



The future of Local Authority Sport and Leisure services

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A very bumpy ride ahead for Public Sport and Leisure

National and local Influence

What will be the likely impacts?

What do we need to do ?



NB Focus mainly on public sport and leisure facilities

National and local landscape

- Economy/consumer spending power/inequalities/state of the market/Council funding pressures
- Leisure centre closures hitting the headlines
- New Government Physical Activity and Sport Strategy
- Swim England Strategy/"Don't put a cap on it"

BBC NEWS

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Cost of living: Londoners shower at leisure centres to save on bills

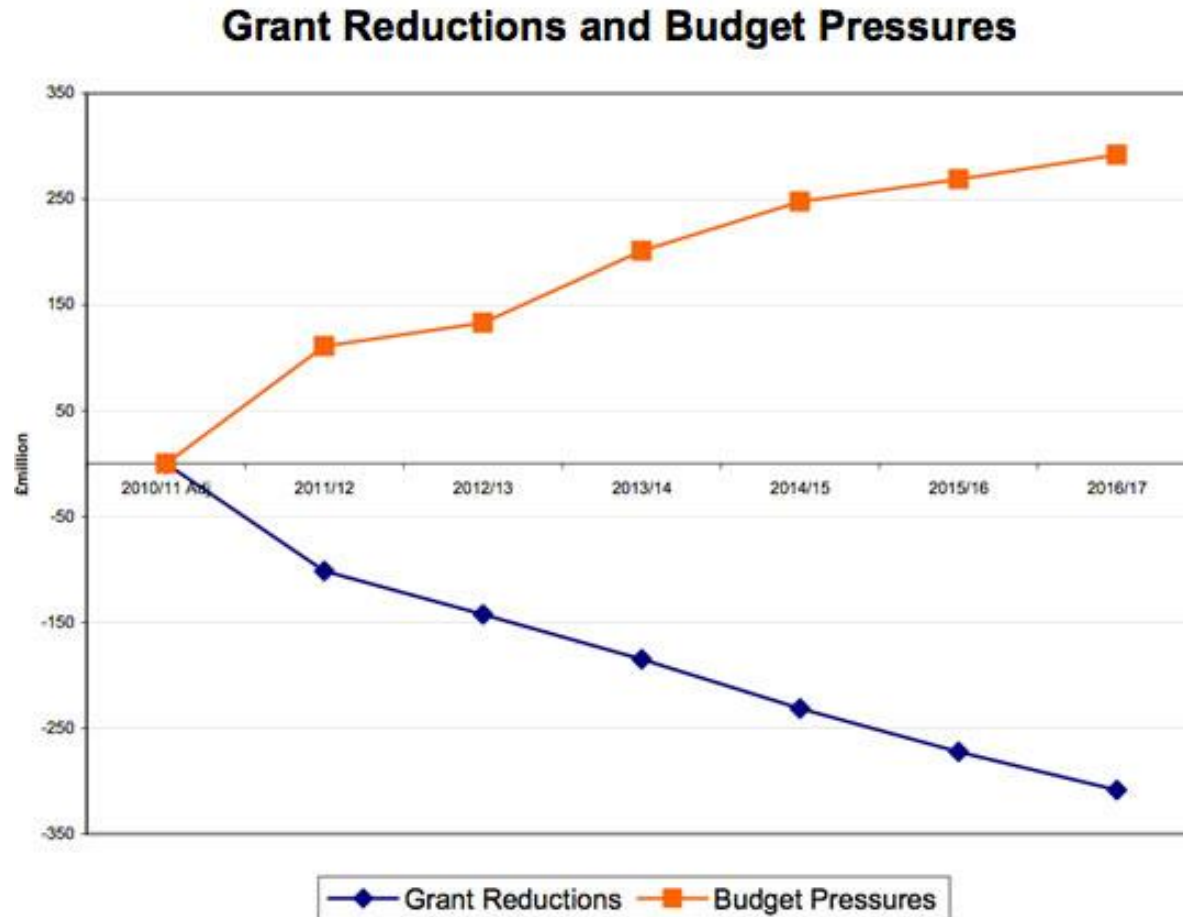
By Gabrielle Sungailaite and Noah Vickers
BBC News and Local Democracy Reporting Service

