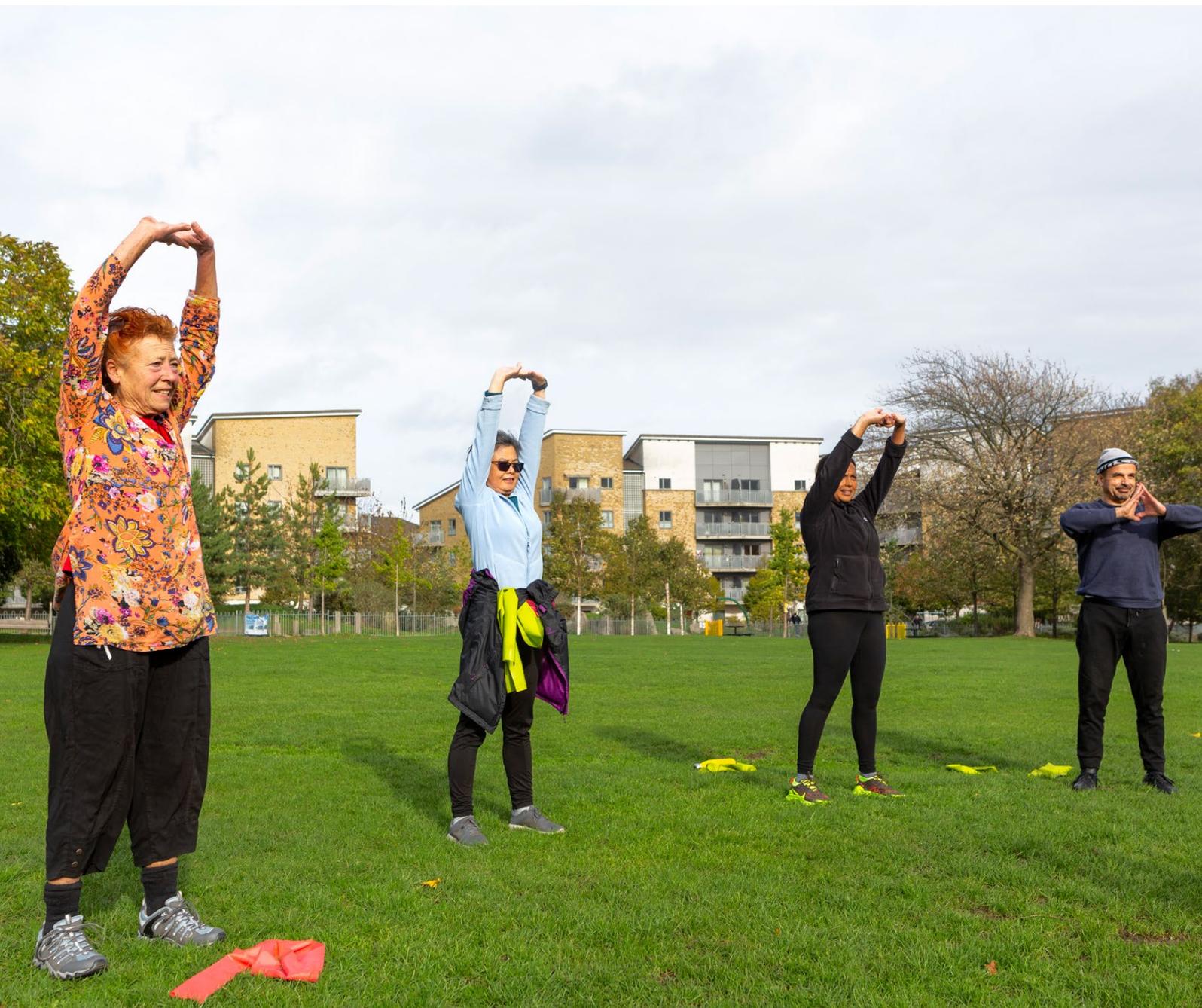


Islington Active Together strategy

2023 - 2030



ISLINGTON

For a more equal future



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Foreword

I am delighted to endorse this strategy, as part of our ambition to build a more equal future for Islington. We are fortunate in having a wide-ranging and diverse physical activity offer in Islington, and have made significant investment into our leisure facilities, parks and open spaces, sports organisations and communities.

However, many more residents could benefit from the powerful impact of being active. There are deep-rooted health inequalities in our borough, and these have been further impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis. Our Islington Active Together strategy outlines our determination as a borough to tackle these inequalities by focusing on our least active residents, supporting groups who are traditionally less likely to participate in physical activity, and maximising the potential for physical activity in supporting mental health and preventing and managing long-term conditions.

We cannot though do this on our own. The council, NHS, Voluntary and Community Sector and local residents all have a part to play in influencing people to be more active. This strategy therefore provides a framework for bringing us together to work towards our shared goals and ambitions for Islington.

Cllr Nurullah Turan



Our vision and guiding principles

Our vision is to **empower our communities to be more physically active.**

We will use the following guiding principles to underpin the delivery of the Islington Active Together strategy:

- Focusing our resources on the **residents who are least active** and empowering them to become more active.
- **Challenging inequalities** in access to, and participation in, physical activity. We will focus on children and young people, and the groups who are traditionally less likely to be physically active, including people living with a disability or long-term health condition, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities, women and girls, older adults, and people living in areas of higher deprivation.
- Recognising the powerful impact that physical activity can have in preventing and managing a range of **long-term health conditions**, including supporting good mental health.

Introduction

The benefits of physical activity

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

– Academy of Medical Royal Colleges

Being regularly active has profound benefits for our physical health, our mental health and wellbeing, our quality of life, and our ability to live independently. It can also help connect and strengthen our communities and has huge value to our local and national economy.

In children and young people, regular physical activity is associated with improved learning and attainment, better mental health and cardiovascular fitness, and contributes to being a healthy weight¹.

In adults, there is strong evidence to demonstrate that physical activity can help to prevent or manage many common conditions such as type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease and some cancers¹. It also helps keep symptoms under control, prevents additional conditions from developing and reduces inequalities².

Having an active population benefits the health and care system and has wider social benefits for individuals and communities too¹. These include increased productivity in the workplace and reducing congestion and air pollution through active travel instead of driving¹.

¹ Public Health England. Health Matters: Physical Activity – Prevention and Management of Long-term Conditions. [Online]. Available from <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-matters-physical-activity/health-matters-physical-activity-prevention-and-management-of-long-term-conditions> [Accessed 22nd August 2022].

² Sport England. Active Lives Adult Survey November 2020–21 Report. [Online]. Available from <https://www.sportengland.org/news/activity-levels-see-partial-recovery-covid-19> [Accessed 22nd August 2022].

How active should we be?

The UK Chief Medical Officers' (CMO) physical activity guidelines published in 2019 stated that any activity is better than none, and more is better still³. Every minute counts and it is never too late to start. The amount of time being sedentary should be minimised, and when physically possible long periods of inactivity should be broken up with at least light physical activity.

- Under 1s should aim for at least 30 minutes of tummy time across the day
- Children aged 1-5 should aim for at least 180 minutes of activity every day
- Children and young people aged 5-18 should aim for an average of at least 60 minutes per day across the week
- Children and young people living with a disability are advised to aim for 20 minutes of physical activity per day, with strength and balance activities 3 times per week
- Adults and older adults should aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate intensity per week or at least 75 minutes of vigorous intensity per week (or a combination of both). They should also aim for muscle strengthening activities on at least 2 days a week.
- Adults living with a disability are advised to make physical activity a daily habit. For substantial health gains, the guidance suggests at least 150 minutes each week of moderate intensity activity and doing strength and balance activities on at least 2 days per week.
- Pregnant women should aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate intensity activity every week and do muscle strengthening activities twice a week.

