

# Empowering communities:

## An assessment of capital investment into community wellness hubs



More people  
More active  
More often



**SPORT  
ENGLAND**



allianceleisure

# Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson, Chair, ukactive

More people, more active, more often. That is ukactive's vision, and it is something that permeates through everything we do as an organisation. To achieve this, we work with a broad coalition of partners and stakeholders who are committed to championing the fun of being active, and embedding physical activity into the heart of our communities.



However, decades of decisions have failed to consider the importance of promoting activity. This has led to an alarming decline in our health. Inactive people spend 38 per cent more days in hospital than their active counterparts<sup>1</sup>, and estimates suggest that physical inactivity is responsible for up to 37,000 premature deaths per year in England.<sup>2</sup> We must take action to reverse this.

Indeed, it is well documented that the NHS is under significant pressure. Hospital admissions have increased 3.6 per cent a year since 2003-4, which has coincided with a period of limited resources.<sup>3</sup> This means that the NHS is under huge strain, and cannot continue to meet rising demand and maintain standards of care within constrained resources indefinitely. At this year's Conservative Party Conference, Jeremy Hunt said that the NHS is not a political football, but something we all need to work together to support.<sup>4</sup> To truly support the NHS, we must work together to limit the demand for hospital care. We need to focus on prevention.

At ukactive's National Summit in 2016, I called for the Government's Industrial Strategy to lead a £1 billion regeneration scheme to transform the UK's ageing fleet of leisure centres into new community wellness hubs and the preventative frontline of the NHS. The wellness hub model, pioneered by Sport England, combines swimming pools, gyms and sports halls, with GP drop-in centres, libraries and police services, to create a one-stop-shop for public services.

Having physical activity and health services located under one roof would make it easier for GPs to prescribe exercise plans for patients battling lifestyle conditions and signpost them towards wellness professionals – while taking some of the load off hospitals. Putting physical activity – described by the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges as a miracle cure – at the heart of community infrastructure is the only long-term solution to saving the NHS from bankruptcy.

If we ensure that wellness hubs are welcoming, inclusive, well located, and focused on the needs of local people, we can ensure that they are at the heart of local communities up and down the country, and that they make a real impact on the lives of those who need these facilities the most. There is a clear demand for community assets from the public, and ukactive and Sport England are keen to see the success of integrated wellness hubs rolled out further.

The wellness hub model has demonstrated it can:

- Leverage £10 of investment from a range of sources (including the private sector and local authorities) for each £1 of lottery funding invested
- Achieve savings of around 30 per cent in both construction and operating costs
- Stimulate a 35 per cent uplift in usage by the public<sup>5</sup>

As this paper highlights, there is a strong coalition of supporters who are committed to making wellness hubs a reality throughout the country. In the case of the private sector, there are principled commitments to lead investment into community leisure. We mustn't let this opportunity pass us by. The Sporting Future and Towards an Active Nation strategies challenged the physical activity sector to think differently about getting the nation healthier. The sector is rising to this challenge, and we now need government's support and investment to deliver a decisive blow in the battle against inactivity.



Going forward we will consult with all parts of the sector – public and private alike – to ensure that their views, ideas and opinions are captured as part of this process.

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# Charles Johnston, Property Director, Sport England

Baroness Grey-Thompson is absolutely right in her call to turn leisure centres into community wellness hubs. It's a sensible use of public money given that 1 in 6 deaths is caused by inactivity – the same as smoking.

In fact, Sport England has been working in this way for nearly five years. Our new strategy 'Towards an Active Nation', which we published last year, reaffirms our belief in the value of a sustainable and strategic approach to community sport and leisure facilities.

As well as putting money into large facilities projects, we have a wealth of insight and experience in this area which we are sharing with partners who are looking at options for replacing the old leisure centres. Evidence shows that more people use new community wellness hubs, and we can leverage up to £10 of additional investment for every pound of public money we spend. And in the longer term, these new facilities are much more financially sustainable and can be operated at a profit, reducing the need for public subsidy, which we know will be very welcome given the considerable financial pressures facing many local authorities.

