

INTRODUCTION

The ukactive Blueprint sets out clear and achievable recommendations to get the nation moving.

It builds on the current impetus shaped over several notable policy documents, frameworks and consultations in the past few years, to strengthen the government's engagement with this crucial area of health, social and business policy with a clear challenge to go further.

For the first time, *The ukactive Blueprint* brings into one place the latest in evidence-based policy discourse nationally and internationally on a range of areas into one place, creating a central platform from which this movement can continue to gather pace.

It is a collection of themes that have the potential to expand on the foundation (of what is now a universal consensus) that sitting still kills and movement saves lives.

It fuses the evidence-based practice of epidemiology and public health research with the ambition and entrepreneurial flair of new technology, programmes and partnerships to get Britain moving at home, at work, in the park, pool or gym and it unites experience from the public, private and third sectors of industry into one coherent voice to get more people, more active, more often.

This document is being launched at a seminal moment for physical activity and health policy in the United Kingdom.

The Department of Culture, Media and Sport is deep into its consultation on the future strategy for 'sport', which will no doubt have a tangible impact on the funding mechanisms for physical activity and establish it more deeply within the health landscape, as well as modernising its language and direction.

Public Health England, now well-established as a body that produces evidence-based public health best practice, has been operating effectively through its regional centres, and has recently hailed the one year anniversary of *Everybody Active, Every Day*, the UK's first government-led physical activity framework.⁴

This framework built upon ukactive's own work including the report *Turning the Tide of Inactivity*,⁵ together with a concerted investment in physical activity interventions, local authorities and the active leisure sector.

It has led to a doubling of activity budgets locally and to a notable increase in the confidence of Directors of Public Health and commissioners in the effectiveness of physical activity in practice, not least through the rapid development and dissemination of research and evaluation practice through ukactive's *Identifying what works for local physical inactivity interventions* report.⁶

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⁴ Public Health England, *Everybody Active, Every Day: An evidence-based approach to physical activity*, PHE Publications, 2014

⁵ ukactive, *Turning the Tide of Inactivity*, 2014, <http://ukactive.com/downloads/managed/Turning_the_tide_of_inactivity.pdf>

⁶ ukactive Research Institute, The National Centre of Sports and Exercise Medicine Sheffield & Public Health England, *Identifying what works for local physical inactivity interventions*, PHE Publications, 2014

LOOK TO THE FUTURE

Fig 2.



The commitment from local authorities has been wide-ranging and comprehensive. In addition to the £905 million invested through sport and recreation budgets, funding of activity from the Public Health Grant has risen from 2 per cent to 4 per cent and is expected to rise again this year, testament to the impact being seen at a local level despite significant funding cuts and challenges to maintaining existing services.⁷

Scotland and Wales have led the way with legislation and tangible policies to get communities moving more. In Wales, the Active Travel Act and national Exercise on Referral Programme have had a demonstrable impact on local outcomes. In Scotland, following the successful Commonwealth Games in Glasgow, the Scottish Executive has placed activity at the top table of health, and drew up a list of targets and definitive actions to achieve a more active Scotland. The Royal Academy of Medical Colleges in Scotland has pledged to fully integrate physical activity into its core mission. In England, this has been matched by the introduction of the spiral undergraduate programme for medical schools and the GP Clinical Champions Programme.

Physical activity and its benefits span a far wider reach than simply measures introduced by the public health or medical communities. The likes of Sustrans, Living Streets and The Outdoor Industries Association have ensured that active travel, walking, cycling and using the outdoors, with all the numerous physical, social and mental health benefits it brings, have been a primary focus for the government as part of the *Walking and Cycling Investment* programme and the *Outdoor Strategy*. Following international examples from Nordic and Northern European countries, active travel remains a core part of getting more people moving.

The Richmond Group of Charities has been increasingly active within the wider physical activity sector, providing much needed condition-specific physical activity platforms and training programmes, even joining the call for an activity-led National Plan for Health Improvement led by the Prime Minister in *What is preventing progress?*⁸ as well as individual charities such as MacMillan Cancer Support, Age UK and Mind creating and delivering effective physical activity interventions of their own alongside activity providers.

Brands and private corporations have also contributed to this agenda with much needed funding, resources and emphasis. There are examples of effective co-working both within the remit of the Department of Health's Responsibility Deal and in partnership with the state through innovative community-based programmes. During a period of tight public finances, the expertise, funding and support of major brands can be instrumental in getting new projects off the ground, especially when brands adopt a credible, evidence-based approach and have a genuine commitment to getting more people active. Harnessing a brand's unique ability to galvanise new movements and engage communities also has an impact.

