

# **Title of report: Update on the implementation of the Physical Activity Strategy**

**Meeting: Health and Wellbeing Board**

**Meeting date: 17 March 2025**

**Report by: Public Health Lead**

## **Decision type**

This is not an executive decision

## **Wards affected**

(All Wards)

## **Purpose**

To provide an update on the progress and the actions taken to work towards delivering the Physical Activity Strategy and next steps.

## **Recommendation(s)**

**That:**

- a) **the Health and Wellbeing Board considers the progress to date; and**
- b) **the Health and Wellbeing Board considers how to ensure that all partnership organisations are clearly sighted on the Herefordshire Physical Activity Strategy and reference it across their own strategies and plans**

## **Alternative options**

1. Do nothing – this is not advised due to the impact inactivity has on poorer health outcomes and widening health inequalities.

## **Key considerations**

- a. Physical inactivity is defined as doing less than 30 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity per week and is one of the leading risk factors for non-communicable disease mortality. People who are inactive have a 20% to 30% increased mortality risk compared to people who are physically active. Physical inactivity and sedentary behaviours are

contributing to the rise in Non-Communicable Diseases and placing a significant burden on the NHS.

- b. In Herefordshire 70.1% of adults are physically active, meaning that 20.9% of adults are inactive, similar to the figure reported for England (22.6%). Worryingly the percentage of children and young people that are physically active in Herefordshire is lower, at 50.8%. Again, this is similar to the national trend at 47.8%. Although there is still a large proportion of people that are inactive, Herefordshire's physical inactivity levels have improved over time. In 2015/16, 27% of people (aged 16+) were inactive, whereas in 2022/23 this has decreased to 24%. Not only are people becoming less inactive, but they are also becoming significantly more active. In 2015/16 only 59% of people were active, whereas in 2022/23 66% of Herefordshire population were active.
- c. In England physical inactivity is higher in more deprived local areas. Individuals with a lower level of education and those on a lower income are less likely to be physically active.. The Active Lives Survey (2022/23) headlines indicate that there are several characteristics that have the most impact on physical activity. These characteristics are, being 65 years or over, having a disability or a long-term health condition, being in a lower socioeconomic group, being pregnant or parents of children under one year, and Asian people. Sport England highlight that addressing the challenges faced by individuals with two or more of these characteristics is more likely to have a significant impact on reducing overall inequalities. Partly due to the aging population in Herefordshire, there is higher levels of inactivity for those aged 75 and over compared to England (58% vs 45%).
- d. Inequalities in activity levels are a social and economic burden, and the largest benefits to society can be seen when we support the least active to take part. In England, Active Lives calculated the social value generated by community sport and physical activity to be £107.2 billion a year. Active lives prevent 1.3 million cases of depression, 600,000 of diabetes and 57,000 of dementia a year. Improved health outcomes help relieve pressure on the NHS through £10.5 billion in wider health and social care savings, as well as saving £540 million on reduced GP visits.

## 2. Physical Activity Strategy

- a. The current Physical Activity Strategy was published in 2020, and will be reviewed in 2026 and is a key deliverable of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy, with the vision: 'In Herefordshire every person has the opportunity to: 'get moving, be active, feel better, keep well and enjoy healthier lives as part of everyday life in their local community'.
- b. The core aim of the strategy is to improve the health and wellbeing of our communities in Herefordshire by increasing levels of physical activity, opportunity for and accessibility to activity, and therefore reduce health inequalities.
- c. The strategy has four shared outcomes with an accompanying action plan to support the delivery of the strategy. The four shared outcomes are:
  - i. Active Environments – environments that support and facilitate every day physical activity for everyone;
  - ii. Active Communities – supported and developed community assets to increase physical activity levels and build community resilience;

- iii. Healthy Individuals – decreasing inequalities, increased awareness and capability in our inactive population to change their behaviour and increase physical activity levels long-term; and
- iv. Partnerships and Collaborative Working - improved partnership working to increase physical activity opportunities and participation across our population.

### 3. Update on Physical Activity Action Plan deliverables

Over the course of the strategy period, the physical activity steering group has been supporting the delivery of the strategy action plan, below are some examples of these activities:

- a. Halo/Physiotherapy team: An early achievement of the PA strategy steering groups was to co-locate physiotherapy teams within Halo Leisure Centres. These have now been in place for a number of years, providing access to the high standard gym facilities for patient rehabilitation and collaborative working opportunities between Halo and WVT.
- b. Active Families: This programme is delivered by Stride Active and supports families to become more physically active. The coordinator works 1:1 with a small number of families to support them to be more active with their children, which may be at home or in the community. The most recent evaluation of Active Families found that levels of physical activity have increased significantly, with a particularly large increase in informal activity such as walking and active games. Increased information and knowledge about accessible and local physical activities has led to increased activity, with successes observed through 'rethinking' what being physically active means. The benefits of play and family time have been observed, alongside improved wellbeing and positive social impacts. (Appendix 2)
- c. Here Girls Can: This programme is delivered in partnership between Stride Active and Active Herefordshire and Worcestershire. It aims to inspire and empower girls in school years 5-8 to be physically active and is targeted at those who are disengaged with PE. The Here Girls Can 2024 report showed the festival has engaged with over 500 unique participants from 47 schools (equivalent to over 40% of schools within Herefordshire) and trained 88 Girls' Champions to support ongoing delivery. The festival is a catalyst for creating sustainable behaviour change to girls' physical activity levels. It was found that 85% of girls said their confidence had improved and 95% felt inspired to take part in physical activity after the festival. (Appendix 3)
- d. Street Tag: Street Tag is a family-friendly smartphone game that records user's physical activity, encouraging users to get active and explore their local area by collecting virtual tags located across Herefordshire. Users gain points every time they go for a walk, run or bike ride and move up their school leader board. The aim of Street Tag is to encourage families to be more physically active, get outdoors and increase community interaction. Tags can be placed in areas such as libraries, parks and leisure centres to increase the use of these areas, we also encouraged schools to set up tags on the route to school to encourage active travel. By the end of Street Tag season 2 (November 2024), 718 users were signed up and 127,380 miles were travelled in total. The key motivations for using Street Tag were to increase physical activity levels and to spend time with family and friends. This project was delivered in partnership with Active Herefordshire and Worcestershire and with the support of local organisations such as Stride Active CIC, Halo and Wildlife Trust to offer schools support and prizes mentioned below, enhancing the street tag offer:

- 1st place school: £500, 2nd place school: £200, 3rd place school: £100 (These prizes went towards the school or PTFA to increase physical activity opportunities for school pupils)
  - Top 20 players overall: £10 voucher each
  - Users had the chance to win one of 50 family passes for swimming, cycling, racket sport or soft play at a Halo Leisure Centre, as well as a one-off Halo 7-day adult pass.
  - Users that scanned a QR code at a Halo Centre or Herefordshire Library won entry to Herefordshire's Cycle Track (Appendix 4).
- e. Wellbeing Walks: Herefordshire's Wellbeing Walks aims to introduce a network of free, accessible walking groups across Herefordshire through providing free walk leader training under the Ramblers Wellbeing Walks licence and framework. The walk leader training is offered to community volunteers as well as partner organisations to enable both open and closed walks, increasing opportunities for Herefordshire to become more physically active. Walk leader training is delivered by the health and wellbeing trainers within the Healthy Lifestyle Service. So far, thirty-nine people have expressed an interest in receiving walk leader training. Twenty-two of these are community volunteers and seventeen of these are linked with a partner organisation or voluntary service (MIND, Halo Feel Good for Life, Newton Farm Community Association, Leominster Wellness Club, Primary Care Network roles, Taurus and Talk Community). Of those thirty-nine, six people have completed their walk leader training. One of these is a community volunteer who is now offering a weekly walk in Bromyard, which has up to ten walkers each week. The other five were MIND Link Workers who planned to offer closed walks to their client base across the county. Seven volunteers have recently completed their e-learning and the practical session to complete their training is booked for either February or March 2025. There are currently three walks live on the Ramblers Wellbeing Walks website, which are also promoted on the Talk Community Directory and also the Herefordshire Council walking pages, following links made with the Sustainability and Climate Change team. Through the trainer's relationship with the coordinators and regular walkers at the weekly Ledbury Walk and Talk, we have recently been able to discuss walk leader training with the group and recruit 10 community volunteers interested in having the training, to enable the group to be sustainable and robust ongoing. This walk can see up to 30 regular walkers each week.
- f. National Walking Month: National Walking Month 2024 was a successful collaborative campaign between Herefordshire Council, Worcestershire County Council, Active Herefordshire and Worcestershire, and Age UK. It promoted the positive benefits of walking for your wellbeing, volunteering to lead walks and active travel. There was lots of information shared on social media throughout the month, and those working on the campaign wrote several blog posts to show how walking has benefitted them personally to help inspire others. We are currently in the process of planning National Walking Month 2025 and are looking forward to building on last year's successful campaign.
- g. Feel Good for Life: This programme provides opportunities for people living with dementia, depression or loneliness, and their carers to be active and to socialise. The sessions run for two hours, the first half of the session consists of gentle physical activity, and the second half of the session consists of activities such as board games and quizzes. The Feel Good for Life project in Hereford won the Inclusion award at the Community Leisure UK Seriously Social Awards, for its impact on reducing social isolation and keeping people physically active.

