

System Leadership & Moving Together in Co Durham

Better Together round table
Becks Lippe (28th April 2026)

BETTER TOGETHER VCSE FORUM

28th April 2026

Why I'm here

- To introduce Rise, Active Partnerships & Moving Together in Co. Durham (Co Durham's PA Strategy)
- Highlight the importance of moving.
- Help understand our inactivity problem
- Share our approach to tackling inactivity (through System Leadership)
- Our challenges
- Our learning

Introductions – who we are

RISE.



Our role as an Active Partnership

As a '**system partner**' and a '**local arm**' for Sport England - We work closely with our partners and stakeholders to deliver positive changes to support and enable our communities who need it most, to move more, through:

- Advocating
- Influencing
- Positively disrupting / challenging
- Supporting
- Collaborating

Rise – Transforming lives through the power of movement

<https://youtu.be/-O3g0TxhEwE>



Why do we need our communities to move more? Because the benefits of moving are huge.

Movement and physical activity improve every stage of life.



Improves physical and mental health and wellbeing

Improves school readiness, confidence, social skills and academic achievement

Improves fitness, bone and muscle strength, reduces falls and frailty

Improves productivity and boosts the economy

Reduces sickness and strain on the NHS

Strengthens communities by building bonds and supporting the environment and sustainability

How active should we be?

Physical activity for adults and older adults

Benefits health	Type II Diabetes	-40%
Improves sleep	Cardiovascular disease	-35%
Maintains healthy weight	Falls, depression etc.	-30%
Manages stress	Joint and back pain	-25%
Improves quality of life	Cancers (colon and breast)	-20%

Some is good, more is better | Make a start today: it's never too late | Every minute counts

Be active

at least **150** minutes moderate intensity per week OR at least **75** minutes vigorous intensity per week

Build strength on at least **2** days a week

Minimise sedentary time Break up periods of inactivity

Improve balance 2 days a week

UK Chief Medical Officers' Physical Activity Guidelines 2019

Physical activity for children and young people (5-18 Years)

Be physically active

Aim for at least 60 minutes everyday

Spread activity throughout the day | All activities should make you breathe faster & feel warmer

Include muscle and bone strengthening activities **3 TIMES PER WEEK**

Sit less | **Move more**

Find ways to help all children and young people accumulate at least 60 minutes of physical activity everyday

UK Chief Medical Officers' Guidelines 2011 Start Active, Stay Active: www.bit.ly/startactive

Physical activity for pregnant women

Helps to control weight gain | Helps reduce high blood pressure problems | Helps to prevent diabetes of pregnancy

Improves fitness | Improves sleep | Improves mood

Not active? Start gradually | **Already active?** Keep going

Home | **Out and about** | **Leisure**

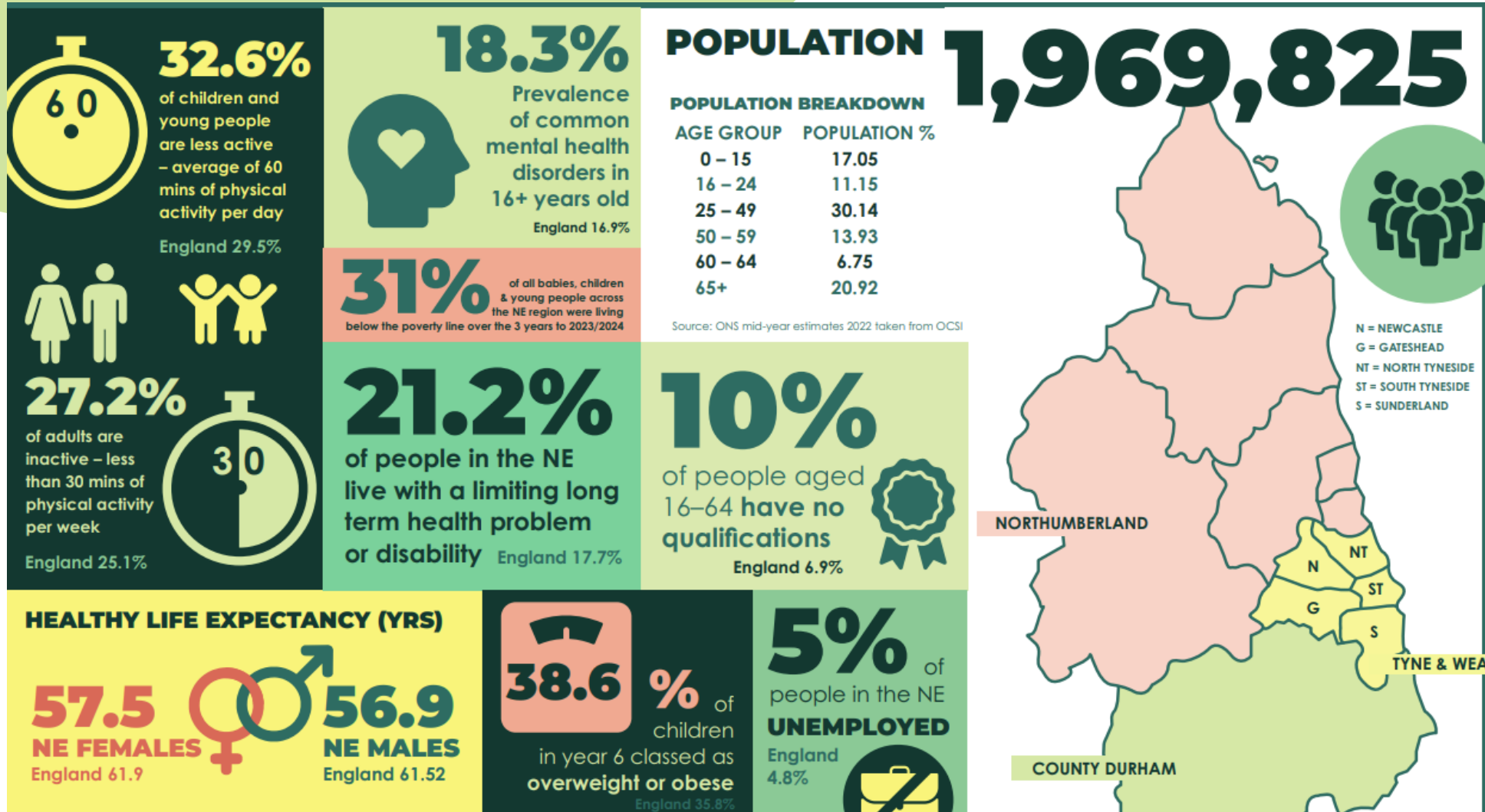
Throughout pregnancy aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate intensity activity every week