Take the Orford Jubilee Neighbourhood Hub in Warrington. It's much more than a leisure centre. It provides great opportunities to play sport and get active, but that's in addition to taking out a library book, dropping the kids at the crèche or seeing your GP. It opened in 2012, replacing three tired and costly facilities in the area. Visits are up from 200,000 a year to over 1.2 million, while operating costs have gone from deficit to surplus.

And not too far away is the brand new Great Sankey Neighbourhood Hub in West Warrington which replaces the old leisure centre with new sport and leisure facilities, a vibrant learning and cultural centre, plus GP and other primary health care services. It is next to a secondary school so the pupils there can benefit from these great new opportunities on their doorstep. It is also worth noting that this particular Neighbourhood Hub has been designed to better accommodate people with specific health and lifestyle needs, for example it will be the first Dementia accredited building in the UK.



A third example to highlight (and there are many more case studies available on the Sport England website), is the Graves Health and Sports Centre which opened in 2016. Previously an ageing leisure centre, Sport England was a partner in a £16m transformation project in which it became the HQ of the National Centre for Sports and Exercise Medicine (NCSEM) combining fitness, swimming and sports facilities with on-site clinical facilities staffed by clinicians, health professionals and researchers. The move has already had a significant impact on public health, with an 82 per cent increase in visitors to the site since it reopened in September last year, while there has also been a significant jump in the number of people being prescribed tailored exercise programmes at the site for conditions such as cancer, Parkinson's and heart disease.



For many people, sports centres can seem like an alien environment, presenting a barrier to participation. And GPs don't always think of physical activity when they reach for their prescription pad. Collaboration and co-location are the ways forward. Bringing the right public services together can be a game-changer with incredible results. Sport England wants to continue this work with our partners in local government and the sport and leisure industry. With the support of government, investors, and local communities, this approach could transform community sport and leisure facilities across the country, and get us all moving towards being a more active nation.

**We can ensure that wellness hubs are at the heart of local communities up and down the country, and that they make a real impact on the lives of those who need these facilities the most.**

# Sarah Watts, CEO, Alliance Leisure

I wholeheartedly support Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson's appeal to government to support the promotion of a £1 billion investment in the regeneration of leisure centres. Our leisure infrastructure is struggling to engage communities in physical activity because so many facilities are tired, out-dated or unable to deliver the activities and services needed to inspire and motivate today's users.



With the right investment, community leisure facilities have the potential to become vibrant physical activity, health and wellbeing hubs where all members of the community, including families, can be encouraged to develop active lifestyles, engender the lifelong habit of regular physical activity from the earliest age and get the advice that they need to remain healthy, both mentally and physically.

If we build inspiring physical activity hubs, people will use them. It's that simple. There are some fantastic examples of innovative and relevant leisure offerings around the UK showing how investment has driven significant participation and I'm proud of the role that Alliance has played in many of these.

The recent £5 million redevelopment of Salt Ayre Leisure Centre is an outstanding example of how a facility can integrate typical non users into the site with the introduction of attractive and innovative solutions.

The full social and economic impact of the investment at Salt Ayre has been analysed by ukactive's research team, led by Dr. Steven Mann. Visits to the centre increased by 72%, the number of disabled people using the facility more than doubled, and fitness memberships quadrupled. Revenues are on course to make the investment not only cost neutral, but generate financial benefits to ensure its future sustainability.<sup>6</sup>

To achieve the scale of change needed to impact the UK's inactivity crisis, the physical activity and health sectors must work together. Baroness Grey-Thompson talks of the ambition to build wellness hubs linking physical activity facilities with GP surgeries and other allied health services. This is absolutely vital. Physical activity must be intrinsic to the healthcare solution, and placing opportunities to participate alongside medical services will strengthen this positioning.

