

Get Active: a strategy for the future of sport and physical activity

Purpose of Report

For information.

Is this report confidential? No

Summary

This paper summarises the key points from the Government's new sports strategy which was published on 30 August 2023 and gives the LGA view on the strategy based on our established policy lines. It is recommended that the Board notes the paper and give their view of the strategy.

LGA Plan Theme: Other service specific support

Recommendation(s)

That the Board note the Government's proposals for sport, with particular reference to:

- National Physical Activity Taskforce, paragraphs 4 and 11.
- National vision for facilities by the end of 2023, paragraphs 7, 12 and 15.

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Get Active: a strategy for the future of sport and physical activity

Background

1. The Government published its long awaited sports strategy on 30th August 2023. "[Get Active: a strategy for the future of sport and physical activity](#)" sets out a blueprint to improve the nation's health and fitness, enhance corporate governance in the sport sector and make it more resilient to future challenges at elite and grassroots level. Alongside the strategy it has published an open call for evidence on Sport integrity.
2. While the strategy sets out the blueprint it is not supported by any new or additional funding to support local areas to implement the changes.
3. The strategy sets a target to increase activity rates in every active partnership area by 2030. This includes a target of 2.5 million more active adults and one million more active children and young people by 2030. It also includes targets for specific groups who are identified as being the least active in the active lives survey. This includes increasing activity rates in Black adults (0.09 more active), Asian adults (0.19 million more active) by 2030. Each Active Partnership in each area will take on a new monitoring role and new data sources will be included in the active lives survey to track progress.
4. A National Physical Activity Taskforce will be created and will be led by the Culture Secretary, Lucy Frazer, Sports Minister Stuart Andrew and former England Rugby Union international Ugo Monye as an independent co-chair. A full list of members will be published in due course.
5. The strategy has a strong focus on councils needing to be flexible and innovative to responding to changing participation habits and securing investment through new partnerships with private businesses, the outdoor activity sector and looking at active travel opportunities. It also seeks to increase the number of impactful volunteering opportunities to help increase participation and tackle inactivity.
6. Specific to local government, councils will need to develop well evidenced facilities plans and to integrate public leisure provision within the council's wider strategic plans for health, wellbeing, place, climate etc. The Government commits to working with the Local Government Association (LGA) to provide advice and support on how to do this and specifically references the LGA's improvement offer delivered in collaboration with Sport England.
7. The Government plans to develop a national vision for facilities by the end of 2023.
8. The focus on the sector's sustainability emphasises DCMS acting as a convenor of Government departments, experts and organisations to share expertise, guidance.

LGA view

9. Overall, it's good to see that the strategy recognises the value of the sector and its contribution to supporting the NHS and delivering savings and recognises the key role

councils play in this agenda. This is an argument the CTS Board has made robustly over the past two board cycles and it is positive to see this has landed with DCMS.

10. However, it is disappointing that the strategy has not been backed with new or additional funding to implement the strategy. Funding is essential if councils are to meet the Government's target of 3.5 million more active adults and children by 2030. And create a sustainable future for the sector through decarbonising leisure facilities. This will require investment above and beyond the Government's current [Swimming Pool Support Fund](#), which is a competitive fund of £60 million for capital investment to improve the energy efficiency of public facilities with pools in the medium to long term. We will continue to call for extension of the Public Sector Decarbonisation Fund to support the long-term sustainability of our vital sporting and leisure infrastructure and deliver against wider carbon reduction targets.
11. We will call for local government to be represented on the new National Physical Activity Taskforce. We will also make the case for including the Department of Health and Social Care and Office for Health Improvements and Disparities to be included in its membership because they are key partners to realise the strategy's ambition to integrate sport, leisure and health services and to shift towards a preventative approach.
12. The strategy explicitly mentions that the Government cannot be relied upon to prop up public leisure services and it is for local areas to work together to find new and innovative ways of working and partnerships. It calls on councils to develop local facility plans, which many councils are already doing. However, it does not recognise that councils will be starting with differing levels of resource and relationships in place, which may impact their ability to meet the Government's target for 3.5 million more active adults and children by 2030.
13. We will seek clarification from the Government on the implications on councils who are not on track to meet the target. We will also work with the Government to develop advice for councils and to support councils to implement the strategy and to share good practice and learning across the sector.
14. We will ensure that any new requirements for councils to report on new data sources captured by the Active Lives survey do not pose additional burdens on councils, or where they do that they are fully funded by the new burdens doctrine.
15. The timescales to develop a national vision for facilities by 2030 is very short and it is not clear if this will be consulted on. We will make representations to DCMS to ensure local government is consulted on the plans.
16. It's good to see the emphasis on capturing and using evidence to inform decision-making. We will seek to influence this ambition, specifically in line with our recommendation in "[Securing the future of public sport and leisure report](#)" to see "DCMS establish a programme for public sport and leisure services equivalent to its 'Valuing culture and heritage assets capital: a framework towards informing decision making' programme. The new programme should make statistics and evidence publicly available to aid the articulation of the value of public sport and leisure services locally and nationally in line with Her Majesty's Treasury (HMT) Green Book".

Implications for Wales

1. None.

Financial Implications

2. None.

Equalities implications

3. The LGA will provide support to help councils to deliver on the activity targets set out for the specific groups that are currently least active.

Next steps

4. We will continue to work with DCMS on the delivery of the strategy. We will also develop support and advice for councils to help them to implement the strategy and work with wider partners.
5. Officers to deliver on actions as directed by the Board.