UK Chief Medical Officers' physical activity guidelines

Doing some physical exercise is good and every minute counts so it's never too late to start.

Build strength and improve balance

Keep **muscles, bones,** and **joints** strong



Be active

Including **moderate,** **vigorous,** and **very vigorous** activities



Minimise sedentary time

Break up periods of inactivity



³ Department of Health and Social Care. Physical activity guidelines: UK Chief Medical Officers' report. [Online]. Available from <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/physical-activity-guidelines-uk-chief-medical-officers-report> [Accessed 27th January 2023].

The local Islington picture

Demographics



Islington has an estimated population of 245,636 residents⁴



71% of residents live in flats, often without access to green space⁵



Over the next 5 years the population is projected to increase by 3%, with an increase in residents aged 35+⁶



The greatest proportion of residents fall within the age group 25-34⁷



Islington is one of the most densely populated local authority with 16,097 people per square Km. This is almost triple the London average.⁸

Deprivation

Islington is the 6th most deprived borough in London. Deprivation varies across wards⁹

27.5% of children (under age 15) in Islington live in income deprived households.¹⁰

33% of adults over the age of 60 are affected by income deprivation. This ranking is the 4th highest in London.¹¹

Islington Ethnicity Breakdown¹²

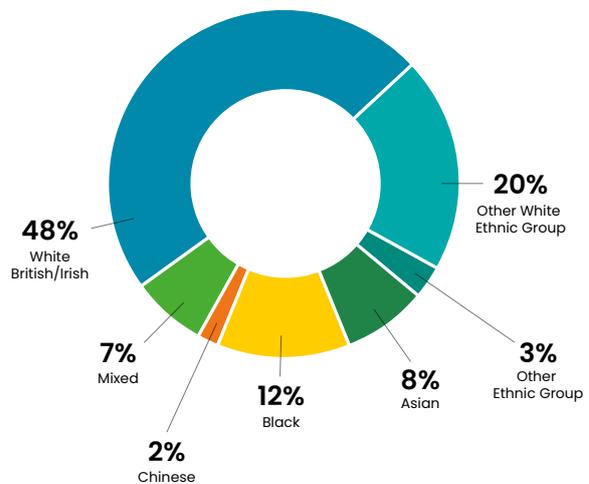


Figure 1. Islington Ethnicity Breakdown

⁴ GLA 2020-based housing-led population projections

⁵ Future Parks Accelerator- "understanding the health and benefits of Camden & Islington parks"

⁶ GLA 2020-based housing-led population projections

⁷ GLA 2020-based housing-led population projections

⁸ ONS population Estimates: Population density for the local authorities in the UK, mid-2001 to mid-2020

⁹ English Indices of Deprivation 2019

¹⁰ Ministry of housing, communities, & Local Government: Child Poverty, Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (2019)

¹¹ Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government- Income Deprivation Affecting Older People Index (2019)

¹² GLA 2016-based housing-led ethnic group population projections

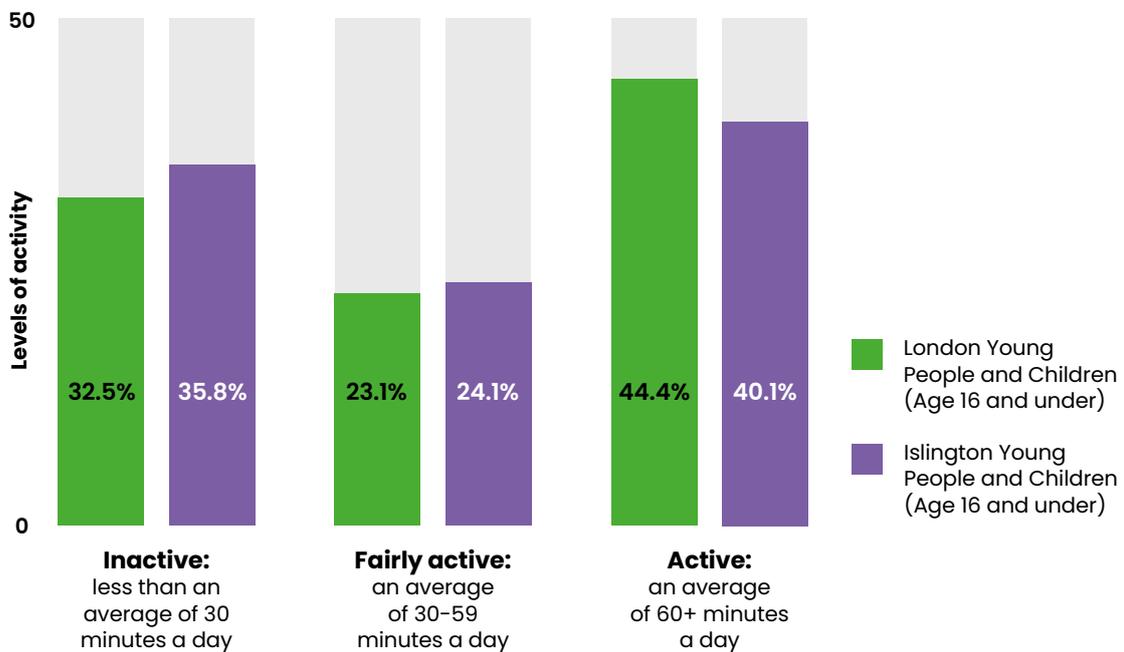


Physical Activity Levels

Activity levels in children and young people

2 in 5 children and young people in Islington are meeting the recommended physical activity guidelines, which is lower than the London average.

Figure 2. Physical activity measures in young people and children (16 and under)¹³



91% of primary, and 74% of secondary school pupils usually travel to school by walking, cycling, or scooting.¹⁴

In a recent survey of Islington pupils, **31% of children** in primary schools and **33% of secondary school students** said that they did not do 60 minutes of physical activity on a single day during the week before the survey.¹⁵

