



SHROPSHIRE HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD

Report

Meeting Date	14th September 2023			
Title of report	Physical Activity in Shropshire			
This report is for (You will have been advised which applies)	Discussion and agreement of recommendations	X	Approval of recommendations (With discussion by exception)	Information only (No recommendations)
Reporting Officer & email	Suzy O'Shea, Head of Engagement, Energize Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin, Suzy.OShea@energizestw.org.uk Penny Bason, Head of Service, Joint Partnerships, Health, Wellbeing and Prevention, Shropshire Council, penny.bason@shropshire.gov.uk			
Which Joint Health & Wellbeing Strategy priorities does this report address? Please tick all that apply	Children & Young People	x	Joined up working	x
	Mental Health	x	Improving Population Health	x
	Healthy Weight & Physical Activity	x	Working with and building strong and vibrant communities	x
	Workforce	x	Reduce inequalities (see below)	x
What inequalities does this report address?	Developing offers to improve physical activity for people in Shropshire must take all inequalities into account. They must demonstrate that efforts are made to reduce barriers for people with any protected characteristic to access activity. Examples in the report below are provided.			

1. Executive Summary

Healthy Weight and Physical Activity are core priorities of the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy. Evidence demonstrates that more than 26% of adults living in Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin are inactive. Nearly 28% of children and young people are less active. According to the recently published national strategy, [Get Active: a strategy for the future of sport and physical activity](#), our numbers of inactive are similar to the national average. One might perceive that with its rolling hills, plentiful walking paths and playing fields, Shropshire is in an excellent position to significantly improve this picture.

Understanding barriers and perceptions regarding physical activity will be important to improving levels of activity in Shropshire.

The new national strategy retains the five outcomes from the 2015 government sport strategy – Sporting Future: a new strategy for a more active nation, which are:

- physical wellbeing
- mental wellbeing
- individual development
- social and community development
- sustainable economic development

The priorities of the new strategy are:

1. Driving participation and addressing inactivity
2. Strengthening integrity in sport
3. Making sport more sustainable

It is important also to make the connection between the Healthier Weight Strategy and physical activity. The Shropshire Draft Healthier Weight Strategy was presented to the June Health and Wellbeing Board, and the final Strategy is due in November. The DRAFT 2023 –2028 Healthier Weight Strategy sets out our system-wide approach and priorities to improve health and promote

healthier weight among the Shropshire population. Our ambition is to ensure Shropshire residents have the opportunity to eat healthy, nutritious food and enjoy physical activity in a way that best suits them. Evidence supports this in helping reduce levels of unhealthy weight and weight-related illness in Shropshire. Strategic objective 2 in the draft strategy sets out our intent to 'Support the development of a physical environment that allows Shropshire residents to enjoy the benefits of active living'.

Healthy weight and physical activity represent key areas of focus within the Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022-2027 and are linked closely with food insecurity and children and young people's health and wellbeing.

The report below provides more details of the national strategy, as well as our activity offer, infrastructure and programmes in place to support people to take up physical activity and sport. The report also highlights national data as well as insight gained through the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, and insights from our Youth Support team.

2. Recommendations

- a. The HWBB note the contents of the report and progress in Shropshire regarding improving levels of activity.
- b. Despite good work to improve activity levels in Shropshire, take up of physical activity remains an issue. The HWBB discuss what more can be done collectively across organisations to improve activity levels in Shropshire.

3. Report

Evidence and Insight

As reported in the new national strategy, the health benefits of sport and physical activity are well known. Active people live healthier, longer and happier lives, with physical activity reducing the risk of disease, helping to support individuals to maintain a healthier weight, and giving wide-ranging musculoskeletal health benefits. It also has a significant role to play in helping prevent and manage many long-term health conditions. Getting active at a young age also aids the healthy development and function of muscles, bones and the cardio-respiratory system.

Reducing the number of inactive children and adults reduces the burden on the NHS. Every year, active lifestyles prevent 900,000 cases of diabetes and 93,000 cases of dementia (the leading cause of death in the UK). This delivers a combined saving of £7.1 billion to the UK economy.

Physical and mental wellbeing



Every **£1** spent on **sport** and **physical activity** generates almost **£4** in return across health and wellbeing, strengthening communities and the national economy.¹

In addition to understanding the importance of physical activity on health and wellbeing, there is clear evidence that demonstrates the impact of diversionary activity on the reduction of crime and antisocial behaviour.

In Shropshire 26% of adults are inactive and nearly 28% children and young people are less active. Data gathered by the Youth Support Team highlights that children and young people aged 13-18 don't have safe spaces where they can meet and be active.

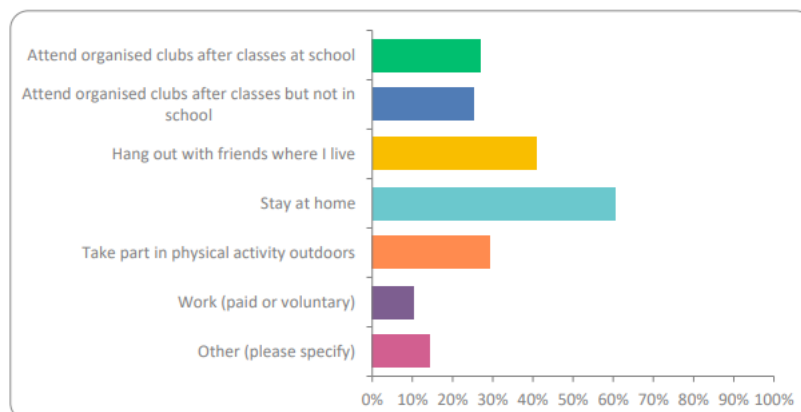
Key data regarding to weight:

- 67.4% of adults aged 18+ are overweight or obese in Shropshire. 32% of adults are obese-this is significantly higher than the national average for England and 2nd highest among 15 closest comparator local authorities.
- Certain areas of the county are more affected than others, with unhealthy weight rates in Gobowen, Selattyn and Weston Rhyn among the 20% highest nationally.
- Of people attending for NHS Health Checks, 37.8% in the most deprived group had a BMI >30 compared to 15% of those in the least deprived group.
- 22.1% of children aged 4-5 years old are overweight or obese, increasing to 30.7% among those aged 10-11 years. These rates are either similar to or better than the regional and national average.
- Bishop's castle, Whitchurch and Oswestry have higher rates of children with unhealthy weight than the rest of Shropshire and are all among the 50% most deprived areas.
- 24.1% (95%CI 22.4-25.8) of people in early pregnancy are obese which is higher than the national average. Rates of overweight and obese people in early pregnancy are highest in Market Drayton (58.5%) and Whitchurch (59.8%).
- Hospital admissions related to obesity in women are higher than the national average at 2,312 per 100,000.
- Diabetes prevalence is likely underestimated, with a lower than national average diagnosis rate of 71% (95% CI 67.9,74.9).

In 2023, the Youth Support Team from Shropshire Council worked with young people to answer a survey about their interests and needs. The following provides a snapshot of what the team learned.

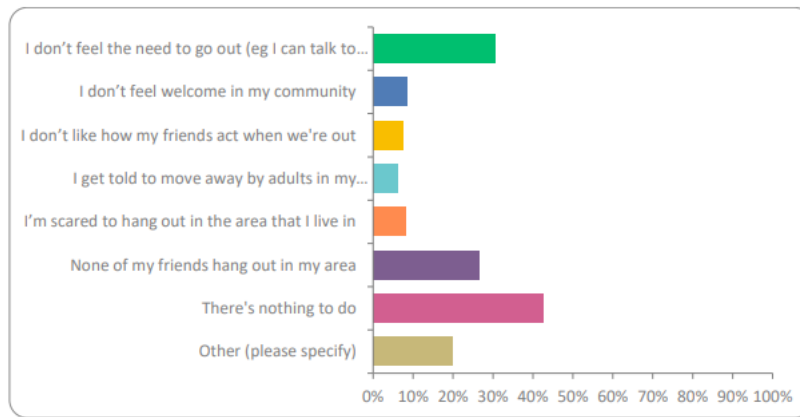
Q1: What do you do in your spare time i.e. outside of education/training?

The most popular individual response was to stay at home followed by hanging out with friends. However, there was also a combined percentage who stated that they attended organised clubs of some kind and/or took part in physical activity. Given the nature of question to select all that apply, most respondents did offer more than one answer suggesting varied activities when outside of school.



Q4: If you don't go out in your area, what's stopping you?

The most popular response was that their local area didn't provide anything to do that interested them. The second most-popular response was that respondents didn't feel the need to go out given the technology that allowed them to connect virtually with friends or simply because they were happy being alone.



Additionally, part of developing the Place Based Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) has included asking people about their experiences and views of health and wellbeing in their area. So far of 1,525 questionnaires, covering Shrewsbury, Whitchurch, Highley, Bishop's Castle and Oswestry, 432 people (28.3%) said they had challenges to being active, 967 (63.4%) said they did not have challenges and 126 (8.3%) didn't answer.

Those that said they had challenges:

- 112 (26%) said it was the cost of facilities,
- 112 (26%) said it was due to lack of adequate local facilities / choice of activities,
- 153 (35%) said it was due to time / work life balance
- 149 (34%) said they had underlying health issues
- 63 (15%) said mobility issues
- 60 (14%) said motivation
- 60 (14%) said it was due to safety about exercising outside

National Strategy

In August 2023 the Government launched [Get Active: a strategy for the future of sport and physical activity](#). The 3 core priorities of this strategy, and what it means for the country, are:

1. Being unapologetically ambitious in making the nation more active, whether in government or in the sport sector:

- Ensuring everyone is focused on increasing physical activity, meaning fewer inactive children, and narrowing the gap on inactivity where groups are not being reached, with visible progress across the country by 2030. This will mean:
 - A new cross-government approach for activity for all, with clear metrics and targets for the sector, held to account by a joint government and sector National Physical Activity Taskforce.
 - More investment in the sector is targeted at inactive groups, and a more strategic approach to facilities to ensure communities have access to the facilities they need. If you are inactive, this will increase the likelihood that there is a way into sport or physical activity for you in your local area.
 - A focus on all children meeting the activity levels recommended by the UK's Chief Medical Officers, supported by a new campaign aimed at children and young people, and it will build on the update to the School Sport and Activity Action Plan to ensure children have the best chance for an active life.
- Focusing on evidence, data and metrics to understand how interventions are helping get people active and demonstrate their value. This will include a new evidence-based measure of success to allow us to make the case for future investment around preventative health as the long-term vision for tackling inactivity. We will expect all organisations to be able to account for how they are addressing our ambitions on inactivity.
- Setting the future direction for facilities and spaces where people can be active, by delivering multi-million-pound investment into grassroots facilities and setting a clear strategic ambition for the future. This will mean facilities that reflect the needs of local communities, supported by hundreds of millions of pounds of government and local authority investment.