Do muscle strengthening activities twice a week | Every activity counts, in bouts of at least 10 minutes

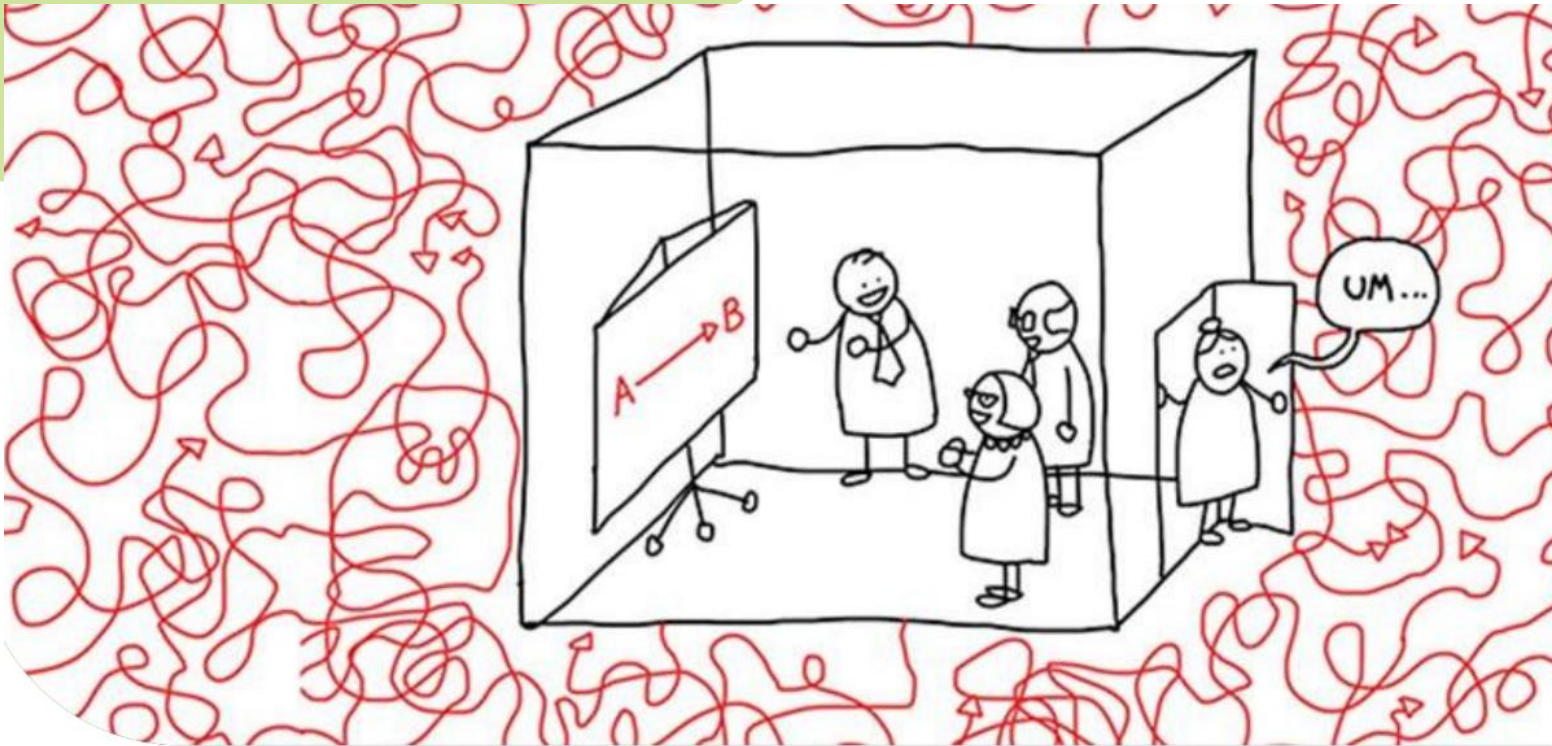
No evidence of harm | Listen to your body and adapt | Don't bump the bump

UK Chief Medical Officers Recommendations 2017: Physical Activity in Pregnancy. bit.ly/startactiveinfo

How active are we? Not enough!