Alliance Leisure is pleased to be at the forefront of this approach in making it efficient and cost effective for public sector leisure providers to scope, develop and deliver leisure developments. Since our appointment as Leisure Development Partner on the new UK Leisure Framework, more than £35 million of investment has already been committed in the past six months, highlighting that despite shrinking budgets, there is an appetite to invest in leisure with the right delivery model.

Physical inactivity is placing an unsustainable burden on our national health service. A new solution needs to be found and fast. Focusing on prevention rather than cure through investment in the UK's leisure facilities is the only viable option that I believe stands any real chance of success.

**If we build inspiring physical activity hubs, people will use them. It's that simple.**



# Executive summary

## Recommendations to government:

- Endorsing Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson's call for a £1billion regeneration scheme to transform the UK's ageing fleet of leisure centres into new community wellness hubs, through committed cross-departmental support, and cross-sector cooperation and partnership
- Supporting the brokering of discussions between public and private partners
- Supporting the securing of funds for wellness hubs beyond core government funding through the UK Guarantees Scheme
- Providing specialist guidance from the Treasury on both regularity requirements and existing historical sectoral comparisons around capital investment.

## Key Findings:

- Total Sport England capital investment for 2012-16 equals £258million<sup>7</sup>
- Total project capital investment (including funds leveraged from other sources e.g. local authorities and the private sector) for 2012-16 equals £1.2billion<sup>8</sup>
- Number of projects funded through Sport England capital investment (including protected playing fields, inspired facilities, improvement fund and strategic facilities): 2,867<sup>9</sup>
- The Sport England strategic facilities (wellness hub) funding model can leverage a 10:1 ratio of private sector funding for public investment<sup>10</sup>
- Wellness hubs funded through the strategic facilities fund can leverage 30% reduction in capital build cost and 40% improvement in efficiency averaging c.£750,000<sup>11</sup>
- Combined throughput in the first full year of operation for completed capital projects: 19.5million visits – a 35 per cent uplift in usage by the public<sup>12</sup>



# Executive summary

## Community impact:

- The wellness hubs showcased in this document demonstrate significant improvements in facility usage and broader health and wellbeing, for example:
- There has been a sevenfold increase in the numbers joining the library at the Orford Jubilee Park, Warrington<sup>13</sup>
- The Portway Lifestyle Centre in Sandwell has a wide range of facilities that are designed to encourage disabled people to participate in physical activity and leisure services. Over 1,000 local disabled people are members<sup>14</sup>
- Over 700 people attend exercise classes each month to manage the symptoms of conditions such as cancer, Parkinson's and heart disease at Graves Health & Sports Centre in Sheffield.<sup>15</sup>

**Wellness hubs can achieve a 30% reduction in capital build cost and 40% improvement in efficiency averaging c.£750,000**



**The Sport England strategic facilities (wellness hub) funding model can leverage a 10:1 ratio of private sector funding for public investment**



# Introduction

We are currently faced with the most inactive population of all time. Physical inactivity costs Britain £20 billion each year<sup>16</sup>; it is the fourth largest cause of disease and disability in the UK<sup>17</sup>; and it directly contributes to one in every six deaths<sup>18</sup>. A staggering 11.3 million people in England are classed as physically inactive<sup>19</sup>. This means one in four people fail to achieve 30 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity each week<sup>20</sup>.

The strain this is placing on our already over-stretched NHS should not be understated. Between 2003 and 2015, all hospital admissions increased by more than 50 per cent<sup>21</sup>. This has contributed to a health and social care crisis, and its impact has almost overwhelmed the NHS which has struggled to find hospital beds and meet the surge in demand. This is, in part, caused by an ageing population – the number of people aged over 85 has increased by nearly 40 per cent during the same period<sup>22</sup>. However, ageing alone is not sufficient to explain the rising demand on the NHS. Research conducted by The Kings Fund argues that the rise in the number of people living with multiple long-term conditions is a significant factor driving the increased demand on the NHS.<sup>23</sup>