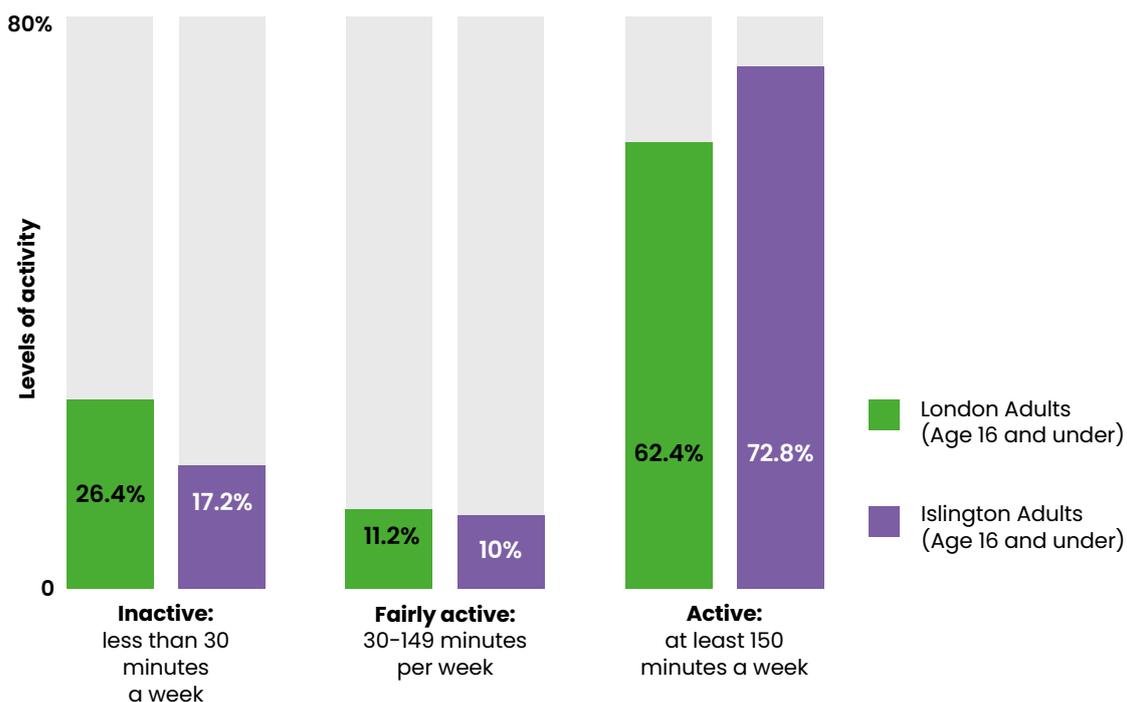
¹³ Active Lives: 2020-2021

¹⁴ The Islington Children and Young People’s Health and Wellbeing Survey 2021

¹⁵ The Islington Children and Young People’s Health and Wellbeing Survey 2021

Activity levels in Adults

Figure 3. Physical activity measures in Adults (16+)¹⁶



Islington has some one of the **highest levels of adult activity in England**. However, approximately **27.2% of the adult population** does not meet recommended physical activity levels.¹⁷

More than **4 in 5 daily trips** for Islington's residents are made by walking, cycling, or using public transport¹⁸. Half of all trips are made on foot or cycling.¹⁹

¹⁶ Active Lives 2020-2021

¹⁷ Active Lives 2020-2021

¹⁸ Camden and Islington Parks for Health Strategy 2022-2030

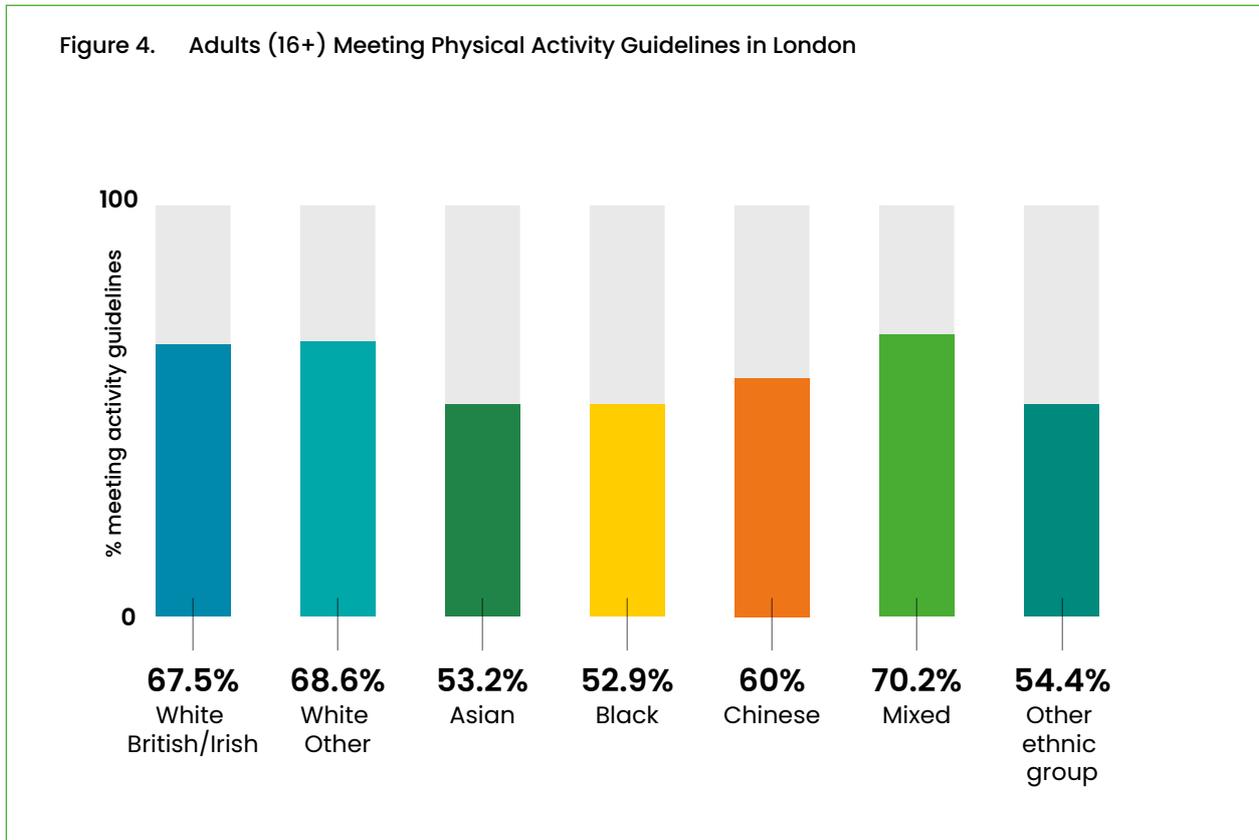
¹⁹ Islington Transport Strategy 2019-2041

Inequalities in activity and overall health

Inequalities in activity

Although adult activity levels in Islington are higher than the national average, there are persistent inequalities in the activity levels of certain population groups.

Ethnicity²⁰



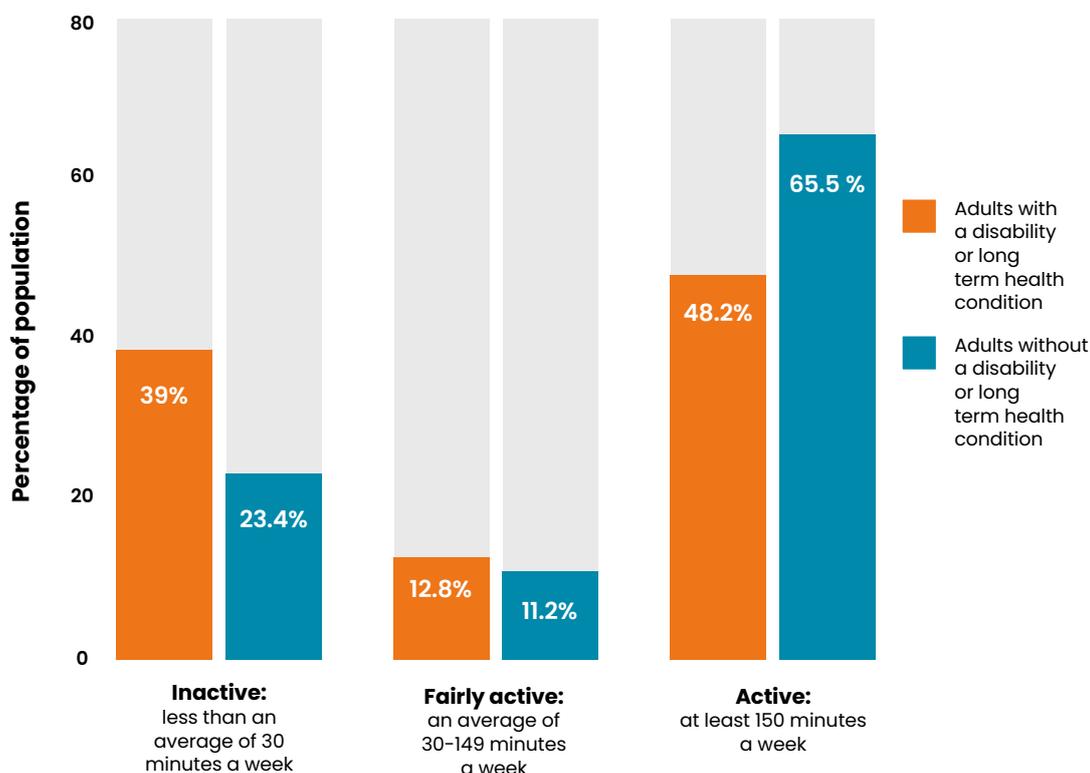
 Black, Asian and ethnic minority groups are **less likely to be active** compared to White ethnic groups²¹