2. Making sport and physical activity more inclusive and welcoming for all so that everyone can have confidence that there is a place for them in sport.

- Helping the sector to be welcoming to all, by promoting women's and disability sport, championing diversity across the sector and holding the sector to account for investing in these groups. We want to help everyone to get active, and support our most talented athletes to realise their full potential, regardless of background or location. This will mean groups feel the benefit of public and private investment, that we see meaningful progress by 2030, and that cultural issues which put people off sport are relentlessly tackled.

- Improving how issues and concerns are dealt with in the sector, starting by launching a call for evidence around sport integrity issues. This will increase confidence in sport so that everyone knows that their welfare is at the heart of the sport system, whatever sport they play.

3. Moving towards a more sustainable sector that is more financially resilient and robust.

- Supporting the sector to access additional, alternative forms of investment to help it continue to grow and thrive, and by highlighting best practice, good governance mechanisms, and opportunities offered by technology and innovation. This will allow sport to thrive for future generations and support the continuation of our sporting institutions.

- Working towards a more environmentally sustainable sector that delivers on the government's net-zero ambitions. We will do this by championing the role that sport can play in sustainability, and bringing together government departments, the sport sector and subject matter experts to share information and provide support.

The publication goes on to say that:

Delivering against these priorities will help create a more active nation and a more sustainable sport sector. These aims are complementary; greater participation, stronger governance and confidence in the sector will help to drive investment, which in turn helps to attract new audiences. Our vision is to make sport and physical activity accessible, resilient, fun and fair, for now and the years to come – for the benefit of individuals and the country.

Local Offer/ Activity Development

In Shropshire, there are a range of availability and offers to support people to remain and become physically active.

Shropshire Council manages or commissions 21 libraries, 25 country parks, 5,500 kms Rights of Way network, 13 leisure centres and associated playing fields, Meole Brace Golf Course, as well as museum and archives, and theatres.

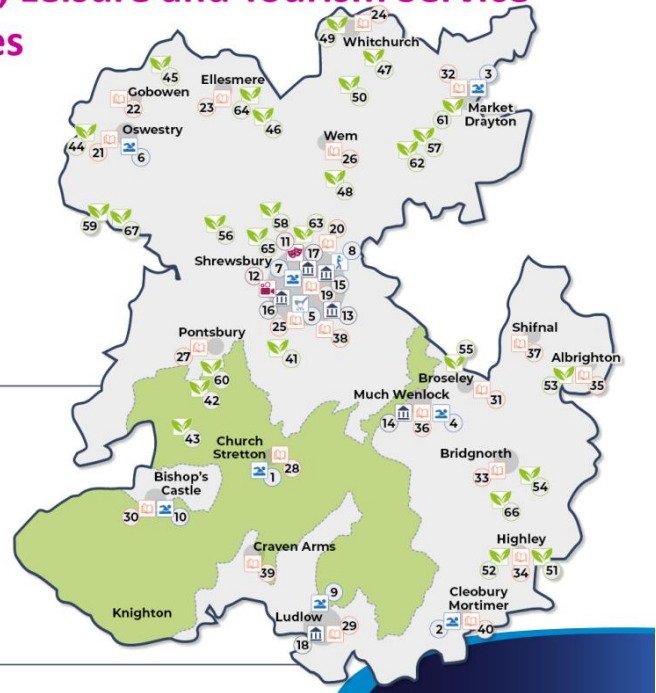
The map below highlights the range of leisure offers that support health and wellbeing in Shropshire.

Map of Culture, Leisure and Tourism Service venues and sites

1. Church Stretton Leisure Centre
2. Cleobury Mortimer Sports Centre
3. Market Drayton Swimming Centre
4. Much Wenlock Leisure Centre
5. Meole Brace Golf Centre
6. Oswestry Leisure Centre
7. Quarry Swimming and Fitness Centre
8. Shrewsbury Sports Village and Indoor Bowls Centre
9. South Shropshire Leisure Centre
10. SpArc Leisure Centre
11. Theatre Severn
12. Old Market Hall Cinema
13. Coleham Pumping Station
14. Much Wenlock Museum
15. Shrewsbury Castle
16. Shrewsbury Museum and Art Gallery
17. Shropshire Archives
18. Shropshire Museums Collections Centre
19. Shrewsbury Library
20. Library at The Lantern
21. Oswestry Library
22. Gobowen Library
23. Ellesmere Library
24. Whitchurch Library
25. Bayston Hill Library
26. Wem Library
27. Pontsbury Library
28. Church Stretton Library
29. Ludlow Library
30. Bishop's Castle Library
31. Broseley Library
32. Market Drayton Library
33. Bridgnorth Library
34. Highley Library
35. Albrighton Library
36. Much Wenlock Library
37. Shifnal Library
38. School Library Service
39. Craven Arms Library
40. Cleobury Mortimer Library
41. Lyth Hill Countryside Site
42. Snailbeach Mine
43. Bog Mine and Visitor Centre
44. Oswestry Old Racecourse Common
45. Ifon Meadows Local Nature Reserve
46. Colemere Countryside Heritage site