Physical activity can be used to treat and prevent up to 20 lifestyle-related diseases, including cancers, heart disease, stroke and diabetes<sup>24</sup>, as well as having a positive impact on mental health<sup>25</sup>. Harnessing the power of physical activity and preventing these conditions is vital for the long-term sustainability of the NHS. Experts at the Academy of Royal Medical Colleges estimated that more than £18 billion of headroom in the NHS national budget could be created if we made improvements in the way that physical activity is offered in England.<sup>26</sup>

The need for prevention is more vital in the context of limited resources that will result in the reduction of the public health budgets of local authorities by £331 million (9.7 per cent of the total budget) between 2015 and 2021<sup>27</sup>. These cuts will force difficult decisions about priorities within the essential prevention services offered by many local councils, as well as the support provided to broader public services. We must reduce demand on the NHS. We need to prioritise prevention, and efficient services to support communities to be active. Indeed, Simon Stevens (CEO of NHS England) highlighted in the organisation's Five Year Forward View<sup>28</sup> – and several times since<sup>29 30</sup> – that a focus on prevention would be essential in securing the future of the NHS.

# Introduction

The ground breaking 'Sporting Future' and 'Towards an Active Nation' strategies changed the sport and physical activity landscape. They challenged the sector to think differently about how to get the nation healthier, and galvanised innovation to engage the inactive. These strategies committed significant funding to address inactivity, reflecting the government's clear ambition on this agenda. Central to these strategies is the need for the sector to deliver against five key outcomes: physical wellbeing, mental wellbeing, individual development, social and community development and economic development. These outcomes determine who the government will fund, and where its priorities lie in future.

There is also a clear opportunity for the government to drive this agenda forwards as part of its Industrial Strategy. As referenced in the government's Industrial Strategy Green Paper, "sustained economic growth requires significant, long-term investments in capital infrastructure" and central government economic infrastructure investment is set to rise by almost 60% between 2016/17 (£14 billion) and 2020/21 (£22 billion).<sup>31</sup>



The local authority leisure sector is increasingly becoming more financially sustainable. It does, however, suffer from poor quality and ageing 1970s facilities. To combat this, ukactive and Sport England are proposing an expansion in the availability of Community Wellness Hubs as part of their shared mission for an active nation.

These hubs would be placed at the heart of local communities and replace 1970s-era leisure centres combining swimming pools, gyms and multisport facilities with GP drop-in centres, libraries and police services, to create a one-stop-shop for public services and empower the public to lead healthier lifestyles. These wellness hubs have been highly successful – subsidies have been turned to surplus, threats to closure have diminished, and greater social benefits have been realised through co location of facilities and creation of community hubs.

# How integrated wellness hubs can provide a solution

Wellness hubs are well placed to support the Government's ambitions for a healthy and fair society. Wellness hubs are not a conceptual idea, but a reality with 54 already established across England<sup>32</sup>. These hubs have had a great impact in the communities in which they are located.

The following case studies showcase best practice, and demonstrate how wellness hubs deliver against the five outcomes outlined in the Sporting Future and Towards an Active Nation strategies.

## Case Study. Orford Jubilee Park, Warrington:

Orford Jubilee Park is a flagship community, leisure, health and education centre for Warrington. Opening in 2012, it is the first example of a sustainable wellness hub. The project was developed through a unique partnership involving over twenty national, regional and local funding partners from the public, private and voluntary sectors and the 25-year lifecycle costs will be met from the Community Investment Fund.<sup>33</sup>

Situated on a former landfill site next to a Victorian park, this wellness hub co-locates a variety of high-quality indoor and outdoor leisure facilities with a range of additional community services. Outdoor leisure facilities include a full-size floodlit artificial football pitch, an enclosed five-a-side Powerleague centre, flat green bowls, a BMX and skateboard park and a campus-wide trim trail<sup>34</sup>. Indoor leisure facilities include an 8 lane 25 m competition pool, a 15 x 9 m teaching pool with movable floor, two dance studios, a 4 court sports hall, an activity hall and a 90 station health and fitness gym<sup>35</sup>. The community facilities comprise an education unit, a library, three GP surgeries, a Primary Care Trust lifestyles team and a central café area with views on to the rear sports fields<sup>36</sup>. This promotes inclusive and social regeneration on a single site in line with Warrington's regeneration strategy.



