



Association for Public Service Excellence

# **APSE Sport and Leisure Seminar**

## **4<sup>th</sup> November 2021**

### **The future of public sport and leisure services**

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

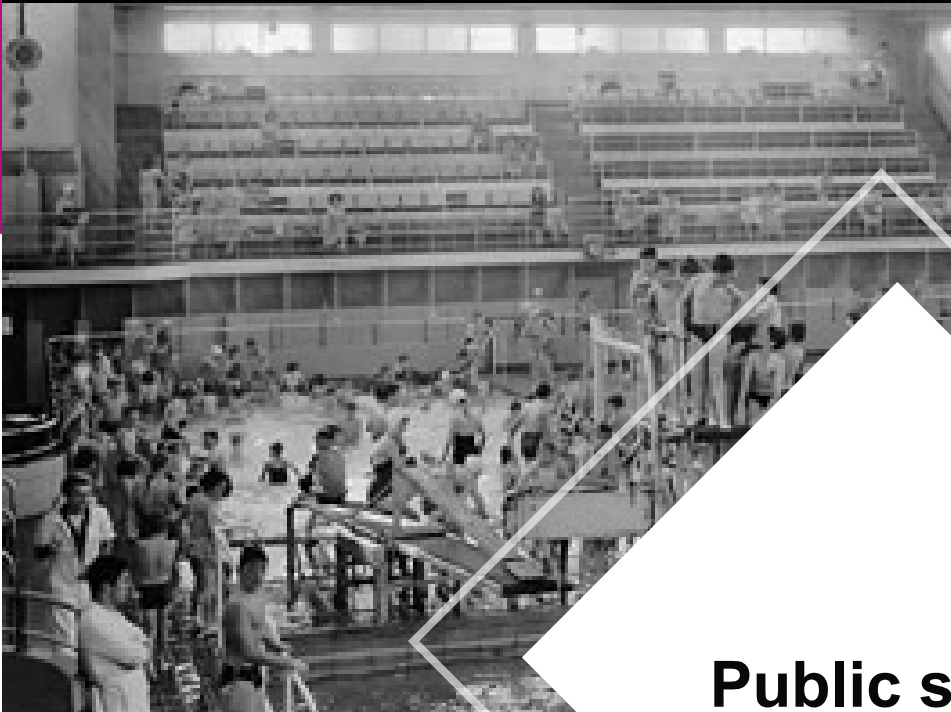


# An active community as part renewal

*(Produced pre COVID by the Local Government Physical Activity Partnership)*

- **Health and economic inequalities – growth/levelling up**
- **Physical and mental health**
- **Active travel** (in rebooting the economy)
- **Environmental sustainability and climate change**
- **Young people and older people**
- **Building back stronger communities (ABCD and infrastructure)**
- **Service integration benefits**

*Public sport and leisure services are one part of this system*



# Public sport and leisure services



# Co produced review-The future of public sport and leisure (starting a conversation)



- **Scope** (within the context of the role of councils in creating an active place)
  - Provision of Leisure Centres, Pools and Sports facilities, indoor and outdoor (but not grass sports pitches)
  - Sports development/community sport
  - Physical activity interventions/Supporting the development of physical activity opportunities.

# The future of public sport and leisure Questions

- Why do Council's provide sport and leisure services?
- What do you think is the role of Councils in providing sport and leisure services going forward?
- What impact do you think COVID-19 is going to have on future service delivery
- Is the sector focussing on the right things?

## Process

- Build on the sector chat already happening
- Creating a momentum for positive change

## Process: Sector survey and roundtable discussions

- Over 250 responses to the survey across England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland with representative mix of types of Council
- Over 200 people involved in roundtable discussions that included;
  - DCN
  - LGA
  - APSE
  - Sport England
  - cCLOA
  - UK Active
  - CLUK
  - Swim England
  - Active Partnerships Network
  - Individual conversations with sector influencers/leaders

## Key messages from discussions

- Genuine appetite for change came through from conversations
- Conversations were very open and often challenging
- Leisure centres dominated conversations
- Immediate problems often dominated discussions
- A view the sector itself has created its own problems, but it is understandable within the context of Local Authority budgets
  - Not about blame. The sector hasn't failed.
  - The sector has been incredibly successful in delivering efficiencies, but at what long term cost?
- There was a desire to have something that could be used to effect change and push back on the continuing expectation of more and more savings.