47. Brown Moss Countryside Heritage Site
48. Corbet Wood Countryside Heritage Site
49. Whitchurch Country Park
50. Steel Heath
51. Severn Valley Country Park
52. New England
53. Donington and Albrighton LNR
54. Stanmore Camp
55. Birchmeadow
56. Nesscliffe & The Cliffe
57. Hodnet Countryside Site
58. Merrington Green
59. Llanyrnnech Heritage Area
60. Poles Coppice
61. Walkmill Meadows
62. Wollerton
63. Battlefield Heritage Park
64. The Mere at Ellesmere
65. Shelton Recreation Ground
66. Eardington Quarry
67. Badgers Green Wildlife Site

-  Libraries
-  Museums
-  Theatre Severn
-  Old Market Hall cinema
-  Leisure centres
-  Indoor bowling centre
-  Golf
-  Parks and countryside
-  Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty



Additionally, the team are also supporting Walking for Health and have a wide range of volunteering opportunities- Across Culture, Leisure and Tourism with:

- Volunteers- 1,705
- Volunteer hours- 64,091, equivalent to > 33 FTE staff

Shropshire Council's [Vibrant Shropshire Cultural Strategy 2021-31](#), highlights that:

“Enjoy- Using culture to support people to be active, happy, healthy and connected Culture makes us feel good, and there’s growing evidence that it can also help prevent, manage and treat a range of public and individual health problems. This is already happening in Shropshire - from supporting mental health in young people and adults to volunteering in nature and creating regular events for families affected by dementia to read, sing or dance together. Play is an important concept, which can be actively incorporated in activities to aid happiness and health. We want to ensure that the county’s cultural sector helps young and old, and everyone in between.”

Holiday Activities and Food for Kids (HAF)

Additionally, Shropshire Council manages a very successful HAF (Holiday Activities and Food) programme of holiday activities for eligible children and young people.

Over the Easter/spring, summer and Christmas/winter holidays, schools, voluntary and community organisations and childcare providers are running holiday clubs across the county.

There are free places available on the HAF programme for children and young people aged four (reception class age) to 16, who are eligible for benefits-related free school meals.

There are also a limited number of free places available for children and young people on the HAF programme living in areas of high deprivation and/or from low-income households who are not in receipt of benefits related free school meals. These children and young people can be referred onto the programme by a professional.

During the three main school holidays, children and young people are invited to take part in a range of fun activities happening at venues from across the county. For example, from 25 July to 1 September 2023, eligible children and young people were invited to take part in a range of fun activities, at 57 holiday clubs from across the county.

Funded by the DfE (Department for Education), the aim of the programme is to make holiday activities as accessible and inclusive as possible.

HAF numbers:

In summer 2022 the programme welcomed 3509 children and young people, with additional offers in 2023, the number will have grown (but the number is not available yet).

Over the 2023 Easter break we welcomed 1238 eligible children and young people onto the programme. Adding in other children and young people who joined the programme who met other criteria or paid for their place, the number is 3105.

The below table gives the break down of attendees over the 2023 Easter period.

	Primary-aged	Secondary-aged
FSM-eligible / Non-SEND	881	119
FSM-eligible / SEND	131	10
Non-FSM-eligible / non-SEND	11	2
Non-FSM-eligible / SEND	4	0
TOTAL number of HAF-funded attendees	1027	211
Other – free	943	36
Other – paid-for	859	29
TOTAL number of attendees	2829	276

Infrastructure Support in Shropshire

Energize Shropshire Telford and Wrekin (STW) is one of 43 Active Partnerships in England, funded as a system partner by Sport England. Energize collaborates with local partners, organisations and the voluntary and community sector to help tackle inequalities through the benefits of physical activity and moving more.

The Energize [Strategy 2022-27](#) states that its purpose is to improve quality of life through the benefits of physical activity. Our initial ambition is to eliminate inactivity, first focusing on those who are inactive, as this is where we can gain the greatest positive impact.

The change Energize seeks is a reduction in the number of people in Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin who are regarded as inactive.

A significant shift for Energize is a new strategy and way of working; to develop at a system level working, gathering data and intelligence from our various projects and programmes listed below, working collaboratively to influence system change.

Energize connects with National research, programmes and pilots to test and learn locally whilst ensuring evaluation and sharing of learning. An example of this is the NHS Charities Together and Shropshire Council funded programme Green Social Prescribing following the model of the [Thriving Community NASP pilots](#) across the UK.

The ability to connect, empower and influence has enabled work across various systems such as Health, Education and Social Care whilst also developing the community sector to better serve those in need of physical health improvement.

The main activities of Energize can be categorised under three headings:

1. Developing and managing programmes:

Operating a significant range of project and programmes funded either by Sport England, Department for Education or other local or national partners. These cover all age ranges and areas of Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin and are listed below.

- **Health & Social Care:** Elevate; strength and balance classes for over 60s, Green Social Prescribing project; encouraging people to access outdoor spaces to get more people active and improve their overall health and well-being.
- **Education & Schools:** School Games; offering sporting opportunities to school aged children, Virtual Schools; creating opportunities linked to sport and physical activity for looked after children, Creating Active Schools (CAS); supporting schools to embed activity throughout the school day, Opening School Facilities (OSF); providing funding to targeted schools to improve their pupil and community offer to those least active, and Active Lives Children & Young People Surveys.
- **Children & Young People:** Life Chances; supporting potentially vulnerable young people across Shropshire, Gen22 volunteering programme for young people aged 16-24, and All-In Short Breaks provision for Shropshire SEND children and young people and their families.

