

Birmingham and Solihull Local Delivery Pilot overview



Funded in 2018 by Sport England, the Birmingham and Solihull Local Delivery Pilot (LDP) set out to increase physical activity in the deprived communities that are statistically least likely to be active. The programme aimed to tackle inequalities and remove barriers for the least active people, whilst exploring the emerging evidence of the positive link between civic and physical activity.

Our aims

Work with unusual suspects: Collaborating with people in deprived communities to identify and tackle the barriers they face to being more physically and socially active

Co- create resilient communities: Feeling healthy and happier is not just about taking up physical activity, it is about feeling better connected with people in your street, community, and neighbourhood

Use a whole systems approach: Bringing individuals, groups and organisations together to identify how actions across the system can best be aligned to create sustainable change

Develop distributive leadership and collaboration: Exploring ways to distribute leadership and creating opportunities for collaboration, to ensure that the least heard aren't left behind and to mitigate the sharp end of inequality.

Our principles

Doing 'with' not to communities: Co-design and collaborate with people, improving daily lives whilst building better futures

Doing things differently: Testing new approaches and tools to see what works and working closely with trusted people in communities

We are part of a flock: Working with locally trusted organisations and knitting connections between partners within the system

Built to last: Advance 'revolution through evolution', driving bottom up and top down system change.

Areas of work

Creating Active Communities

- Active Streets
- Active Parks
- Big Bikes
- Big Run
- Under 15 Field Lab
- Community networks

Active Healthy Communities

- Sharing Communities
- Feeding Communities
- Common Ground
- Tactical Urbanism
- Wild Wellbeing
- Holistic Interventions

Systems & Learning

- Whole Systems Awareness
- Deep Democracy
- Festivals of Fearlessness
- Learning Festival
- Rapid Innovation
- Storytelling & evaluation

Stats at a glance*

130,712 total attendances

14,296 overall unique member attendance

333 venues

84% from IMD Quintiles 1 & 2

73% female

68% from Global Majority backgrounds

*Interim as of December 2023

We are proud to have

- Paved a different path towards physical activity through food, listening, nature connection and sharing
- Co-designed things differently in a way that improves people's days and lives
- Engaged more women and ethnically diverse communities in activities which promote wellbeing
- Built networks such as Food Justice Network and the Clean Air Justice Network which bring people's voices and skills front and centre, distributing leadership to tackle systemic barriers to healthy and connected lives
- Changed the system through partnership working, capacity building and innovative practices.

Emerging lessons

Along our Active Communities journey, we have learnt many lessons about what it takes to make positive systems change in Birmingham and Solihull. We hope to share some of the tools, processes, ideas and values which enabled this change with others at the outset of their journey. Join our Learning Festival to find out more.

Work with unusual suspects

- Listening actively and with empathy
- People couldn't be active if we didn't work with them to sort out other issues
- Trust needed building and progress goes at the speed that trust can be established
- Needed to be prepared to start where they were at
- Emphasise connection, fun and improved wellbeing, don't lead with sport
- Find a line of sight to physical activity but don't start there

Use a whole system approach

- We learned that the values needed for this work are an open heart, open mind and open will
- Be in service and create opportunities
- Building community interconnection through 'social knitting' is also dependent on developing systems interconnection through 'systems knitting'
- We applied the principles of Otto Scharmer's Theory U to continually push the boundaries, whilst holding space for people to ask 'what else'?
- Holding the changes lightly
- Remember "Those who do the work do the change"

Co-create resilient communities

- Letting ideas come: Arrive in communities with no preconceived ideas
- Opening the field of awareness and understanding about our communities
- Once you understand the issues, step aside
- Orchestrate opportunities for communities to come together for conversations that provoke change
- Sharing offers people an opportunity to give as well as share
- Foster learning: Developing feedback loops around the learning and evaluation
- Find the balance between what the community needs and funding requirements
- Provide scaffolding and support networks which build on community strengths, connections, and offer support for people in times of crisis and scarcity

Distribute leadership and collaborate

- Active listening and 'rounds' foster thinking environments which enable people to participate
- Build capacity where it is needed most
- Being curious and seeking other views—make space for challenging the norms and status quo
- The system needs more effective ways of holding power... using deep democracy is a good start