## Key findings

- That **fundamental systemic issues** with the funding of public sector sports and leisure provision have been building over the past decade and have been hugely exacerbated as a result of COVID-19. Increasing reliance on those that can afford to pay.
- *The **continued focus on expenditure savings and income growth is not sustainable** when the sector is up against changed customer participation trends (80% of pre COVID) as well as needing investment in building stock and a much greater focus on its' role in levelling up.*
- **Councils play a central leadership role in creating active places**, connecting diverse Government objectives through planning, active travel schemes, parks and playground provision, and their leisure facilities
- **Public sport and leisure services are unique** among leisure providers for their reach and support for communities, providing lifelong opportunities for all to be active and the bedrock for community and elite sport. Breadth and depth and cross cutting value (economy/health/civic pride etc)
- **Public sport and leisure services are integral to COVID-19 recovery** supporting communities to recover and helping relieve pressures on NHS services
- **Community sport and physical activity development is essential** in expanding the reach of services and helping to address health inequalities



## Key findings

- **Public sport and leisure services are under immediate risk of operational failure** and face critical long-term damage without immediate further support.
- **The public provision of swimming facilities cannot be fulfilled by private operators.** It is essential for ensuring tens of thousands of primary school children learn important water safety skills and learn to swim each year. Trends on learn to swim are going the wrong way and young people from poorer backgrounds are achieving proportionately less.
- **Ageing leisure assets make a significant contribution to carbon emissions,** and investment in decarbonising assets can help to meet net-zero targets and reduce running costs in the longer term
- The **voice of the public sport and leisure sector is fragmented,** which has weakened its ability to influence at local and national level. The sector aligns best with Health/wellbeing.
- **Investment in professional leadership and skills development** is required across sport and leisure and health partners to develop the services needed by communities in the future, support collaboration and drive further integration of services.

## Key findings

**Health and wellbeing was seen as the main (but not the only) reason for provision of services**

**The sector is keen to expand on its existing contributions and to work collaboratively with partners such as the NHS to further enhance its preventative offer for mental and physical health. Collectively, our respondents identified the following ambitions for their services:**

- **Working to integrate more closely with health systems**, including the new integrated care systems, deliver increased social prescribing opportunities, and take GP referrals, building on existing work.
- **Ensuring that new contracts build in additional social value to communities**, whether through apprenticeships, outreach and activities targeted at less active groups, or purchasing from local businesses.
- **Thinking strategically about what is needed** for the facilities of the future, including co-location with other services and the role they may have in high streets of the future.

## 2 “Asks” of Government

- **The National Office for Health Improvement and Disparities, to take the lead role in embedding PSL services within health systems, coordinating closely with DCMS and DLUHC**
- **Invest in the Public sport and leisure facility stock to bring down carbon emissions, create new jobs (especially young people) and secure vital community assets.**

# Recommendations

1. DCMS should establish an equivalent programme for public sport and leisure services to its “Valuing culture and heritage assets capital: a framework towards informing decision making” programme. The new programme should **make statistics and evidence** publicly available to aid the articulation of the value of public sport and leisure services locally and nationally in line with Her Majesty’s Treasury (HMT) green book.
2. DCMS and MHCLG should work in partnership with local government to build a robust case for the **sustainable investment in public sport and leisure services**, to be put forward to HMT for the Comprehensive Spending Review 2021. It should recognise the wider policy objectives that these services contribute to and be supported by the new Office for Health Improvement and Disparities, the Department for Health and Social Care, the Department for Education and NHS England in recognition of the critical role public sport and leisure services play in addressing their objectives.

## Recommendations

3. The Department for Education should work with Government departments and councils to map the provision of swimming facilities, investing to address gaps or future gaps in the system and making targeted support available to enable schools to **invest in learn to swim** and swim safety where the system is currently failing.
4. Councils should consider what **social value outcomes** they want to achieve through public sport and leisure services and implement these outcomes in all council activity, as well as in procurement activity and activities such as outreach work to support those who are most vulnerable.
5. Sport England (and other home Sports Councils), UK Active and CIMSPA should work together to provide **professional development opportunities** that meet the future skills needs in a post-COVID-19 world. This work should consider what is needed to tackle inequalities in access, including the implications of digital inequalities.

## Recommendations

6. Investment should be made available to enable Sport England and partners within the LGA, APSE and CLOA to continue to **provide leadership development for portfolio holders and officers at a strategic level**. A key element of the programme should be supporting elected members and officers to make the linkages with the wider system, including health systems.
  
7. **The Local Government Physical Activity Partnership (LGPAP)** should enhance its capacity, increase its visibility and engagement with the Government, and accelerate its work.

## Next steps

- Parliamentary launch delivered 14<sup>th</sup> September
- Long version of report nearing production
- Political engagement in the weeks ahead
- APSE National Sport and Leisure Seminar 4<sup>th</sup> November (sector engagement and action)
- LGPAP- preparations/web presence/OHID engagement
- Pursuing the asks and recommendations

## Next steps

- We are only at the starting blocks.
- Much more is needed to secure the sector's future and to bring about positive, sustainable change.
- Some pain is inevitable.
- No magic wand
- Over to you.
  - Questions and discussion.
  - E.g. How do we balance the financial challenges against need for greater reach of services?