22 October 2023



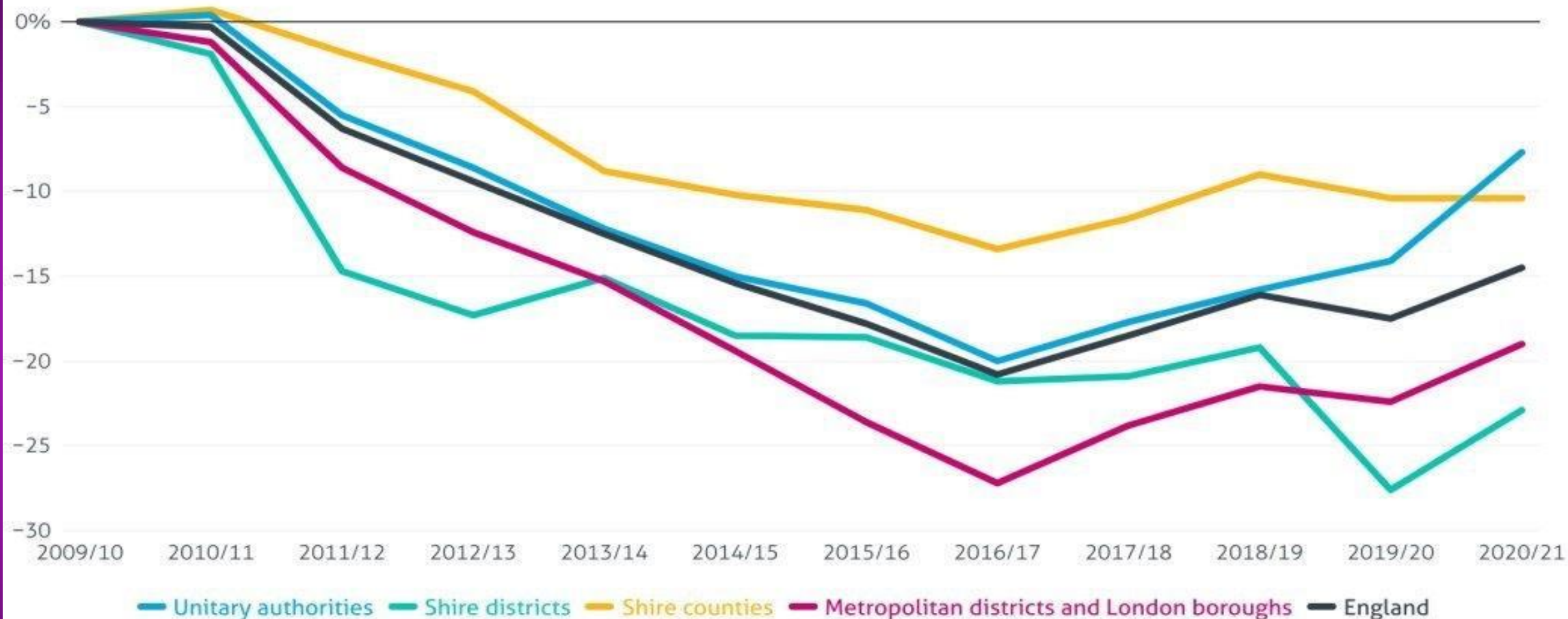
Financially: Scissors of Doom!

Increased expenditure, decreased funding!