2. Distributing funds, developing people and infrastructure support and building resilience in the community & voluntary sector:

Over the last 12 months, Energize's Empowering Communities team has managed and distributed funds to develop organisations delivering physical activity or sport and to help create a robust infrastructure ensuring continuity into the future. These projects and funds are listed below:

- Together Fund, Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games Fund.
- Places & Spaces project for local facility development.
- Shropshire Infrastructure Partnership (SIP) data and insight project.
- All In Short Breaks

3. Creating a social movement to support our ambition to eliminate inactivity:

One of Energize's strategic goals is to widen the reach of their work by creating and growing a social movement of champions – people based in our communities with the knowledge, passion and time to have a real impact on eliminating inactivity in their local areas. This movement is known as **#TogetherWeMove**.

Key achievements for Energize and Partners in 2022/23

- Utilising National funding, a significant shift has taken place within operations at Energize to gain intelligence and invest in local communities that address specific health inequalities aligning with the Core20Plus5 NHS England audiences. This investment steered with both Local Authority input has seen significant investment to address social isolation, health and wellbeing and address sedentary behaviour for those hardly reached communities. We were able to fund [£233,640k to 93 projects](#) from Sport England Together Fund and Commonwealth Games grants through our Empowering Communities team. We have also secured a further £75k from the Together Fund to support the resilience and development of community organisations whilst also linking to initiatives such as social prescribing to better support our vision to eliminating inactivity.
- One of Energize's strategic goals is to create a social movement of champions for an active lifestyle across Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin: So far [15 champions have been recruited](#) and many of them are already having a positive impact in their local communities.
- The [Creating Active Schools framework](#) provides a whole system approach to school improvement and a structure for embedding physical activity into the heart of a school's ethos and culture. There are currently 18 schools involved with more than 5700 pupils benefitting as a result. An impact survey of 11 of the schools found that 100% reported increased activity levels, 90% reported improved pupil mental wellbeing and 72% reported improved pupil behaviour. Energize is keen to explore how they can learn from the intelligence gained in this pilot to replicate in other sectors such as care settings.
- The School Games programme has adapted over the last two years since Covid, and Energize has made significant changes aligning with the national outcomes as well as their new strategy. Energize aims to reach a wider audience across our events by targeting least active children, tackling gender inequalities, providing opportunities for those who have SEND whilst still offering opportunities for gifted and talented pupils. Over the last year Energize ran a total of 8 county finals, 13 engagement events and 4 inspire events for Primary & Secondary Schools across Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin. This [short video](#) is a great round-up of the last academic year.

- Virtual Schools are not schools in the traditional sense, but support mechanisms for looked after children and young people. The Virtual Schools Activity programme can provide young people experiencing significant challenges and barriers in their lives to provide positive experiences of being active increasing social engagement and community connectivity. Young people have also had the opportunity to gain recognised qualifications through the partnership, which aims to build and grow as the relationship develops into 23/24.
- The [Elevate strength and balance classes](#) for those 60+ in Shropshire have now been going for over five years. In the last year alone there have been 43 Elevate programmes, 550 referrals processed, 92% of which were offered a place on the programme. In addition to the standard programme, earlier in 2023, Elevate was part of an NHS funded falls improvement pilot. Here is the full [pilot report](#).
Elevate is further proving its worth having just undertaken a [Social Return on Investment project](#) supported by University Centre Shrewsbury's Health and Exercise Science team. This has demonstrated that the Elevate programmes are improving the health and well-being of older adults, reducing healthcare costs, reducing social isolation, increasing independence and providing economic benefits to individuals and society as a whole.
- The [Green Social Prescribing project](#) is a legacy project to understand the challenges and barriers to accessing green spaces for our hardly reached communities. It has bridged the gap between community providers and health systems providing greater connectivity developing intelligence for evidence of need. During Autumn 2022, 8 workshops were held with social prescribers and green activity providers, building connections and knowledge across the county and enabling even more people to be supported to access safe green spaces. This summer the project team launched 9 new [easy to use guides showcasing local green spaces](#) created to support the health system with signposting and awareness to better encourage patients/clients to spend more time outdoors experiencing natural environments to the benefit of their physical and mental health.
Part of the work on Green Prescribing has been to understand how we can work collaboratively to support people to access green space more often. **A summary of key findings can be found in Appendix B, below.**
- Energize works closely with their delivery partner Brightstar Boxing Academy on the Life Chances programme which is run in Shropshire through their Futures programme. They have now established great partnerships with over 20 different schools who refer students to the programme that are struggling to engage, focus and succeed in the standard school system. In the past year, the programme has successfully supported 99 young people, 64 of which have achieved 83 accredited qualifications including Boxing Leaders Award, ASDAN Sports and Fitness Short Course and mini-medics awards providing a life changing intervention for those young people who have been highlighted as most in need.
- As part of the Gen22 programme, young people facing challenges and barriers are engaged with through volunteering to improve community connectivity addressing wider determinants of health for each young person. Energize is working with locally trusted organisations including Brightstar, SYST and Shrewsbury Town FC Foundation who are all providing volunteering opportunities and currently engaging over 30 young people aged 16-24.
- The All-In Short Breaks provision for SEND children and young people and their families provides community provision specifically to improve social engagement, mental wellbeing and physical health for both the young person and their Parent Carers The 22 providers across Shropshire LA area delivered sessions throughout 22-23 engaging 364 All-In members and 118 siblings in various activities. Sessions ranged from horse riding and canoeing to nature clubs, dance and gymnastics.
- In partnership with Shropshire Council, Sport England, Shrewsbury Bid and Shrewsbury Town Council, Energize led on Beat the Street for Shrewsbury. Appendix A is the final report on the impact and outcomes of delivering this project in Shrewsbury leading up to the Commonwealth Games in the summer of 2022. Beat the Street aims to get more people 'beating the street', on a daily basis, by running a fun competitive and interactive game for all ages. As the report highlights more people were active during and following the game, and people responded very positively to participating in a fun, local opportunity, aimed at improving activity levels. The challenge going forward is developing all age community activity such as this across the county.