## Case Study. Orford Jubilee Park, Warrington:

The project is delivering well against key performance targets. Visitor numbers for the new wellness hub building are three times higher than the leisure centre it has replaced. Compared to the previous year, there has been a sevenfold increase in the numbers joining the library.<sup>37</sup>

### Orford Jubilee Park, Features and Impact:

This wellness hub co-locates a variety of high-quality indoor and outdoor leisure facilities, such as swimming pools, dance studios and football pitches, with a range of community services such as three GP surgeries, a primary care trust, an education unit, and a library.

Visitor numbers for the new wellness hub building are three times higher than the leisure centre it has replaced.

There has been a sevenfold increase in the numbers joining the library

## Case Study. The Portway Lifestyle Centre, Sandwell:

The Portway Lifestyle Centre is a new health, well-being and leisure centre that is built on the site of a former outdated facility in Sandwell. It brings social care, health and leisure services together under one roof combining an NHS family practice with a range of health, social care and sports facilities. The project is a partnership between Sandwell Council, Sandwell Leisure Trust, Department of Health, NHS England and Sport England. It has been supported by Sport England through Sustainable Facilities Lottery Funding.<sup>38</sup>

The project aims to provide easy and inclusive access for all of the community and provide a 'whole life approach' to health and social care delivery. It includes a wide range of facilities that are designed to encourage disabled people to participate in physical activity and leisure services.

New indoor facilities include a 4 court sports hall, a climbing wall, a hydrotherapy pool suite, a 114 station fitness suite, a dance studio, a multipurpose hall and a NHS family practice<sup>39</sup>. Outdoor facilities include a full-size floodlit 3G football pitch, a sensory life trail with 7 exercise stations and a sensory garden.<sup>40</sup>

## Case Study.

### The Portway Lifestyle Centre, Sandwell:

This wellness hub has had a huge impact on the local community, particularly amongst disabled people – in 2015 more than 1,000 disabled Sandwell residents were Portway Pass members, and the hub achieved the 'Excellent' level of the Inclusive Fitness Initiative mark in March 2014 (a scheme run by the English Federation of Disability Sport designed to support leisure centres to become more welcoming and accessible environments to disabled people)<sup>41</sup> 30,000 visits were made in 2015, and over 75 group fitness classes average more than 800 visits weekly.<sup>42</sup>



### The Portway Lifestyle Centre, Features and Impact:

➤ This facility co-locates a range of indoor and outdoor facilities – including a large fitness suite, a climbing wall, football pitch, and a sensory garden – with social and health care services, such as an NHS family practice

➤ In 2015 more than 1,000 disabled Sandwell residents were members

➤ The hub has achieved the 'Excellent' level of the Inclusive Fitness Initiative mark (an initiative designed to ensure leisure centres are welcoming and accessible for disabled people)

➤ 30,000 visits were made to the hub in 2015



## Case Study.

### The Graves Health & Sports Centre, Sheffield:

The Graves Health and Sports Centre recently underwent a £16m transformation to become the headquarters of the National Centre for Sport and Exercise Medicine (NCSEM) combining fitness, swimming and sports facilities with on-site clinical facilities staffed by clinicians, allied health professionals and researchers.<sup>43</sup>

The project has a strong neighbourhood focus, and is strategically located to ensure that it is accessible for all of Sheffield's residents and families. It supports communities which have higher than average health inequalities in Sheffield – the life expectancy gap can be as high as 25 years.<sup>44</sup> It also addresses the requirements of those people in Sheffield who are living with poor health and long term conditions, including weight management and fall prevention.