20 Active Lives Survey 2020–2021

21 Active Lives Survey 2020–2021

Disability and Long-Term Health Conditions²²

Figure 5. Physical activity measures in Adults (16+) in London



Individuals with a disability or long term health conditions are **less likely to be active**, and **more likely to be inactive**.²³

1,224 Islington residents have been diagnosed with learning disabilities.²⁴

Barriers to Activity²⁵

Recent research conducted with Islington residents highlighted particular things which make it more difficult to be active when living with a long term health condition. These include the cost of activities, finding it difficult to incorporate activity into daily life, needing more support from professionals, and lack of knowledge about opportunities to be active locally.

²² Active Lives Survey 2020-2021

²³ Active Lives Survey 2020-2021

²⁴ Office for Health Improvement & Disparities- Public Health Profiles- Fingertips Data

²⁵ Camden and Islington- Supporting Inactive Adults with a Long Term Health Condition to be Physically Active (2021)

Other Groups that Experience Inequalities

National research suggests that certain groups are less likely to meet the recommended levels of physical activity



Those in routine/semi routine jobs, and those who are long-term unemployed are less likely to be active.²⁶



Women are less likely to meet physical activity guidelines, compared with men.²⁸



Teenage girls are less likely to be active, compared to teenage boys.²⁷



Individuals who are aged 75+ experience sharp declines in activity levels.²⁹

Please note that the data on inequalities is London Level data. Local data is not available due to small survey sample sizes.

Health

We know that physical activity can have a powerful impact on health and wellbeing, helping to prevent or manage a range of the following long term conditions.



44% of adults are estimated to be overweight or obese in Islington³⁰



16% (38,952 individuals) of residents registered at a GP have been diagnosed with depression³³



4.5% of adults in Islington have been diagnosed with diabetes³¹



1.7% residents registered at a GP have been diagnosed with serious mental illness³⁴

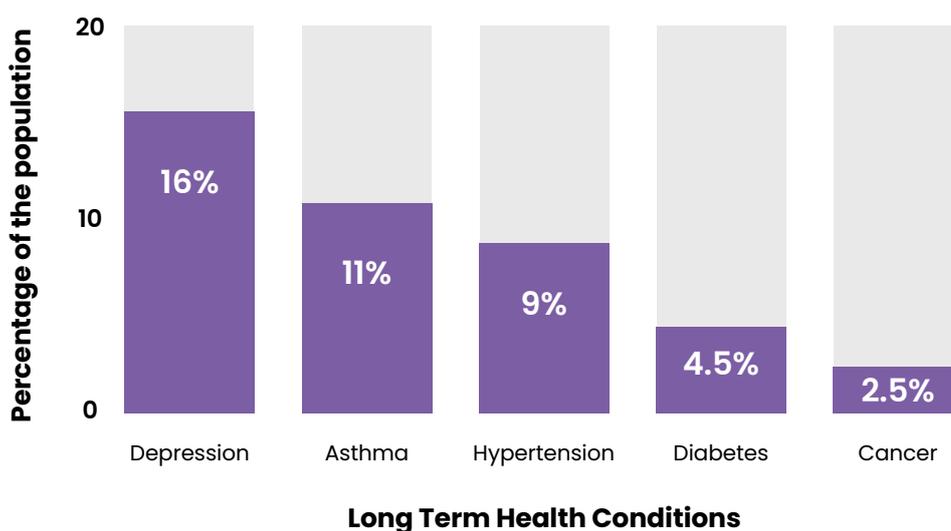


37% of children leaving Islington primary schools are overweight or obese³²

- 26 Active Lives Data 2020/21
- 27 Islington Children and Young People's Health and Wellbeing Survey 2021/22
- 28 Active Lives Data 2020/21
- 29 Active Lives Data 2020/21
- 30 Active Lives Data 2020/21
- 31 Population Health HealthIntent Platform 2022
- 32 Islington National Child Measurement Programme 2019/2020
- 33 Population Health HealthIntent Platform 2022
- 34 Population Health HealthIntent Platform 2022

Long Term Health Conditions³⁵

Figure 6. Top 5 Long Term Health Conditions that affect Islington residents



22% of Islington residents registered at a GP practice have at least one Long Term Health Condition.³⁶

Healthcare professionals advocating for physical activity³⁷

In a recent survey of health professionals in Islington, 83% said that they frequently discussed physical activity with their patients, although 56% said that they were not so familiar with the recommended guidelines for physical activity.

Health professionals told us that having more information and resources about the physical activity opportunities available in Islington would be helpful to their role.

³⁵ Population health HealthIntent Platform 2022

³⁶ Population health HealthIntent Platform 2022

³⁷ Camden and Islington Public Health Clinician Engagement Report- Supporting Patients to be Physically Active, and Shaping Future Services (2021)

Islington is proud to have a wide range of facilities which support local residents to be active

Islington's Opportunities to Play and be Active

8 Leisure Centres

Did you know... Sobell Leisure Centre is one of the largest in the country, and future projects include building a new Finsbury leisure centre!

Investing back into our facilities... Our leisure centre provider in Islington (GLL) has invested over £14 million into our facilities

Generating income for local good.... The money generated from our leisure contract is invested into subsidising pricing and community programmes for local Islington residents.

15 Swimming Pools

Making waves... This includes the council's four swimming pool venues, which have a strong community programme of free lessons, and a thriving swimming club.

More than 100 parks and open spaces

Play for everyone... We are proud to offer free play sessions at our park sports facilities to ensure availability to everyone.

26 artificial and 3G pitches

Opportunities for younger people... Market Road football pitches host two of the most well-established leagues in London including Camden and Islington Youth League that has over 200 teams playing midweek football.

50 sports clubs

Did you know... Islington Tennis Centre has the highest usage in the country for a facility of its type.

21 community centres offering opportunities to be active

Bringing physical activity to local estates... Islington Council, Arsenal in the Community, Access to Sport, and local community centres work together to offer a programme of physical activity on estates which is targeted towards inactive residents.

More than 60 sports and types of physical activity on offer

Benefiting from our local premier league football club.... Arsenal in the community delivers activities and education training programmes to thousands of local young people and adults. It has invested into more than 20 local facilities like Elthorne Park and Harvist Estate.

.....
Enabling young people's futures... Access to Sports run coaching courses that support Islington's young people to become employable sports coaches.