In a large rural county such as Shropshire, there are a great many assets to support physical activity and sport. However, there are also barriers for people, particularly those living in rural parts of the county. As approximately 65% of our population live in villages and hamlets, access to sport and

physical activity often relies on cars and transport. Collectively we must consider how we can reduce barriers and support people to access activity, with the infrastructure we have, and how can we improve infrastructure for our rural populations especially.

The health benefits of sport and physical activity are well known. Active people live healthier, longer and happier lives, with physical activity reducing the risk of disease, helping to support individuals to maintain a healthier weight, and giving wide-ranging musculoskeletal health benefits. It also has a significant role to play in helping prevent and manage many long-term health conditions. Getting active at a young age also aids the healthy development and function of muscles, bones and the cardio-respiratory system. Reducing the number of inactive children and adults reduces the burden on the NHS. Every year, active lifestyles prevent 900,000 cases of diabetes and 93,000 cases of dementia (the leading cause of death in the UK). This delivers a combined saving of £7.1 billion to the UK economy.

Risk assessment and opportunities appraisal (NB This will include the following: Risk Management, Human Rights, Equalities, Community, Environmental consequences and other Consultation)	The work on physical activity recognises that equity of access is a significant element of ensuring the improvement of health and wellbeing. The paper highlights that barriers do exist in Shropshire to accessing the natural assets and the physical activity offers. Significant work is underway to address this (as demonstrated through HAF and Energize), however more work is needed.
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Financial implications (Any financial implications of note)	None as a result of this report.
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Climate Change Appraisal as applicable	
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Where else has the paper been presented?	System Partnership Boards	
	Voluntary Sector	
	Other	

List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)

Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder) Portfolio holders can be found [here](#) or your organisational lead e.g., Exec lead or Non-Exec/Clinical Lead

Cllr Cecilia Motley – Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care, Public Health & Communities
 Rachel Robinson – Executive Director, Health, Wellbeing and Prevention

Appendices

Appendix A – Beat the Street 12 Month Report (attached)
 Appendix B – Green Social Prescribing, Summary of Key Findings (below)



Background

The Green Social Prescribing (GSP) Project, which ends in November 2023, has been funded by NHS Charities Together, Telford & Wrekin Council, Shropshire Council, Sport England's Tackling Inequalities Fund, Energize STW and Shropshire Wildlife Trust.

Its mission was 'to use our knowledge, connections, skills and passion to help build the 'bridge' between social link workers, health systems and local green activities to benefit wellbeing'.

Four main aims were identified;

- Help build local partnerships with community providers and social link workers to create 'one system', where local people have a continuous journey to green spaces and wellbeing.
- Nurture new and enhance existing green activities, using local community assets.
- Empower a network of 'Green Activity Champions' who can raise awareness, lead activities, become befrienders and advisors and also maintain accessible local green space and routes.
- Work with our steering group to align local partners and projects to ensure that activity funds from e.g. Sport England are aligned to this cause, to benefit a large number of local people.

A considerable amount has been achieved during the project and a summary of those achievements is available separately.

This paper shares a summary of the findings from the 2-year project as it ends, along with highlighting pertinent points from recently published literature.

Summary findings / recommendations

Below are the main findings but detailed information can be found in the supportive information section.

1. More low level, low cost, local activities are needed.
2. There is a need for a greater level of public awareness, and confidence, of green spaces / activities that members of the community can self-refer to.
3. Resources for daily use by social prescribers (SP's) that outline the benefits of GSP would help to reinforce the impact it could have on patients as well as encourage more referrals to activities in nature.
4. Better awareness of local provision amongst SP's is needed as well as time for them to experience the activities and build relationships with providers – both of quality assured interventions but also others that can be signposted to.

Note: uptake by health care professionals of ‘taster / immersive’ sessions in nature has been low due to workload pressures.

5. A strategy for GSP is needed and should be shared so all stakeholders can see the aims and areas of need, meaning interventions can be designed to meet demand. Advocates at all levels of the system are required.
6. A GSP steering group for Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin could be set up to share learning, drive forward its development and be accountable for its implementation.
7. Critical is long term investment in groups providing activities; to maintain existing levels of provision but also build capacity, knowledge and expertise that enable more inclusive activities.
8. A green activity providers network covering both Shropshire and Telford and Wrekin would facilitate invaluable sharing, learning and improvement, ultimately increasing effectiveness of the providers.
9. Consideration, along with other stakeholders, should be given to a mechanism for supporting groups that manage and maintain green spaces that would like to start offering activities that meet a health and wellbeing demand.
10. Evaluation, evidence of impact and proof of savings to health care services are extremely difficult to gather in a consistent way for projects which often have very short timeframes.