- h. Falls Needs Assessment: A Herefordshire Falls Prevention Needs Assessment was carried out in May 2024. This document provides an update of the Herefordshire Older People's Integrated Needs Assessment (2018) using epidemiological data. The document makes several recommendations to decrease the number of falls in Herefordshire, but the key finding is that the only route to preventing and reversing loss of function and frailty is exercise, in particular muscular strengthening activity. As a result, a falls prevention steering group will hold the recommendations from the needs assessment and develop a plan for delivery (Appendix 4)
  - i. Holiday Activities and Food Programme (HAF): This programme is free for all school aged children (reception to Year 11), who are eligible for benefit related free school meals. The programme runs over the school holidays and the aim is to ensure that children eat healthily and stay active over the school holidays. The programme offers a range of different physical activities for children to try such as dance and martial arts. Funding for the HAF programme has recently been confirmed for 2025/26. Several HAF providers had quality assurance visits last summer, and all met good or excellent in terms of physical activity.
  - j. Halo exercise referral programme: This exercise referral programme helps individuals to increase their activity levels and overall health through one-to-one support with a registered exercise professional for up to 12 months. Individuals are referred into this programme by their GP and will receive a personalised activity plan to suit their age and fitness level, as well as having access to all Halo facilities. To date 908 referrals have been assessed since January 2023. The programme is delivered in Hereford City and 4 out of 5 of the market towns. This programme hopes to be established in Bromyard by Easter 2025.
  - k. Increase uptake of NHS health checks: NHS Health Checks is a national screening programme for cardiovascular disease (CVD). Herefordshire has been part of a national pilot to also extend this programme into workplaces, further enhancing the reach of the programme to identify risk factors that contribute to CVD, including physical inactivity. Following the Health Check people are provided with, healthy lifestyle advice, signposting information and where required appropriate clinical intervention. To date in 2024/25, 3658 people have received an NHS Health Check and a further 564 in the workplace.
  - l. Walk To School: Stride Active are in contract until end of May 2025 to deliver the Walk to School Programme. The programme targets primary schools in the city and market towns, whilst also providing a universal offer for any school in Herefordshire that would like to increase levels of active travel. The programme includes in person assemblies and workshops highlighting the many benefits of walking to school, which have had good take up from schools. Schools are also encouraged to take part in the National Walk to School week, and a hands up survey was completed to gather insight about active travel habits, giving schools a benchmark for changes in behaviour.
4. Moving into the final year of the strategy, the Physical Activity Steering group will continue to support the delivery of the key actions set out in the strategy action plan. Plans have also been discussed to broaden the focus of our strategic approach to physical inactivity, through the development of a Healthy Weight Strategy.

## **Environmental impact**

5. The council provides and purchases a wide range of services for the people of Herefordshire. Together with partner organisations in the private, public and voluntary sectors we share a

strong commitment to improving our environmental sustainability, achieving carbon neutrality and to protect and enhance Herefordshire's outstanding natural environment.

## **Equality duty**

6. The physical activity strategy aims to address health inequalities faced by certain population groups in Herefordshire by increasing levels of physical activity. Outlined below are examples in which the key deliverables of the physical activity strategy are targeted to help reduce inequalities in Herefordshire:
7. The Active Families programme helps to reduce inequalities, by working with schools in the most deprived areas (selected using The Index of Multiple Deprivation). Over half of the clients using this programme (51.89%) live within the two most deprived areas within the county. Schools are also selected using the National Child Measurement programme which measures the height and weight of children. Therefore, taking a targeted approach to reducing physical activity inequalities in the county.
8. There are gender inequalities in Physical Activity in England with 1 in 4 women being classed as physically inactive, compared to 1 in 5 men. Furthermore, according to the Youth Sport Trust Girls Active Survey, just 64% of girls enjoy PE in comparison to 86% of boys. It is important to address this gender inequality early on, which is what the Here Girls Can Festival aims to do by increasing the confidence and self-esteem of girls locally.
9. The Holiday Activities and Food programme helps to target inequalities as it is aimed at low socioeconomic status families.
10. The workplace health check programme encourages lifestyle changes such as physical activity and aims to reduce inequalities by targeting these checks at workplaces in areas of higher deprivation as well as low wage roles.
11. Age is a key driver of inequality in physical activity, with inactivity increasing sharply for those over the age of 75. The Feel Good for Life scheme helps to target this inequality by encouraging older people to get involved in the physical activity aspect of the programme.
12. Street Tag also engaged with users in areas of high deprivation, with fifty eight percent of users being from the most deprived areas of Herefordshire.

## **Resource implications**

13. No resource implications from this report.

## **Legal implications**

14. This section is to be completed in its entirety by the legal services team.

## **Risk management**

15. Lack of support for the physical activity strategy – ensure the Health and Wellbeing Board remain updated on the implementation and delivery, with the physical activity steering overseeing the delivery action plan.

## **Consultees**

16. Physical Activity steering group includes partners Active Herefordshire and Worcestershire, Stride Active, Wye Valley NHS Trust, Halo leisure, Active Travel, Wildlife Trust.

## **Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Herefordshire Physical Activity Strategy

Appendix 2 – Active Families Report

Appendix 3 – Here Girls Can Report

Appendix 4 – Street Tag Report

Appendix 5 – Falls Prevention Needs Assessment

## **Background papers**

None

## **Glossary of terms, abbreviations and acronyms used in this report:**

CVD	Cardiovascular disease
HAF	Holiday Activities and Food Programme
PA	Physical activity
PCN	Primary Care Network
PE	Physical education
TC	Talk Community
WVT	Wye Valley NHS Trust