The physical activity sector is one of the success stories of British industry over the past decade. It has matured and grown as it continues to cater for many millions of people every day, providing essential access to health and wellbeing in every town and city in the UK.

The UK's law-making body, the Houses of Parliament, held its first debate on physical inactivity last year and the Health Select Committee's overriding message, following an inquiry into activity and diet, was 'Move more.'⁹

But although there have been positive movements, there are still areas that must be challenged and where rhetoric is yet to be matched with much-needed action. It could be said that the acceptance of the problem is still to manifest into the provision of solutions.

From the Government's *Sporting Future For All*¹⁰ through to *Moving More, Living More*¹¹ the United Kingdom has continued to experience spiralling levels of physical inactivity which are yet to level out, let alone decline in the same way as obesity, smoking and alcohol abuse.

As set out in ukactive's own *Turning the Tide of Inactivity* and *Steps to Solving Inactivity* almost one third of UK adults currently fail to meet even the minimum activity levels, causing undue pressure on all aspects of our society. Pressures which are only set to increase as the population ages and becomes increasingly at risk of non-communicable disease.

The Department of Health is still to fully meet the challenge set by the inactivity pandemic with a costed strategy to turn the tide, and the ambitions set out within the *Five Year Forward View*, citing a 'radical upgrade in preventative and public health', have not taken enough clear steps toward implementation across all networks, despite the introduction of the ring-fenced Public Health Grant which cannot be relied upon to remain eternally in place.¹²

In setting out its annual priorities for Public Health England, the Public Health Minister does not name physical activity as a core area of focus. The language of obesity and the predominance of diet in government language and strategies – in spite of MP's desire for activity to become a bigger focus – continue to hold this movement back. The focus is still on the size of Britain's waistline rather than the health of hearts, minds and communities – all of which are impacted by inactive lifestyles.

The continuing association of activity with sport, and activity often being considered only as a feeder system to grow competitive sporting practice – especially within the education system and the interests that lie therein – is partly the reason why the health sector is yet to be convinced of the merits of physical activity as an effective solution for the nation's health. If the goal is improving the health of the nation, why should we care about the manner in which people move to achieve that goal?

NICE, the government body for accrediting and authenticating new medicines, has yet to be convinced that exercise prescription models can be effective in all settings, despite more than 30 years' development, and the academic community, including the National Institute for Health Research, still doesn't prioritise research into physical activity practices applicable in real-world settings.

Women and girls, older people, disabled people and ethnic minorities remain under-represented in physical activity statistics and people from a lower socio-economic background are still far more likely to live an inactive lifestyle.

The wellbeing workforce, and the colossal role that can be played by tens of thousands of activity professionals of all descriptions in keeping the nation active, is yet to realise its full potential and employers in the activity sector face more challenges when it comes to hiring and providing jobs and careers to young people across the UK.

The fact that there are so many strands to this debate renders it even more crucial to have a central platform and an encompassing movement outside of government where the views and analysis of stakeholders with a role to play in getting people active can be collected, considered and promoted.

The ukactive Blueprint brings together a collection of stakeholders speaking to the broadest spectrum of physical activity policy. It aims to support each of these individual voices to become louder in unison while retaining their individuality.

The purpose of this document is to support government, local authorities, business and activity providers of all types to collaborate in introducing ambitious new measures in a range of areas to turn the tide of inactivity. Most of all, ukactive's Blueprint speaks to the urgency that real action is taken in the short, medium and long-term to address the need to re-embed activity back into our daily lives.

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⁷ ukactive, *Steps to Solving Inactivity*, 2014

⁸ The Richmond Group of Charities, *What is Preventing Progress?*, November 2014, <<http://www.richmondgroupofcharities.org.uk/sites/default/files/pdfs-what-is-preventing-progress-2014.pdf>>

⁹ Health Select Committee, "Impact of physical activity and diet on health", House of Commons, March 2015

¹⁰ UK Government, "A Sporting Future for All", 2000, <<http://www.lsersa.org/modernisation/sportfutureforall.pdf>>

¹¹ HM Government, *Moving More Living More*, 2014

¹² NHS, *Five Year Forward View*, 2014, <<https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/5yfv-web.pdf>>