Change in local authority spending power since 2009/10, by type of authority

IfG



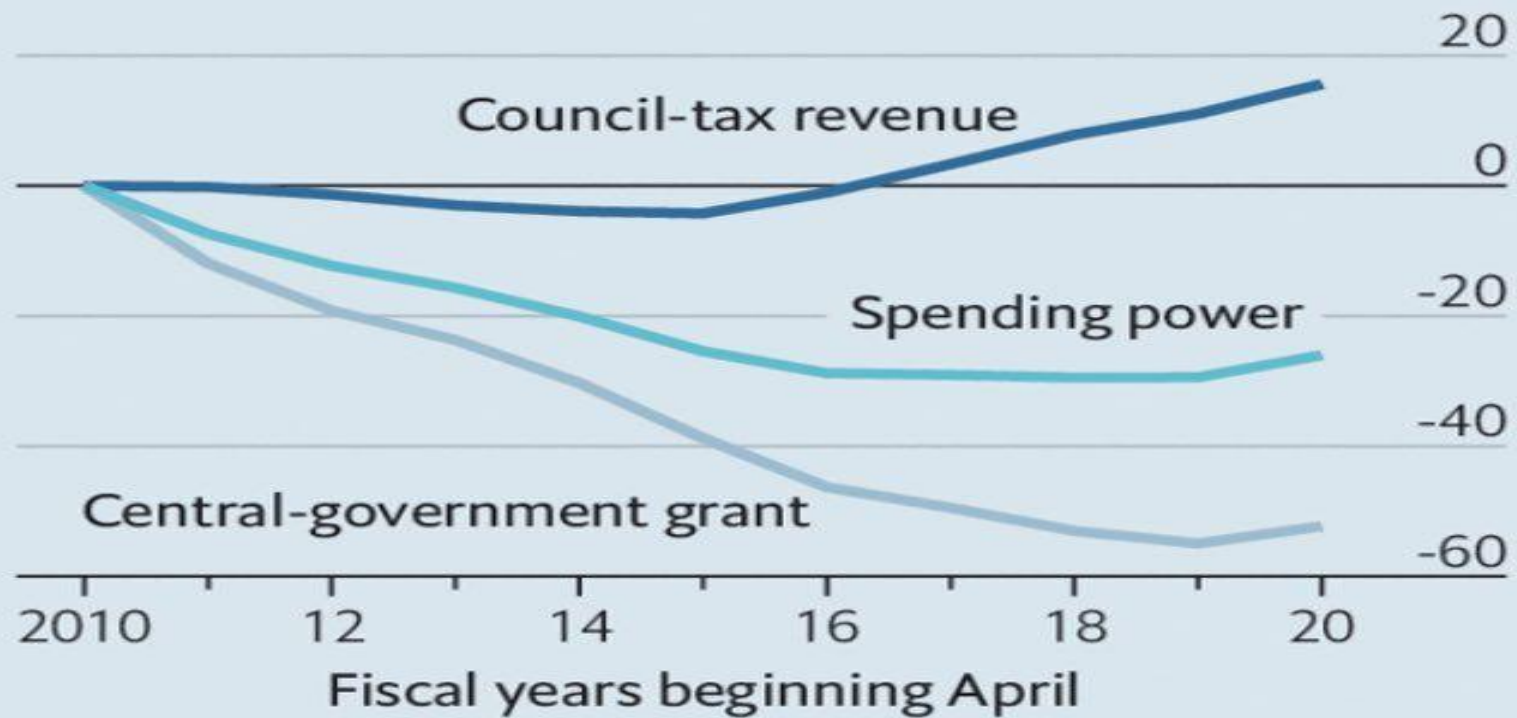
Source: Institute for Government analysis of DLUHC, Local Authority Revenue expenditure and financing in England: individual local authority data – revenue outturn. Notes: 'England' excludes 'Other' authorities, and excludes grants for education services, police, and public health. The sharp increase in Unitary authority spending power between 2018/19 and 2020/21 mostly reflects local authority reorganisations in Dorset and Buckinghamshire. This analysis excludes 2021/22 because totals are still provisional.

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Spending descending

England, local-government finance

Real terms % change since 2010-11



Source: National Audit Office

IMAGE: THE ECONOMIST



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Seven swimming pools in West Yorkshire at risk of closure

4 August



Get Active:

A strategy for the future of sport and physical activity

August 2023



Overview

- Driving participation and addressing inactivity (Disparity/Children and young people/community facilities)
- Strengthening the integrity of sport (Safety/welfare/professional and elite sport/Discrimination/governance)
- Sustainability (Economic/Technological/Environment)

Some very ambitious aims

By 2030:

- over 2.5 million more active adults, as defined by the Chief Medical Officers' guidelines on physical activity;
- over 1 million more children meeting the Chief Medical Officers' guidelines on physical activity;
- activity rates increasing and inactivity levels decreasing in all parts of the country.