>400 cycle hangars on residential streets

Did you know... Islington has an ambitious programme of cycle training for both children and adults. The council is also committed to supporting schools to participate in the STARS programme which encourages walking, cycling and scooting to school

.....
Investing in local children... Islington primary schools receive £1m every year from the government to deliver a range of extra-curricular physical activity programmes. The council's PE, school sport, and physical activity team supports the delivery of sport in schools

8 Outdoor gyms

Outdoor gyms are situated in parks across Islington. They are free to use and offer a range of equipment to help residents get fit.

12 Adventure playgrounds

Did you know... adventure playgrounds are free to access for children who live or go to school in Islington? They provide a great opportunity for children to develop self-confidence and social skills, as well as keep active and healthy.

Investments in Islington's physical activity infrastructure

The council and wider community partners invest into People Friendly Streets, cycleways, adventure play, estate and physical activity infrastructure.

Capital investments planned for the strategy time period:

- £2.5 million investment from GLL into leisure centres over the remaining life of the leisure contract (£11.5 million invested to date)
- £2.52 million council capital investment into centre infrastructure
- £7.5 million investment into our parks and open spaces
- £1.5 million investment into green infrastructure investment into the public realm
- £10 million investment into Thriving Neighbourhoods (a portion of this to be invested in infrastructure to support physical activity including new play, pitches, cycle facilities, and food growing)
- £20 million investment into People Friendly Streets and cycle lanes
- £0.5 million each year of investment into the roll out of on-street residential bike parking (bike hangars)
- New Finsbury Leisure Centre residential homes, a medical centre, and a new energy centre

Partnership programmes that are jointly funded and commissioned across Leisure, Public Health, Homes and Communities, GLL and Arsenal in the Community:

- Islington Football Development Partnership provides a programme for young people across the borough
- Active Estates Partnership targets older adults, families, and children on estates
- School Sports Team supports schools and early years settings in their whole school/ setting approach to health and wellbeing through the Healthy Schools and Healthy Early Years programmes

Leisure contract revenue and Public Health funding that is invested into borough-wide physical activity services

- GLL Sports Development Team- £400,000 per annum
- Subsidy to support operation of Caledonian Pool- £200,000 per annum
- Grants to sports clubs and voluntary groups- £26,500 per annum
- London Youth Games (regional sports competition)- £47,000 per annum

- Free swimming lesson programme- £54,000 per annum
- Get Active Specialists (behaviour change and health coaching support for inactive individuals living with a long term health condition)- £90,000 per annum for 2-year pilot
- Active Travel promotion through school travel plans, cycle training, and the operation and management of the council's bike hangar network, made up of a mixture of revenue and capital- estimated at £400,000 per annum

Key voluntary sector and community partners that provide a significant physical activity offer funded through the council and grant funding

- **Camden & Islington Youth League** – 220 community teams from 55 different sports clubs with 14 players registered per team. Generates over 3000 players, 220 football coaches, over 10 referees, and hundreds of volunteers
- **Anaconda Swimming Club** – 180 Squad Members and 450 Learn to Swim members. Generates over £150k per annum, employing teachers and operating across our pools predominantly at Cally and Beacon High School
- **Access to Sports** – 6 full-time equivalent staff and 40-50 sessional coaches with over 5000 individual participants last year. Over two thirds of this funding is directed to Islington via community estate-based delivery programmes and coach education programmes. Access to Sports operate coaching courses and activity programmes, and are an active employer that supports young people in becoming sports coaches and leaders
- **Arsenal in the Community** – Invest £2.55 million per annum and have a community team that consists of 27 full-time equivalent community staff and approximately 50 sessional coaches. The organisation manages educational training programmes for young people, gap year programmes, targeted adult programmes, and delivers 3 grant giving strands to the local community via The Arsenal Foundation. Most programmes are free to users and 85% of their expenditure is directed towards Islington programmes

Please Note: This does not capture all the investment and activity taking place but is intended to provide a sense of the scale of resources that supports and underpins the commitments of the strategy.

The impact of Covid-19 and cost-of-living crisis on physical activity

The Covid-19 pandemic had a profound effect on our residents. Social distancing, restrictions on movement, and the intermittent closure of early years settings, schools, leisure centres and physical activity providers all had an impact on people's physical activity habits. The pandemic led to a reduction in the activity levels of both children and adults, with particular groups more affected than others³⁸. National figures demonstrated that inequalities were particularly exacerbated for the least affluent, Asian people, adults living with a disability, and people with a long-term health condition³⁹.

At the same time, the leisure and physical activity sector in Islington reported widespread disruption to their ability to deliver physical activity opportunities during the pandemic⁴⁰. Although the provision of virtual physical activity led to unexpected positive outcomes, 60% of local providers who responded to our local survey said that their organisation had suffered a financial burden due to the pandemic⁴¹.

Having emerged out of the pandemic, we now face a cost-of-living crisis which brings additional challenges for residents and deliverers of sport and physical activity in the borough. Initial insights from London Sport has highlighted that half of adults have reported making difficult choices and cutting back on spending on sport and physical activity due to the rising cost of living⁴². Meanwhile, physical activity providers face unprecedented challenges from utility price rises, which has a disproportionate impact on high energy consuming facilities such as swimming pools. Despite the challenges of the cost-of-living crisis, it is important to recognise that many of the most effective activities that can be built into people's daily lives are free or low cost.

38 Sport England. Active Lives Adult Survey November 2020–21 Report. [Online]. Available from <https://www.sportengland.org/news/activity-levels-see-partial-recovery-covid-19> [Accessed 22nd August 2022].

39 London Sport. London 2012 Games Legacy Report. [Online]. Available from <http://londonsport.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/London-2012-report-1.pdf> [Accessed 22nd August 2022].

40 Islington Council. Secondary School Girls Physical Activity Engagement in Islington: Student and Staff Consultation (2020)

41 Islington Council. Secondary School Girls Physical Activity Engagement in Islington: Student and Staff Consultation (2020).

42 Islington Leisure team. Islington Sports and Physical Activity Organisations Post Covid-19 Survey (2021).



Our priorities

Priority areas

We will seek to achieve our vision to empower our communities to be more physically active, through the following five priority areas for action:

1. Active facilities: Maximising the impact of, and access to, our physical activity venues and facilities, including leisure centres, swimming pools, Multi-Use Games Areas, and school sports centres.

2. Active communities: Strengthening the role of communities in delivering physical activity, including sports clubs, community groups, schools, early years settings, businesses and workplaces.

3. Active environments: Ensuring that our high streets, neighbourhoods, parks, and open spaces are appealing, promote active travel and influence residents to move more.

4. Active health and social care: Connecting with health and social care systems to embed physical activity as a key pathway for the prevention and management of long-term health conditions and promoting good mental health.

5. Finding ways to be physically active: Working with partners to improve information and access to where and how residents can be active.

Consultation and engagement to inform the Islington Active Together strategy

The Islington Active Together strategy has been informed by evidence and insight on physical activity levels in Islington and developed in consultation and partnership with colleagues from across the Council, Voluntary and Community Sector, and NHS. Feedback gathered from residents and community representatives has also shaped our priorities and commitments, including:

- Surveys, focus groups and interviews with secondary school girls and PE teachers to understand barriers faced by teenage girls' in being physically active, and engage their views on how to create positive physical activity experiences for girls⁴³
- Survey of GPs and other local health professionals to understand confidence and current practice on promoting physical activity to patients⁴⁴
- Survey of local sports and physical activity organisations to understand the impact of Covid-19⁴⁵
- Survey of inactive adults with a long-term health condition, to explore barriers faced to being active and understand what support individuals need⁴⁶
- Resident feedback from the Let's Talk Islington engagement work, which included themes on the green spaces, infrastructure for pedestrians and cyclists, community connectedness, opportunities for young people, and making better use of community resources⁴⁷

Linking to other relevant strategic work

Our focus will be underpinned by Islington Fairer Together⁴⁸, ensuring that physical activity has an important role to play in ensuring that everyone – whatever their background – has a decent chance for a long and healthy life.