The Graves Health and Sports Centre has a large swimming and training pool, a 100+ station gym, a strength gym, a spin studio, indoor and outdoor tennis courts, and a gymnastics and trampolining hall. It is also the headquarters of the National Centre for Exercise Sports Medicine, and has 19 consultation rooms, podiatry specialist facilities, and biomechanics facilities. All areas of the centre are fully inclusive to disabled people.



This wellness hub has had a significant impact on public health, with an 82 per cent increase in visitors to the site.<sup>45</sup> This is partly driven by a significant jump in the number of people being prescribed tailored exercise programmes at the site under the Fit4Health Exercise Referral Scheme. Over 700 people attend exercise classes each month to manage the symptoms of conditions such as cancer, Parkinson's and heart disease.<sup>46</sup> This wellness hub is also a dementia friendly centre. people.

## Case Study.

### The Graves Health & Sports Centre, Sheffield:

#### The Graves Health & Sports Centre , Features and Impact:

This wellness hub hosts a range of leisure facilities, such as a large gym, spin studio, and gymnastics and trampolining hall. It is also the headquarters of the National Centre for Exercise Sports Medicine, and has 19 Consultation Rooms, podiatry specialist facilities, and biomechanics facilities.

There has been an 82 per cent increase in visitors to the site

Over 700 people attend exercise classes each month to manage the symptoms of conditions such as cancer, Parkinson's and heart disease

This wellness hub is a dementia friendly facility

## The solution in practice

For an ambitious regeneration plan of this scale to be undertaken; maximise its full potential, and benefit the widest range of people – ukactive and Sport England must work collaboratively with a broad array of organisations and stakeholders to turn this ambition into a reality.

This includes:

### Investors

Their financial backing and experience is central to providing the level of investment required to reinvigorate (at scale) ageing leisure centres into modern integrated wellness hubs. This includes organisations such as community leisure operators, private financiers and National Governing Bodies of Sport.

The interest of private financiers has been attracted through the success of the Sport England investment programme. They can provide alternative sources of investment for community leisure facilities and relieve pressure on local authority borrowing. Projects will be required to demonstrate cross sector collaboration and co-location of services (health, social services etc.) to achieve broader social outcomes.







## Local Government representatives

Their understanding of the needs of the local population, the regulatory landscape and their local networks means that they are essential in guiding resource allocation, connecting local partners, encouraging integrated working and leveraging local relationships. This includes organisations such as The Local Government Association (LGA), Sporta, and The Chief Cultural & Leisure Officers Association (cCLOA) amongst others.



## Deliverers

Their experience completing large scale construction and development projects and their ability to deliver efficiently to benefit the UK economy means that practical deliverers such as the construction sector and its representatives e.g. Build UK and The Building Research Establishment are essential in turning the ambition for more integrated wellness hubs into reality.



## Government/Parliamentarians

Ministerial support and endorsement would help to create investor confidence and provide confidence to local authority sector that the programme has been reviewed by the relevant government departments.

The support of constituency MPs is also important in championing the message of these wellness hubs being at the heart of local communities. They can encourage their constituents to engage with these major community assets and support them to lead healthier lifestyles.

# Sport England funding model

Sport England's funding approach has been positioned to sustain and increase investment into sport and leisure infrastructure at a time when the financial climate threatens a loss of assets through funding reductions and a subsequent impact on activity levels, especially given sport and leisure's discretionary status within local authority services. Sport England – through its Strategic Facilities Fund – is driven by the following three aims:

- Develop a physical activity sector that delivers against its local community outcomes and its target audience, contributing to the delivery of the Government's five outcomes for sport and physical activity – physical, mental, social, economic, and personal.
- Challenge and influence the sector to put capital investment in the proper strategic context in order to deliver against its locally determined outcomes
- Create the right environment that is locally relevant, accessible, welcoming, flexible, and sustainable to enable behaviour change of the customer and delivery of those outcomes<sup>47</sup>

The funding model goes further than pure investment, providing an integrated approach to any funding programme with support and guidance around model design standards, business planning, procurement and operating costs all provided to help deliver more financially efficient solutions for major projects.