* *This will be assessed using the geography of Active Partnerships to help us monitor and learn about where and how progress is being made at a local level across the country

To reduce the disparities in participation rates, we will also be introducing specific ambitions to ensure that we are making progress by 2030. These will focus on the groups identified by Active Lives data as being the least active:

- 1.4 million more active adults from those in NS-SEC 6-8 (see "Terminology" in the "Building on strong foundations" section on pages 13-14).
- 0.7 million more active people who identify as having 1 or more disabilities.
- 1.5 million more active adults aged 55+.
- 1.25 million more active women.
- 0.19 million more active Asian adults, particularly people from Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi ethnic groups.
- 0.09 million more active black adults

Commentary

- “**Unapologetically ambitious**”but deliverable? Light on detail.
- Still feels like a sports strategy? (Footer says Government Sports Strategy).
- Welcome the establishment of **physical activity task force** NPAT. DOH/NHS/public health needs to be fully bought in
- Emphasis on providing **better data** to support funding decisions against outcomes.
- **Active Partnerships** seen as drivers (enhanced role).
- Welcome the **focus on most inactive** and driving up more activity as well, but again how? Understanding of local systems?
- **Funding focus on structural disparities.** 75% of Sport England funding. *Lower activity levels are reported for women, those aged 75 and over, disabled people, people with long-term health conditions, and for some ethnic groups. These disparities in activity levels must now be addressed.*
- **Welcome the focus on young people** and driving participation (to meet CMO guidelines) through more active young people through schools. National Sport Participation Partnership Scheme (clubs and school facilities)
- **Very little funding for investment** (£300m plus £20+m for tennis courts)..... But local councils need £bns for public sport and leisure centres longer term, more especially for pools. National Facilities Vision by the end of 2023

Continued.....

- Driving up levels of **physical activity**/addressing inactivity **vs** Driving up **participation in sport**.
- Where should councils invest? Are built sports and leisure centres going to address levels of physical inactivity? Better to invest in walking and cycling pilots/Green space etc.?
- **DCMS understanding of public sport and leisure/place shaping improving but more work needed?**
“nostalgia must not play a part...”
 - *“a more sustainable sector” (no more bailouts)*
 - **(Public Sport and Leisure) ...” needs to be flexible and innovative in adapting to changes in participation habits and in securing investment. This includes being considered within the wider local authority landscape for how it can contribute to improving physical and mental health outcomes for individuals across the community, rather than sometimes just offering an alternative to other gym provision”.**
 - *.....”There are some great examples where the local leisure estate is being used in a holistic and innovative manner, such as the use of leisure centres as musculoskeletal hubs. However, there are also plenty of areas that have seen their local public leisure provision decline. **Too many facilities across the country fail to deliver a sustainable and quality offer to the community, with some duplicating services already delivered by the private sector, resulting in over-subsidised and underutilised sites.”***
- **“Development of local plan paid in part by borrowing”** (all partners). How/capacity? Role of consultants?



Strategic Priorities

We have focused on **WHAT** takes place in the water, **WHO** is participating in and delivering aquatics and **WHERE** activity takes place. This has led to three key priorities:



Value of swimming

The new research shows that swimming³ generated more than **£2.4 billion of social value⁴ in 2022.**

Swimming benefits society through improving people's physical and mental health, improving their life satisfaction as well as aiding both individual and social and community development.



Role of public leisure

Public leisure facilities give local people access to vital community facilities and tackle inequalities in an affordable and accessible way.

They provide a place-based infrastructure through which services and support can be delivered across the most deprived communities in England.

The sector fulfils a vital public service and these pools are a central part of the swimming pool mix in the country, accounting for 67% of the total social value of swimming⁶.

Currently, 72% of all school swimming lessons take place in public pools⁷, which includes both the statutory learn to swim programme and the water safety curriculum across primary schools.

Aquatic club usage is also predominantly based from public leisure facilities.

But these facilities – and the activities they support – are under threat.

We know 68% of sports halls and swimming pools were built more than 20 years ago⁸ and there remains significant levels of ageing public leisure stock.

A total of 30% of publicly accessible swimming pools, more than 1,200 pools, are more than 40 years of age⁹.

Since 2010, more than 1,000 publicly accessible pools, including around 450 local authority owned pools, have closed either permanently or temporarily¹⁰.

Based on the opening and closure rates of swimming pools, Swim England forecasts that almost 75% of local authorities could have a shortage of swimming pools by 2030.

A sustainable future is more than just money for bricks and mortar, though. It is about reimagining the purpose of our leisure facilities and having a shared strategic vision across all levels of government to intertwine leisure, health and wellbeing.