43 Islington Council. Secondary School Girls Physical Activity Engagement in Islington: Student and Staff Consultation (2020).

44 Camden and Islington Public Health. Supporting Patients to be Physically Active and Shaping Future Services (2021).

45 Sustrans. Active Travel Full Report – Evidence Review. [Online]. Available from https://www.sportengland.org/research-and-data/research/active-travel?section=our_research [Accessed 22nd August 2022].

46 Kettle V E, Madigan C D, Coombe A, Graham H, Thomas J J C, Chalkley A E, Daley A J. Effectiveness of Physical Activity Interventions Delivered or Prompted by Health Professionals in Primary Care Settings: Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis of Randomised Controlled Trials. *British Medical Journal*. [Online] 2022; 376. Available from <https://www.bmj.com/content/376/bmj-2021-068465> [Accessed 22nd August 2022].

47 Islington Council. Let's Talk Islington (2022).

48 Islington Fairer Together [Online]. Available from <https://islingtonfairertogether.org/> [Accessed 22nd August 2022].

A wide range of strategies are already contributing to the Islington Active Together vision, including:

- Camden and Islington Parks for Health strategy 2022–2030⁴⁹
- Islington Transport Strategy 2019–2041⁵⁰
- Giving Children the Best Start in Life: Islington Children and Families Prevention and Early Intervention Strategy 2015–2025⁵¹
- Islington Housing Strategy 2021 – 2026⁵²

Islington Active Together will also make a key contribution to future areas of strategic work, including the upcoming Carers Strategy and Dementia Strategy.

49 Camden and Islington Councils. Parks for Health Strategy 2022–2030. [Online]. Available from <https://www.islington.gov.uk/sports-parks-and-trees/parks-and-green-space/parks-for-health> [Accessed 22nd August 2022].

50 Islington Council. Transport Strategy 2019–2041. [Online]. Available from <https://www.islington.gov.uk/consultations/2018/transport-strategy> [Accessed 22nd August 2022].

51 Islington Council. Giving Children the Best Start in Life: Islington Children and Families Prevention and Early Intervention Strategy 2015–2025. [Online]. Available from <https://www.islington.gov.uk/children-and-families/partnerships-and-strategy> [Accessed 22nd August 2022].

52 Islington Council. Housing Strategy. [Online]. Available from <https://www.islington.gov.uk/housing/housing-development-and-involvement/housing-strategy> [Accessed 22nd August 2022].

Priority area 1: Active Facilities

Maximising the impact of, and access to, our physical activity venues and facilities, including leisure centres, swimming pools, Multi-Use Games Areas, and school sports centres.



Why is this important?

Islington already has a range of facilities and infrastructure that directly contribute to enabling residents to be active, from the provision of swimming pools to the iconic Emirates Stadium. It has a history of providing facilities for its communities and places high value on ensuring that these are accessible to local people. The council owns facilities including leisure centres, parks, sports pitches, adventure playgrounds, outdoor gyms, and schools.

The sport and physical activity sector is a very competitive marketplace, from private boutique gyms to new shopfront studios. The commercial reality relies on our facilities providing health and fitness facilities to subsidise our swimming pools. The private sector does not provide these as they are expensive to operate. It is imperative that the council can therefore provide facilities that can compete with the quality afforded by the private sector, whilst making these available and appealing to all. Every customer that attends one of our facilities supports our ability to ensure a varied programme and affordable prices for our local communities. The leisure offer generates a significant income stream for the council which in turn subsidises other development work and enables the council to have a comprehensive range of prices and programmes for all its community ensuring subsidy is targeted at those in need.

The Council will continue to work with our leisure partner to maximise commercial opportunities and ensure we are able to navigate through the current economic challenges.

We need to:

- Ensure that our leisure contract returns to maximum full service and rental, following the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Make continued investment into the council's leisure centres. They are very popular but have been hit by Covid-19 with usage dropping from 2.2m to 1.68m visits per year.
- Operate our facilities efficiently and contribute to the borough's net zero carbon policy and develop Energy efficiency and reduction strategies.
- Promote the council's non-traditional facilities for physical activity including parks, adventure playgrounds, school sports facilities, and some sports club buildings.

Our commitments

- We will work with our leisure provider to increase membership levels, keep the cost of membership low, and provide an offer which targets population groups which are more likely to be inactive.
- We will invest in the development and refurbishment of our leisure facilities, including rebuilding a new Finsbury Leisure Centre.
- We will support and enable investment in community-based facilities, including adventure playgrounds, schools, and voluntary sector provision.
- We will work to ensure that our facilities are contributing to Islington's net zero carbon policy through improved energy efficiency.

Priority area 2: Active Communities

Strengthening the role of communities in delivering physical activity, including sports clubs, community groups, schools, early years settings, businesses and workplaces.



Why is this important?

Islington has a strong and diverse network of community groups, sports clubs, early years settings, schools, businesses and workplaces which use sport and physical activity as a tool to improve the lives of residents and strengthen our communities.

Positive childhood experiences of sport and physical activity help to lay the foundations for an active and healthy life. However, many children and young people are not active enough which impacts on their physical literacy and enjoyment of being active. This is particularly true for girls, young people living with a disability, young people with a long-term health condition, young people from Black and Asian ethnic groups, and those from less affluent families⁵³. Our early years settings, schools and sports clubs are continuing to address these inequalities, driving change for children and young people through initiatives such as The Daily Mile, Healthy Early Years Programme, Healthy Schools Programme, and much more.

Adults face similar inequalities in participation in physical activity, and our community centres, estate-based activities, leisure centre concessionary schemes, and opportunities through local clubs and workplaces, provide important opportunities to enable more people to be active.

Our clubs, community organisations, schools and settings know their communities and understand where inequalities lie on a hyper-local level. These include Arsenal in the Community, Access to Sports, Islington Play Association, GLL, community centres and many other grassroots organisations. The ProActive Islington partnership aims to bring together these key stakeholders to influence the sport and physical activity landscape across the borough, making further progress on tackling inactivity.

⁵³ Sport England. Active Lives Adult Survey November 2020–21 Report. [Online]. Available from <https://www.sportengland.org/news/activity-levels-see-partial-recovery-covid-19> [Accessed 22nd August 2022].

Our commitments

- We will support early years settings and schools to deliver physical activity opportunities to improve health, wellbeing and educational outcomes for pupils, with a particular emphasis on the least active children and girls.
- We will collaborate with residents to promote the role of local estates in encouraging positive physical activity habits.
- We will expand opportunities for swimming (including lessons), with a particular focus on supporting Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic groups to access the available provision.
- We will work in partnership with local physical activity providers to increase community participation and break down barriers for inactive residents.
- We will support workplaces in Islington to promote physical activity.
- We will enable employment and work experience opportunities within the local sport and physical activity sector.

Priority area 3: Active Environments

Ensuring that our high streets, neighbourhoods, parks and open spaces are appealing, promote active travel and encourage residents to move more.



Why is this important?

