** within the community possibly impacts on levels of fear – where residents know fewer people locally, they appear to be more fearful
- A sense that sections of the community **inflict crime** on the community - intimidation, theft, burglary. At worst, gang culture evident
- **Lack of tolerance and understanding** of need between different sections of the community, i.e. young people nearly always seen as the problem
- Older children hanging out at assets and intimidating younger children

## System

- Lack of visible **police presence**
- Lack of **things to do** to divert young people away from problem behaviours
- **Transient social housing** residents – feelings that people are “dumped” in neighbourhoods bringing behavioural problems
- **Negative media** fuelling safety concerns, i.e. bad news spreads fast
- **Continue building connectivity** with Housing associations, Police, Safer Neighbourhoods Teams, Police and Crime Commissioner, street cleaning/maintenance management, parks and green spaces teams etc

## Impact on Physical Activity

- Consciousness of need to adjust behaviour to 'stay safe':
  - Won't go to certain places (e.g. parks) even during the day
  - Won't let children play out
- Impacts on Capability, Opportunity, Motivation to be active
- Won't go out at night



# Managing complex lives

## People

- Often managing multiple disadvantages such as poverty, caring and poor health and **don't have bandwidth to think about physical activity**
- **Burden of caring** - mindset focused solely on caring responsibilities and unable to think beyond this
- **Wide range of residents needing care**: children (some with disabilities), grandchildren, partners with health conditions, older family members
- **Scarcity of income brings stress** – managing multiple part-time jobs or long hours or worklessness - all front of mind

## Place

- A high proportion of residents are **managing multiple disadvantages**: “triple whammy” of poverty, poor health and caring responsibilities
- Activities are generally perceived to **not be affordable**. If travel is needed then transport increases cost. For families with more than 1 child this can be prohibitive

## Relationships

- A strong desire to **connect with ‘people like me’ and share experiences**. This is particularly important for **carers**. Carers are also motivated to want to make something happen for those they care for
- The burden of managing multiple disadvantages often means that residents have **no time to be involved in community activities**

## System

- Capacity to support individuals **with broader needs** - Social prescribers
- **Connectivity** with family support services, housing services, adult social care, carers networks, return to work support, training and employment services, debt advice etc
- **Shared outcomes and collaboration** with a range of partners around mental health e.g. schools and impact of COVID

## Impact on Physical Activity

- Don't have the bandwidth to even think about being active
- Too tired to think about or do physical activity
- No free time to fit in physical activity – it's not a priority
- Can't afford activities, transport and other associated costs
- More reliant on walking to get around

# Limited infrastructure directly in the neighbourhoods

## People

- Voluntary sector infrastructure and **capacity varies hugely** in different communities
- Assets are often considered to be **out of reach** – too far away or too expensive
- Where an asset is viewed positively, **there is significant will to see it improved for all**, i.e. local park
- Generally, residents would like to make **more use of the assets** they have rather than necessarily having something new

## Place

- Limited **availability of assets** within neighbourhood
- Lack of ownership of assets **'that's not for us'**
- Open spaces **under-utilised** 'not for me'
- Assets in **poor condition**, broken equipment
- Lack of benches, routes and trails
- **Schools are very important assets**. They help to reach into communities. Pride in quality of local schools can lift whole community. But if the school is viewed negatively, this can create a huge gap for reaching families

## Relationships

- **Children's centres** popular and well known with families
- **Churches** have found ways to **reach into community** although in some places this puts people off attending
- Less **visibility** of council services
- Assets not always run **to meet needs** of whole neighbourhood
- Assets not always fully utilised due to **lack of volunteers** to manage

## System

- Relationships with the system based on **individuals** working in the neighbourhood – different personalities yield different perceptions
- VCS **competing** for limited resources often with the public sector
- **Poor connections** between planners and those working in the neighbourhoods
- Varied **connectivity** between local organisations

## Impact on Physical Activity

- Perception of nowhere suitable to be physically active
- Nothing for people like me
- Places not designed to enable activity
- Lack of capacity to make things happen