Sport England's investment has historically been a key driver to triggering partner investment and reassuring political decision makers. Over the last five years the programme (in its totality) has delivered the following results:

- Leveraged £1.2 billion of inward capital investment for the £258m of lottery awards made (the leverage across programmes ranges 1:1 for small scale community projects to 1:10 for major projects)
- 2,867 projects have been funded across a wide geographic spread
- Combined throughput in the first full year of operation for completed projects is 19.5 million visits – this continues to grow year on year for most projects.
- Reduction in construction costs of 30% and an increase in operational performance of up to 40% (often a £750,000 turn around) has been achieved in Strategic Facilities projects<sup>48</sup>

# Headline Statistics

The table below outlines headline statistics on each investment strand <sup>49</sup>

	Protecting Playing Fields	Inspired Facilities	Improvement Fund	Strategic Facilities
<b>Investment made (£m)</b>	£22 million	£120 million	£41.8 million	£74.4 million
<b>Total Project Investment (£m)</b>	£44.5 million	£306 million	£129 million	£720 million
<b>Leverage</b>	1:1	1.6:1	3:1	10:1
<b>Number of projects funded</b>	453	2233	127	54
<b>Throughput (First full year of operation)</b>	244,500	11.3 million	3 million	5 million



# How does the Strategic Facilities Programme generate a return on investment?

1. Increase in participation figures – this is achieved through the creation of new facilities that are welcoming and inclusive, well located, improved and more relevant.
2. Local authorities are encouraged to provide co –location of services where possible (leisure, health, libraries, social services) to ensure that these facilities serve a broader range of the community.
3. The leverage of partnership investment – Sport England investment and support is typically the catalyst to leverage £10 of investment from a range of sources (including the private sector and local authorities) for each £1 of lottery funding invested.
4. Avoidance of closure or reduction in provision – this model demonstrates a viable alternative to cuts in service.
5. Long term financial sustainability – the build and facility layouts are designed to be cost effective and reduce operational costs. They utilise financially advantageous operating contracts which produce local authority surpluses but also seek delivery of social and health outcomes. Lottery funding conditions also require applicants to commit to provision for a 25–year period, again contributing to the return on investment.<sup>50</sup>

## Other examples of regeneration

It is important to highlight other forms of effective regeneration that have seen greater community engagement with physical activity. Alliance Leisure has recently undertaken an extensive £5million renovation of the Salt Ayre Leisure Centre in Lancaster. The aim of the project was to improve facilities at Salt Ayre in order to make it into a 'community hub', which was able to provide accessible sport and leisure facilities to the local community. This involved creating a new range of exciting features – such as an XHeight Indoor Climbing Wall, Gravity Flight Tower, Energy Soft Play and a Les Mills Immersive Studio – as well as refurbishing existing facilities and reconfiguring the space that was available to improve the utilisation of the centre.

This redevelopment has been extremely successful. Visit numbers to Salt Ayre have increased by 72% since the development<sup>51</sup>, 63% of respondents say they are 'visiting more frequently' since the Salt Ayre redevelopment – particularly women<sup>52</sup>, and members were also positive with regards to their perceptions of Salt Ayre since the redevelopment, with the majority agreeing that the look, range of facilities, environment and appeal of exercising had improved since the redevelopment.<sup>53</sup>

# The Future

ukactive and Sport England will continue to champion the national expansion of Community Wellness Hubs, working together with an array of stakeholders to turn our ageing leisure centres into modern wellness hubs at the heart of local communities. With a national health and social care crisis placing extensive pressure on the NHS and local authorities – it is essential that we increasingly prioritise preventative health measures and empower communities to take greater control of their health and wellbeing.

Government should champion significant investment in community leisure provision, supporting the injection of public/private funding into vital community assets that would deliver both long term economic productivity and support ambitions for a healthy and fair society.

We must seize this opportunity to expand the availability of community wellness hubs – creating one-stop-shops for public services across the nation. This will provide people with convenient and cost effective services, that can empower them to lead healthier lifestyles.



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