The places and spaces around us can have a positive or negative impact on whether, how, when, and where we move. Evidence suggests that environments which promote walking, have quality parks and playgrounds, and provide infrastructure for active transport, are likely to generate positive impacts on activity in children and adults⁵⁴. Active design is about inspiring and informing the layout of cities, neighbourhoods, streets and open spaces, to promote sport and good physical activity habits⁵⁵. With 26,000 council owned properties in Islington, estates also provide a wealth of opportunities for creating active environments, from spaces to play and bike storage, to community gardens and opportunities for food growing.

Active travel – which is the everyday journeys we make through walking or cycling – has a major part to play in increasing physical activity levels. It can offer a convenient, accessible and affordable way to move more⁵⁶, whilst also contributing to better air quality⁵⁷. For those with busy lives, it may be one of the few opportunities to create a regular habit. While walking and cycling are already the most popular ways to get around Islington, continued changes to the environment can support residents to incorporate these activities into their routines. As outlined in the borough’s Transport Strategy⁵⁸, the introduction of low traffic neighbourhoods, School Streets and cycleways in Islington are already creating more space for those who want to enjoy the borough as they walk or cycle. We want to build on this success, so more residents are engaged in active travel.

⁵⁴ Smith m, Hosking J, Woodward A, Witten K, MacMillan A, Field A, Baas P, Mackie H. Systematic literature review of built environment effects on physical activity and active transport – an update and new findings on health equity. *International Journal of Behavioural Nutrition and Physical Activity*. [Online] 2017; 14:158. Available from <https://ijbnpa.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12966-017-0613-9#citeas> [Accessed 22nd August 2022].

⁵⁵ Sport England. Revamped Active Design Guide Arrives. [Online]. Available from <https://www.sportengland.org/news/active-design-guide> [Accessed 22nd August 2022].

⁵⁶ Sustrans. Active Travel Full Report – Evidence Review. [Online]. Available from https://www.sportengland.org/research-and-data/research/active-travel?section=our_research [Accessed 22nd August 2022].

⁵⁷ UK Parliament. Active Travel: Increasing Levels of Walking and Cycling in England. [Online]. Available from <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmtrans/1487/148704.htm> [Accessed 22nd August 2022].

⁵⁸ Islington Fairer Together [Online]. Available from <https://islingtonfairertogether.org/> [Accessed 22nd August 2022].

Parks and green spaces offer a wide range of benefits to health and wellbeing, and populations with access to a park are 24% more likely to meet physical activity recommendations⁵⁹. Islington is one of the UK's most densely populated local authority area, making access to parks and green spaces an essential way for residents to connect with nature, be active, and connect with the wider community. Our Parks for Health strategy outlines plans to improve the overall quality and accessibility of our parks and open spaces to support the health and wellbeing of Islington residents, with a particular focus on our most inactive communities⁶⁰.

Play is an essential part of the wellbeing, social and emotional development of children, and is enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child⁶¹. Despite Islington being a densely populated borough, children should still have safe and attractive play spaces within walking distance of their homes. In line with the Mayor of London's ambition to make London a child-friendly city, Islington has good quality and stimulating play provision through adventure playgrounds and is working to ensure that developments and the wider public realm promote opportunities to play across the borough.

Our commitments:

- We will develop and improve Islington's infrastructure to make it easier and more accessible for residents to walk and cycle, as outlined in the borough's transport strategy.
- We will encourage residents to use active travel, through supporting schools, providing affordable bike purchase schemes, delivering cycle training and promoting walking.
- We will invest in our parks and green spaces to enable them to better support health and wellbeing, and increase greening opportunities in the wider public realm.
- We will invest in our estates' physical activity infrastructure through the Thriving Neighbourhoods programme.
- We will enable children to explore nature and play freely, recognising the benefits this can have on health, wellbeing, physical development and positive educational outcomes.
- We will encourage families and young people to be active and move more around the borough through the use of digital platforms.

⁵⁹ Vivid Economics. Natural Capital Accounts for Public Green Space in London. [Online]. Available from https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/11015viv_natural_capital_account_for_london_methodology_v2.pdf [Accessed 22nd August 2022].

⁶⁰ Islington Council. Let's Talk Islington (2022).

⁶¹ United Nations. Convention on the Rights of the Child. [Online]. Available from <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-child> [Accessed 22nd August 2022].

Priority area 4: Active Health and Social Care

Connecting with health and social care systems to embed physical activity as a key pathway for the prevention and management of long-term health conditions and promoting good mental health.



Why is this important?

Physical activity has been described by the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges as “The Miracle Cure”. Being regularly active can have such a vital role in preventing and treating a wide range of long-term health conditions promoting independence. Taking the first steps to being more active can be challenging for people in poorer health, and people living with a long-term health condition or disability are less likely to be active⁶². A recent survey of local adults in Camden and Islington living with a long-term health condition or disability highlighted that barriers to being active include: a perceived lack of strength and stamina to exercise, affordability of activities, feeling anxious about being active, and not having enough local opportunities⁶³.

Resident quote:

“I am not far away from my 80th birthday so there are limitations as to what I can manage to do. I need to be able to access guidance/activities that are appropriate to my age and condition”.

Insight from Carers UK has highlighted that unpaid carers over the age of 55 are less likely than other adults to be active, leaving them in poorer health than the general population⁶⁴. This research highlighted particular challenges in finding the time to be active, not being motivated, activities not being affordable, and not having anyone to go with.

⁶² Active Lives Data 2020/21

⁶³ Camden and Islington Public Health. Supporting inactive adults with a long term health condition to be physically active (2021).

⁶⁴ Carers UK. Carers and Physical Activity: A Study of the Barriers, Motivations and Experiences of Unpaid Carers Aged 55 and Over in England. [Online]. Available from <https://www.carersuk.org/for-professionals/policy/policy-library/carers-and-physical-activity-a-study-of-the-barriers-motivations-and-experiences-of-unpaid-carers-aged-55-and-over-in-england> [Accessed 22nd August 2022].

We have worked in partnership with the health and social care sector in Islington to explore how we can promote physical activity and tackle inequalities faced by residents. This will include working with:

- **Healthcare professionals:** Health professional-led physical activity interventions are very effective⁶⁵, and evidence shows that 1 in 4 people would be more active if advised by their GP or Nurse⁶⁶. However, a recent survey of local health professionals in Camden and Islington highlighted that a lack of time and competing priorities were barriers to discussing physical activity with patients. Health professionals suggested that additional training and information about the local physical activity offer would be helpful to support their role in championing physical activity.
- **Social Prescribing Link Workers:** Islington has social prescribing link workers within primary care teams. They support patients with long-term conditions and complex needs and are well placed to promote the benefits and opportunities for being physically active in Islington. This will build on the work that has been undertaken to promote the benefits and opportunities offered by Islington parks through green social prescribing as part of the Parks for Health strategy.
- **Adult Social Care:** Currently, 3,456 individuals access long-term adult social care services in Islington⁶⁷, and the council works to ensure that residents can live healthy, fulfilling, and independent lives. Being physically active can make a significant contribution to this aspiration, and evidence suggests that physical activity interventions to maintain mobility and prevent frailty have the potential to improve quality of life for older people at any age⁶⁸. With anticipated future growth in demand for Adult Social Care and an ageing population, physical activity provides an important opportunity for early intervention and prevention.

65 Kettle V E, Madigan C D, Coombe A, Graham H, Thomas J J C, Chalkley A E, Daley A J. Effectiveness of Physical Activity Interventions Delivered or Prompted by Health Professionals in Primary Care Settings: Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis of Randomised Controlled Trials. *British Medical Journal*. [Online] 2022; 376. Available from <https://www.bmj.com/content/376/bmj-2021-068465> [Accessed 22nd August 2022].