Total social value

£2.4 billion



Social value from public leisure facilities

£1.6 billion

⁶ Local authority owned facilities, which are publicly accessible, are used to generate this social value statistic.

⁷ sportengland-production-files.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/2023-01/Future%20of%20public%20sector%20leisure.pdf?VersionId=zrxRiwa9Fz__GWWRfYrBTmCmPqj0Fey

⁸ Ibid

⁹ and ¹⁰ Data taken from the Active Places Power database - activeplacespower.com/



What are the impacts for Public Sport and Leisure?

What makes PSL provision unique?



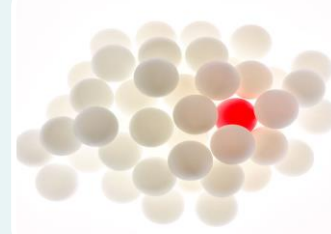
Affordable
 Subsidised membership
 - facilities for grassroots sports clubs
-accessible



Cradle to grave
 opportunities for **all** to be active at any stage in life
 - Breadth & depth of provision



Public pools deliver the **statutory requirement** for swimming/water safety
 - diving/swimming couldn't exist



Reach
 Deprived, under-represented, inactive groups & communities
 - **health inequalities**
 -Community hubs



Public Policy
 Levelling up
 - Health, social care
 - Climate
 - Social prescribing
and much more..

The private sector cannot match the breadth & depth of facilities provided by the public sport and leisure sector because it is not viable for them to do so.

Implications for Public Sport and Leisure

- Why is the sport and physical activity sector is leading addressing inactivity?
Where is DoH? Underlines the need to work local.
- Driving up activity levels goes well beyond public sport and leisure facilities.
Councils still have a major place shaping role.
- External investment in Councils is likely to be focussed on those initiatives that will address inactivity levels.
- Public Sport and Leisure facilities are going to face even greater challenges if there won't be future Government support. Capital investment most likely linked to carbon/energy consumption reduction or income generation initiatives.
- Sector already struggling post covid and with workforce retention/pay issues.
Pressures likely to further increase costs
- Swimming (as a sport) is likely to suffer the most, especially longer term without a more joined up plan with Government.

Implications for Public Sport and Leisure

- Any desire to extend reach of services amidst existing budget challenges is going to be very hard for some, but this remains essential in order to underline the unique role public sport and leisure and to drive down health inequalities.
- Those services who have already integrated/co located will be better insulated
- Need to produce a local PA and sport plan? Capacity/readiness.
- Dealing with public sport and leisure estate is likely to disproportionately occupy member and officer time where cuts are proposed, rather than working collaboratively on tackling physical inactivity. It will dominate discussions.
- Major sports events/more Councils unable to support.

cCLOA top tips to survive and thrive (Public sport and leisure centres)

1. **Use data** to your advantage. Understand need/demand/resident value/develop a local plan.
2. Nurturing great **partnerships** nationally and locally.
3. Go for **low carbon** emission
4. Strong **leadership** and utilise support.
 - Use LGA members and officers' forums
 - Use your networks, help colleagues. APSE/cCLOA/CLUK/Active Partnerships etc
 - Stand strong on issue of subsidy. Parks, vaccines, prescriptions are all subsidised.
 - Consider training front line staff as part of pivot to health
 - Share best practice

cCLOA top tips to survive and thrive (Public sport and leisure centres)

5. We create **Health-*Pivot to health and wellbeing***

- Meet with your DPH/Director Childrens/Director of Adults. Discuss what is of mutual benefit. Build your health programmes/integrate facilities
- Build connections with physical and mental health providers
- Work with allies in Culture

6. We want **inclusive** public sport and leisure facilities

- Resist pressure just to generate income without understanding implications
- Better match your catchment to user profile
- Reach out to your local partners and community.

7. Public Sport and Leisure still has major **political capital**, utilise it.

Finally

- LGPAP case studies sharing best practice
<https://cloa.org.uk/lgpap/>
- [Ten months in – putting our Pivot to Active Wellbeing into perspective - GM Active](#)
- [Learning from ICS roll out. | Sports Think Tank](#)
- LGA White paper, “Make it Local” <http://www.local.gov.uk/local-government-white-paper>
- Change of Government?