Supportive information

There are 2 recently published documents that reinforce our findings on the ground – The Government’s Green Social Prescribing delivery capacity assessment and NHS England’s Green Social Prescribing Toolkit.

1. [Department of Health and Social Care’s National green social prescribing delivery capacity assessment: final report \(Published 30 March 2023\)](#)

The aim of the national green social prescribing (GSP) delivery capacity assessment was “to quickly improve our understanding of the existing provision of green and nature-based activities across the country and help determine whether the current level of provision is sufficient to support social prescribing referrals equitably to these activities if rolled out nationally.”

The executive summary suggests; “To enhance GSP delivery capacity, the focus on local provision must be accompanied by **system-wide changes**. The areas identified include:

- 1) **funding**, with a need to move away from short-term competitive funding that drives inefficiencies and uncertainty in provision and incentivises new and different green and nature-based activities at the expense of continuity
- 2) **knowledge and information**, with a need to generate awareness of the benefits of green and nature-based activities among GPs, link workers and service users
- 3) **consistency and contextuality**, with a need to develop consistent language, metrics and accreditation in an overarching framework that also encourages local variety of green and nature-based activities in ways that meet the needs of communities
- 4) **networks**, with a need to strengthen cross-sectoral partnerships and collaboration to facilitate resource and knowledge sharing between the health and third sector.”

The full document can be found here –

2. NHS England's Green Social Prescribing toolkit, produced in partnership with the National Academy of Social Prescribing and the 7 Green Social Prescribing Test and Learn sites.

“This toolkit is specifically about the learning that has arisen from the targeted Green Social Prescribing programme to tackle and prevent mental ill-health. It is anticipated that a lot of the learning and practice arising from the targeted mental health programme will be relevant to applying green social prescribing to address other priorities and to support people with other major conditions.”

The toolkit references the importance of **building a vision**:

“To successfully change systems, it is important to ensure that everyone (people and organisations) who take part, or might be affected by the change, are fully engaged in shaping that change from the outset. Bring together people from across their local communities, local government, health and social care, voluntary and community organisations, the ‘green’ or environmental sector, and involve people with lived experience of mental ill-health, from a range of backgrounds, to set out the vision, and how it will be achieved, at this early stage.”

And goes on to say the vision could be delivered by a GSP coalition with representation from both health and environmental sectors that involves learning from people with lived experience.

“It is useful to identify a senior leader to be the ‘**senior responsible officer**’ for the programme. This is someone who holds a leadership role in the Integrated Care system or can influence decision-making within the ICS. Their role is to make others aware of GSP, look for opportunities to fund and deliver GSP in local systems and to champion it as a direct route back into their system.”

It suggests a **steering group** should be responsible for maintaining momentum and be accountable for the development of GSP. That group should “have representation from the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) green sector, green providers and landowners, and wider VCSE organisations, the health sector at strategic and operational management levels.”

Emphasis is also given to the importance of **co-designing services** to result in more people from across communities using services and providing confidence to GSP steering groups that they are providing the right services in the right way. Two suggested actions are worth noting:

1. “Commit to build the capacity of the green sector so that staff teams reflect and are representative of the diverse communities that they serve.”
2. “Work together with grassroots community groups and trusted community leaders to engage widely.”

GSP can be embedded in a number of different pathways so consideration should be given to determining local need and then understanding as much as possible about targeted audiences so the provision is sustainable. Part of this process could be a mapping exercise “mapping green providers against levels of mental health need will

help to inform an analysis of supply and demand and this will be useful in planning for the spread and scale of GSP.”

In the **building relationships** section, the toolkit outlines:

“It is important to take time to build understanding and trust between referrers and green providers to ensure that the value that the VCSE sector offers is fully recognised; to increase, and make consistent, the numbers of people referred to green social prescribing activities; and to ensure that new services are not set up or commissioned that duplicate existing provision.”

“It is therefore **essential that referrers** (such as Social Prescribing Link Workers, or others) **are aware of the green provision available in their area**, to understand what each provider offers and who it is suitable for. And in turn, **green providers need to understand the referral process**, such as who will refer, the likely number of people that they can expect to be asked to work with, and clear information about the people referred to them.”

“Lack of knowledge of smaller providers, or those who haven’t been commissioned in the past, or of how to work with health and social care systems, such as who to talk to about referrals and commissioning, power imbalances, and differing organisational cultures and priorities all might adversely affect relationships between referrers and providers.”

A suggested action is to “offer regular opportunities to bring referrers and green providers together so that they can get to know one another and understand more about each other’s roles.”

The following points are noted for **building capacity and capability** across the GSP workforce:

“**Raising awareness and understanding of what green social prescribing is and its benefits is critically important** to win the hearts and minds of those who might refer people.”

“Supporting existing local green networks or building **networks of green practitioners** in a place has been important to help increase the visibility of the sector and provide a practice sharing forum.”

“**Offer in person and immersive sessions in nature**, for potential referrers to experience the benefits for themselves, as this appears to increase the likelihood of future referral.”

“**Remove some of the internal barriers to referrals**, such as workload pressures and competing priorities, which prevent people from engaging with green social prescribing.”

“Map what the green offer comprises, how much capacity is available and whom it is suitable for. Also work together to develop an understanding of the **development potential of the local green sector** and any support required to expand.”

“Ensure that green sector business development requirements are considered by local enterprise partnerships and that Local Authority economic growth and business support programmes target green providers.”