66 Orrow G, Kinmonth A L, Sanderson S, et al. Effectiveness of Physical Activity Promotion Based in Primary Care: Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis of Randomised Controlled Trials. [Online]. 2014. Available from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK121691/> [Accessed 22nd August 2022].

67 NHS Digital. LTS001a. [Online]. Available from <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/data-collections-and-data-sets/data-collections/social-care-collection-materials-2022/salt-data-return-2021-2022-guidance/lts001a?key=> [Accessed 22nd August 2022].

68 Groessl E J, Kaplan E M, Rejeski J, Reid K, Spring B, Pahor M. Physical Activity and Performance Impact Long-term Quality of Life in Older Adults at Risk for Major Mobility Disability. *American Journal of Preventative Medicine*. [Online] 2019; 56:1. Available from [https://www.ajpmonline.org/article/S0749-3797\(18\)32268-2/fulltext](https://www.ajpmonline.org/article/S0749-3797(18)32268-2/fulltext) [Accessed 22nd August 2022].

Our commitments:

- We will support health and social care professionals to promote physical activity more easily and effectively in their daily contact with residents.
- We will ensure that it is easier to signpost residents (including patients, service users and carers) to appropriate, accessible and affordable physical activity opportunities, such as the local leisure centre offer, community physical activity providers, and the Parks for Health offer.
- We will work closely with schemes that can help connect less active people to local opportunities to be active, including well established social prescribing schemes.
- We will work with social care services and providers (for children, young people and adults) to maximise opportunities for physical activity within contract specifications and service delivery.
- We will engage with residents with a disability, long-term health condition and mental health condition to promote the benefits and opportunities for being active in Islington.

Priority area 5: Finding Ways to be Physically Active

Working with partners to improve information and access to where and how residents can be active.



Why is this important?

We have a strong physical activity offer in Islington with a wide variety of activities being delivered through a range of physical activity providers. However, residents and professionals in Islington say that it is difficult to know what opportunities are available to be active in the borough. As part of the Let's Talk Islington engagement, residents felt that we are “miss[ing] a trick” in promoting local opportunities⁶⁹. Having surveyed residents living with a long-term condition, three-quarters of respondents said that having information about free and low-cost physical activities locally would be helpful in enabling them to be more active⁷⁰. Similarly, health professionals have told us that a lack of up-to-date information about the community physical activity offer is a real barrier to discussing physical activity with their patients⁷¹. A national survey commissioned by Sport England found that people also find it twice as easy to order takeaway food online than to book a sport or fitness class⁷².

Making it easier to find ways to be physically active will benefit residents and referrers, whilst also boosting and promoting the work of local physical activity providers.

Our commitments:

- We will improve residents' awareness of the local physical activity offer, making it easier for people to access these opportunities.
- We will support and grow the number of physical activity providers promoting their offer.

⁶⁹ Smith m, Hosking J, Woodward A, Witten K, MacMillan A, Field A, Baas P, Mackie H. Systematic literature review of built environment effects on physical activity and active transport – an update and new findings on health equity. *International Journal of Behavioural Nutrition and Physical Activity*. [Online] 2017; 14:158. Available from <https://ijbnpa.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12966-017-0613-9#citeas> [Accessed 22nd August 2022].

⁷⁰ Kettle V E, Madigan C D, Coombe A, Graham H, Thomas J J C, Chalkley A E, Daley A J. Effectiveness of Physical Activity Interventions Delivered or Prompted by Health Professionals in Primary Care Settings: Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis of Randomised Controlled Trials. *British Medical Journal*. [Online] 2022; 376. Available from <https://www.bmj.com/content/376/bmj-2021-068465> [Accessed 22nd August 2022].

⁷¹ Islington Council. Housing Strategy. [Online]. Available from <https://www.islington.gov.uk/housing/housing-development-and-involvement/housing-strategy> [Accessed 22nd August 2022].

⁷² Sport England. Call for Sport and Physical Activity Sector to Embrace Digital Revolution. [Online]. Available from <https://www.sportengland.org/news/leaders-call-on-sport-and-physical-activity-sector-to-embrace-digital-revolution#:~:text=A%20ComRes%20survey%20commissioned%20by,a%20sport%20or%20fitness%20class> [Accessed 22nd August 2022].

Governance and measuring our outcomes

The Islington Active Together strategy will be accountable to the Active Together Board, which will monitor deliverable actions and progress on physical activity outcomes for residents.

The ProActive Islington partnership will bring key physical activity stakeholders together to support the implementation of the strategy. The partnership is chaired and organised by Public Health and the Leisure Team, and consists of the following members:

- Greenspace and Leisure
- Public Health
- Active Travel
- Schools Health and Wellbeing
- Octopus Community Network
- GLL (contracted leisure centre provider)
- Arsenal in the Community
- Access to Sports
- London Sport
- Adventure Playgrounds
- Islington Play Association
- Health and care providers

How we will monitor progress against our outcomes

The strategy is supported by detailed action plans that set out specific actions for each priority. The action plans will be reviewed on an annual basis using the governance mechanism set out above. This will help us to be flexible; maximising on new opportunities and responding to the latest evidence and insight relating to physical activity.

The annual Sport England Active Lives survey provides a valuable source of information to understand how Islington residents' physical activity behaviours compare with other areas regionally and nationally. As a borough, Islington generally performs well against London and England and is situated within the top 5 most active boroughs in

London⁷³. Seventeen percent of Islington adults are estimated to be inactive, compared to approximately a quarter of people in London and nationally. Our ambition is to retain Islington’s place amongst the top 5 boroughs in London with the lowest levels of inactivity.

Although the Sport England Active Lives survey provides a valuable source of insight into physical activity behaviours, it is important to note that the survey does not highlight the persistent inequalities in activity levels between different population groups in Islington. In line with our guiding principles, we must therefore ensure an unrelenting focus on:

- Focusing our resources on the residents who are least active.
- Challenging inequalities in access to, and participation in, physical activity.
- Recognising the powerful impact that physical activity can have in preventing and managing a range of long-term health conditions.

To understand our progress in delivering the Islington Active Together strategy, we will continue to monitor the following sources of data:

Indicator	Current baseline
Overall percentage of Islington children and young people who meet the national physical activity guidelines. Source: Sport England Active Lives survey	40.1% (2020-21 academic year data)
Overall percentage of Islington adults who meet the national physical activity guidelines. Source: Sport England Active Lives survey	72.8% (November 2020-21 data)
Percentage of children and young people who usually walk, cycle or scoot to school. Source: Health Related Behaviours Questionnaire	90% primary pupils and 74% secondary students (2021-22 academic year data)
GLL membership numbers and activity, broken down by demographics Source: GLL	15,200 memberships 50% usage from concessionary usage (2019 GLL membership levels)
Number of residents referred to physical activity by an Age UK Islington social prescribing link worker Source: Islington Leisure Team	489 referrals (2021-22 financial year data)
Number of residents referred to a park by an Age UK Islington social prescribing link worker through green social prescribing Source: Islington Leisure Team	141 referrals (2021-22 financial year data)

⁷³ Sport England. Active Lives Adult Survey November 2020-21 Report. [Online]. Available from <https://www.sportengland.org/news/activity-levels-see-partial-recovery-covid-19> [Accessed 22nd August 2022].



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