

## Impact case study: place-based leadership programme



### About the place-based leadership programme

From April 2024 to March 2025, the Local Government Association (LGA), in partnership with Sport England, coordinated a pilot place-based leadership programme. During this period, 26 two-day courses were delivered in new [Sport England Place Expansion Partnership areas](#).

Insight, learning and feedback from this pilot year have all shaped the ongoing design of this programme, which will now be delivered across all 80 Place Expansion Partnership areas.

Since April 2025, the place-based leadership programme has been fully embedded within Sport England's wider Leading the Movement work, ensuring its long-term integration and impact.

This case study highlights the experience of Kirklees Place Partnership, including the outcomes and impacts of the place-based leadership programme on local organisations and their approaches to tackling physical inactivity.

### Kirklees Place Partnership

Kirklees is one of Sport England's Place Expansion Partnerships, a programme aimed at tackling inactivity and inequalities, making physical activity accessible to all. Kirklees Place Partnership is supported by Kirklees Council working in partnership with other organisations such as Yorkshire Sport Foundation, the Integrated Care Board, Third sector leaders and residents. The Place Partnership is currently in a development phase refining their priorities.

Before taking part in the place-based leadership programme, Kirklees partners had been working together in numerous multi agency partnerships, including the

Kirklees Everybody Active Every Day Advisory group, to support 'more people, more active, more often across Kirklees'. This involved working with various people, partners and programmes in the most effective way based on the limited resources available. The focus was on sharing learning of approaches that could be taken to embed a community led, system enabled way of working across the Borough. The collective ambition and drive have now been met with the Place Partnership investment and resource to act as a further catalyst for the partnership. Over the last couple of years Kirklees, supported by the Active Partnership, started to reframe their approach by building new and enhanced relationships with key partners across the physical activity system to tackle inequalities in their area.

The vision is that a community led, system enabled approach will lead to a collective ambition that is wider than just a focus on the Place Partnership investment. It includes a combination of local people leading, senior level engagement, using existing resources differently and the opportunity to pull in new investment that will lead to change. The Place Expansion funding and the leadership programme has enabled the Kirklees Place Partnership to take that next step forward.

By taking part in the place-based leadership programme, Kirklees Place Partnership aimed to address several priorities:



**Develop a shared understanding** of systems approaches and raise awareness of the role that every individual and organisation plays in tackling physical inactivity.



**Inspire new thinking**, by discussing ideas for projects and exploring innovative ways to address physical inactivity and address inequality.



**Strengthen collaboration**, by fostering greater partnership working between local organisations to help embed physical activity into the daily lives of Kirklees residents.

## Outcomes and impacts

Several outcomes emerged from the 2-day place-based leadership programme. Discussions with other participants during the training helped attendees understand how other organisations view and apply systems approaches to address physical inactivity. Learning about other Place Partnerships and their success stories fuelled participants' enthusiasm and reinforced the idea that systems approaches are effective and achievable.



Specific exercises, such as **ripple effect mapping**, helped participants understand how systems approaches operate and how they, as individuals or organisations, contribute to the system.

Seeing **case study examples** from pilot areas such as Calderdale and Doncaster were powerful and inspiring, offering a **good balance between theoretical and practical content**. These helped demystify the concept of system change, making it feel less new, unknown, or daunting. This, in turn, **increased participants' confidence in decision-making** and in their ability to influence change within their local area.



*“It gave us a confidence that if we do this, the evidence from the pilots is this is what works. So, I think that reinforcing the messages we were given with some practical ways of working.”* – **Director of Partnership Development, Kirklees Health and Care Partnership**



Having **dedicated time to reflect on working together** and explore ways to address physical inactivity fostered **relationship-building** and collaboration amongst participants and their organisations. The **informal nature of the programme** helped break down historical hierarchical barriers and created space for meaningful discussions – further supporting relationship building.

## Newly established relationships encouraged knowledge and resource sharing

The Project Manager at Third Sector Leaders Kirklees planned to evaluate their charity's work by developing case studies and data highlights that could then be used in their future funding applications, but they lacked the expertise and capacity to do this work. Through connections made during the 2-day programme, they received support from a senior officer at the ICB, who connected the Project Manager with another colleague who had capacity to help with the evaluation. The charity now has evaluation case studies and data highlighting their work and successes that they've used in funding applications. The Project Manager noted that this collaboration, rooted in a shared understanding of systems approaches, would not have happened without the place-based leadership programme – because the senior officer understood that cross-organisational collaboration could be beneficial not just for the charity, but for the wider Kirklees area.

Attendees described **tackling inactivity is now more embedded in their day-to-day work**. Those working directly with residents describe how they are trying to encourage them to take part in physical activity or are including physical activity opportunities in their service delivery – such as walking groups and chair-based exercising.



Attendees have also **adapted the language** used in their organisations (charities, the ICB etc.) to showcase the benefits of systems approaches to others and to bring it closer to local organisations ensuring a consistent approach. Physical activity is now presented using more **inclusive language, moving beyond traditional competitive sport**, and referencing wider physical activity such as, walking, cycling, gardening and dancing – activities that are not traditional sports. It is believed this shift will better engage residents and help address long-standing challenges with inactivity in Kirklees in the future.

## Future intentions

Interviewees are enthusiastic about opportunities for future collaboration and making a tangible impact on physical activity in Kirklees. The place-based leadership group remains connected and is planning new initiatives which they hope will have an impact in the future. However, one attendee raised concerns about Place Expansion funding only being secured until 2028, noting that this uncertainty hinders long-term planning.

*For further information about Sport England's Leading the Movement place-based and national programmes and online support resources, visit [leadingthemovement.org](https://www.leadingthemovement.org).*