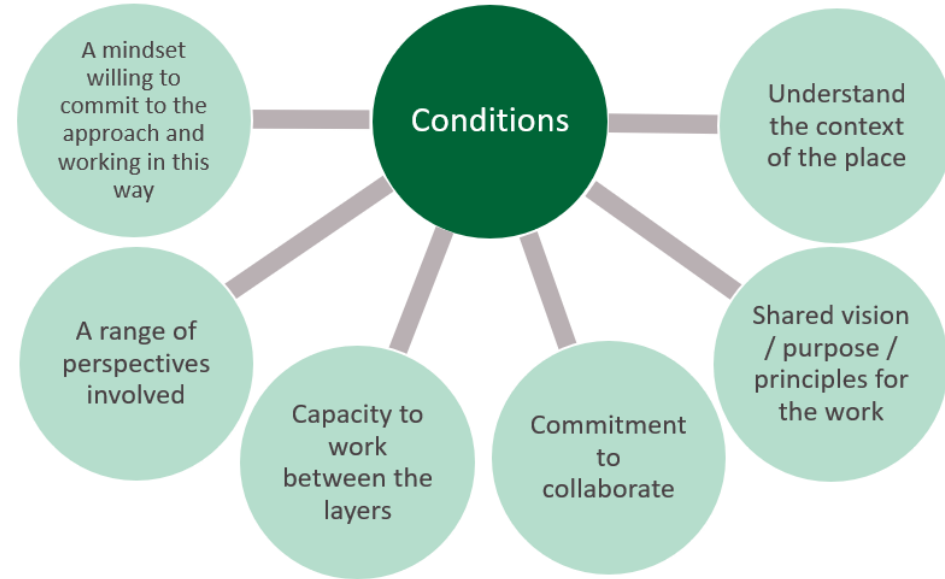
# Some of the changes we are seeing

- More people and organisations are connected to this way of working and to the physical activity cause
- Brought data and insight together to inform decisions
- Aligned more of Active Derbyshire and Active Notts's investments, such as young people's fund and TIF, to these neighbourhoods to enable opportunities
- Supported securing wider investments in spaces and opportunities
- Created more opportunities to be active in these neighbourhoods by connecting in providers and residents making things happen for themselves
- Influenced urban planning on the needs of the community to enable more movement
- Reacted to the pandemic with resources and investment
- Influenced the behaviours and ways of working of individuals and some organisations
- Greater collaboration with some partners on the work together
- Influenced organisational and place policies to enable people to be active and to embed this way of working

# Understanding of the systems-based approach...



# and the conditions for it



“Partnerships seem strong but are they characterised more by **relationships** than action? Many spoke of the strength of **partnership working** in the city but, when challenged as to what this meant, it was about the incredible asset that arose from **good relationships and trust** rather than from delivering outcomes together (although there were notable exceptions)”

# Embedding a 'systems-based approach'



# The role of Active Derbyshire & Active Nottinghamshire

## Navigator

Guides and connects across the system. Operates between the layers where required

## Shares insight

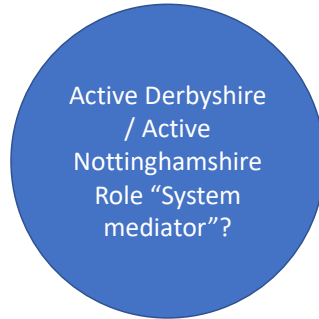
Shares information and knowledge appropriate to context and audience

## Enables learning

Brings insight and experience together to inform practice. Enables observation of process and impact

## Convenor and facilitator

Creates spaces to bring bring people together to connect, learn and create



## Critical friend

Plays a questioning role and reflects back observations of behaviours. Is prepared to challenge when required

## Investment seeker

Seeks relevant investment to enable the work and action

## Workforce developer

Invests in the development of the right knowledge, skills and behaviours across the workforce

## Opportunity enabler

Identifies opportunities that will support the work to flourish and spread

# Impact of Covid-19

- Growing awareness of the strength of communities to support themselves
- Acknowledgement of the strong role that the voluntary and community sector can play
- Greater recognition of the need to collaborate, especially in parts of the system that directly interact with residents
- Increased acknowledgement of physical activity
- Many people have still found a way to be active even though their choices have been limited

## On the other hand:

- x Supply of opportunities to be active have been significantly impacted
- x Schools, colleges and universities are having to adapt considerably to manage the situation
- x Services are having to adapt accordingly and potentially deal with increased demand
- x We don't yet understand how physical activity habits may be impacted
- x Health and public health are completely focussed on the pandemic response as well as facing considerable change
- x The emerging evidence is that the pandemic has exacerbated pre-existing inequalities
- x The economic impact is unclear

# Emerging intentions

## **Explore and identify potential opportunities for continuing to develop system-based approaches that create change around physical activity**

There's both drive and opportunity for continuing to develop this way of working in different parts of our two counties. This should be explored with partners alongside these findings and other evidence and should take different approaches to the work into account, as well as greater representation of our ethnically diverse communities.

## **Continue to give residents a voice and work with them to get more people active**

At the heart of changing behaviour of individual people and creating system change is understanding the lived experience of our inactive residents. There's a need to continue to build the culture, practice and processes around this to inform decisions and actions.

## **Create more consistent practices and processes to understand the changes we need to make in the way we work, so more people can be active**

Across partners involved in taking a systems-based approach, there's a need to strengthen the way we capture our observations around the work and the change it creates.