“Work together to secure **sustainable investment in the sector**, for delivery, capital developments and expansion.”

“Building other relationships: community support with green social prescribing can be very valuable, and help to raise money for activities, and recruit volunteers. This is also important for capacity building.”

The toolkit outlines the **policy areas** that GSP is relevant for: the NHS Long Term Plan, The 25 Year Environment Plan, Environmental Improvement Plan, Levelling Up, Tackling Loneliness Strategy, Uniting the Movement strategy and Active Travel plans.

And goes on to outline “social prescribing and green social prescribing can help ICSs to meet their **core objectives** to:

- Improve population health and healthcare
- Tackle unequal outcomes and access
- Enhance productivity and value for money
- Help the NHS to support broader social and economic development.

GSP can provide a tangible example of how ICSs can deliver greener models of care for their Green Plans.”

It goes on to suggest; “Join up health and environmental policy to enable the ‘ingredients’ required for a successful GSP programme, to be prioritised.”

For **commissioning** the toolkit recommends “that information about local needs, demand and commissioning intentions are available to green providers and that it is easy to find and understand.”

Furthermore, **provider collaboratives** should be encouraged and “ICSs should engage green provider collaboratives and connect into work to develop VCSE Alliances in ICSs.”

Another suggested action is “Work towards **proportionate commissioning and procurement processes** in place, which offer an opportunity and the time for smaller providers to apply.”

The following observations were made about investment in green activity providers:

“**Sustainable investment** in community activities for social prescribers and others, to connect people to, is a key challenge to making services available to everyone that needs them. As outlined in the GSP Interim Evaluation Report, in many circumstances, providers are reliant on short term, piecemeal funding, which limits their ability to invest in their businesses and expand, where there is demand. The delivery, and continuation, of good quality, consistently available VCSE services in the community is dependent upon predictable and sustainable investment.”

“ICSs have a responsibility to bring together local partners from the statutory and voluntary sector, to ensure that they can fund and deliver services which meet the needs of the local population. Work together to develop **place-based shared investment funds** (brought together under the umbrella of the ICS), which would in turn bring together:

- opportunities for statutory partners to ‘commission’ community activities.
- grant schemes available to support environmental recovery and the development of access to green space and green infrastructure.
- community, health and social care focused grant funding schemes.

- philanthropic and social investment, by developing strategic partnerships with local and national trusts and businesses, within a place.”

The full document can be found here –

<https://socialprescribingacademy.org.uk/media/mona1pmt/green-social-prescribing-toolkit.pdf>

Key findings from Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin’s GSP Project

Feedback from stakeholder workshops shows us the following (and has been used to form the project work plan):

Barriers to accessing green spaces / activities.

Don’t have/or know of local green space that can be used for gardening or walking.

Lack of awareness of green space and if accessible etc.

Lack of or poor transport / financial barriers.

Some communities organise their own activities (STUWA Cycle Group/walking group).

Lack of volunteers and funding available and no person that has the time to complete the paperwork for funding.

Landowners have pieces of land that can be used for activities but don’t wish to provide activities themselves.

People anxious to go on their own - need befrienders to take people to activities, need to take small steps first.

People that have poor mental health are less likely to go outside.

People have poor mobility and won’t go outside.

People are lonely and isolated, no-one to go with.

People only want to do low level activities to start with.

People have a lack of confidence, interest / motivation.

Gaps in the provision of activities.

Men who are over 40, particularly for Asian men.

Parents with children under 5, including buggy walks.

Activities for children / young people aged 16 – 24.

Farm workers with onset dementia – limited outdoor activities.

Would like more forest schools.

A general knowledge by SPLW of what is available.

Activity gaps for younger people and men

Low level/simple activities

Some type of befriender/buddy to help patients join the activities.

More support for green activity groups to become intervention.

Improve communication of what is out there – directory/newsletter.

SPLW would like to meet the Green Providers, so they understand what is on offer.

Barriers to becoming an intervention for providers of green activities.

No regular person to connect with in the provider organisation or SPLW.

Whole process to become an intervention - complicated process, sometimes just given paperwork and asked to complete it, would like continued support and what paperwork they need.

Lot of fear about clients being referred with severe mental health and not having the skilled staff to support, or feeling that they can’t say no.

Smaller groups don’t want to become fully constituted but would still like to help people.

Money – finance to provide the activities especially if more people attending.
Transport to the activities.

Support needed to become an intervention.

Better support in place from councils/community development officers/SIP to help them become interventions.

Some type of good practice guidelines that we can work through.

Improved communication with SPLW/CDO. Attending the activities for themselves.

Smaller groups being able to sit under a larger organisation so they can still have a bit of funding. i.e., Shropshire Hills Discovery Centre apply for grants on behalf of the smaller groups.

Someone to help with meet and greet for the first-time clients (befriender/buddy/pal).

Other insight.

Some groups would prefer to do an activity for a specific group rather than as an intervention i.e., Autism Hub, Alzheimer Group.

Some organisations require you to be a fully paid-up member of the organisation – this is how they fund their activities.

Can we link with care homes who have minibuses to see if they can be used to help with transport issues.

Getting smaller groups to be part of a multi-provider network that offers events throughout the year.

Can we establish a network of providers, so that as individual interventions, we can signpost to our colleagues.

Can there be a list in each GP Surgery of low-level green activities that people can do themselves.

Sharing of success stories, to encourage others to get involved.

Author: Green Social Prescribing Project Team, September 2023