Physical inactivity is a complex problem



<https://w>

Complex Problems Need a Different Approach

Sport England – working differently



Focus on learning

Local Delivery Pilots

In 2017, we invited communities from all over England to test a new way of working with us by becoming one of 12 'local delivery pilots'

Our 12 local pilots

At the end of the process, we had 12 local pilots:

1. Southall
2. Greater Manchester
3. Calderdale
4. Birmingham and Solihull
5. Exeter and Cranbrook
6. Doncaster
7. Withernsea
8. Bradford
9. Essex
10. South Tees
11. Hackney
12. Pennine Lancashire



Learning from the national pilots

UNITING THE MOVEMENT

We have captured lots of learning...



People and Places
The story of doing it differently

We wanted to understand how working with places could address the stubborn inequalities that exist among the least active and in 2018, we invited communities from all over England to test a new way of working with us by becoming one of 12 'local delivery pilots'.

People and Places is the story of our journey over the past four years. It's an honest look at the challenges and successes of implementing a new way of working and equipping people with the tools and resources to make a big difference to people's lives.

Learning is the doing

It's an essential part of the process: working with our local delivery pilots, sharing key insights to inform the pilot work, try to learning from each others' experiences, and using collective learning about system change to drive forward.

Explore the principles that have guided our learning

- Programs known as the 'spiritual map'
- Building on the existing 'tools on the shelf'
- Working out what's working
- Building the capacity to grow
- Stay local to the ground
- Doing what's right for the people
- We don't solve problems with the same mindset that created them

The practicalities of system change

We talk about the 'what' of the system, but what we have found is that it's how the work is done that makes progress. Our pilots' theories and learnings have emerged across the pilots and we've shared these with you, but we've also been learning from the way we've done things that these may not have been as they present on their own change journey.

Learn how pilots have put these steps of working into practice

- Shared purpose
- Understanding the local environment
- Distributed leadership
- Capacity and shared roles
- Test and learn
- Prove it
- Measuring the right outcomes
- Understanding the system you're trying to change
- Start with questions, not answers

This is the **story** of our work so far

The need for change

Our work started with the thinking and realization that things weren't working for the least active, and we needed to do something about it. We needed to do something that was different to what we were doing.

Take a look at how we set out to explore a place-led, bottom-up approach

Taking the first steps

As we began to explore approaches with the pilots, we realized that many of our tools and methods should have to be re-examined, so we worked with experience and practice to see what worked and what didn't. We started to think about the thinking and doing, and we started to think about the thinking and doing, and we started to think about the thinking and doing.

Discover how our understanding of leadership has changed through this journey

Understanding value

A key challenge of taking a systems approach is how you measure it. We've been thinking about this for a long time, and we've been thinking about it in a way that's different to what we were doing.

Understand how we are starting to measure value and the behaviours and principles that enable this

Doing things differently

We don't see ourselves as doing things differently, but we do know what that would look like or even what it might mean. For us, it's about using the tools and resources we have to do things differently.

Here's what we are learning and the key agents for change

Becoming the change you want to see

We're all influenced by lots of different factors that we don't see, but we do know that we need to work together as a system. It's not just about the tools and resources we have, it's about the thinking and doing, and we started to think about the thinking and doing.

See how the pilots have begun to embed physical activity across the layers of the system

Looking forward

Over the past year, we've been thinking about how we can continue to work with the pilots, and we've been thinking about how we can continue to work with the pilots, and we've been thinking about how we can continue to work with the pilots.

There's plenty more journey to come

Read the full story at sportengland.org/PeopleandPlaces

The Principles from the National Pilots

1 **PROGRESS MOVES AT THE SPEED OF TRUST**



START WITH BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS and TRUST
IT TAKES TIME
THIS CANNOT BE SKIPPED TO MOVE PROGRAMMES FORWARD

3 **HOLDING OUR NERVE**



BELIEVING IN OURSELVES and STAYING TRUE TO OUR GOALS IS ESSENTIAL TO PREVENT DEFAULTING TO OLD WAYS OF WORKING

2 **STUBBORN ON THE VISION FLEXIBLE ON THE DETAIL**



BE FLEXIBLE ALONG THE WAY and LET INVESTMENTS BE GUIDED BY NEED

4 **BRIDGING THE EMPATHY GAP**




→ ENGAGING COMMUNITIES
PUSHING ASIDE PRECONCEPTIONS AND ADAPTING THE WAY WE COMMUNICATE
SUPPORT CHANGE EMERGING FROM COMMUNITIES

5 **SAY 'YES' TO MESS**



NO SIMPLE ANSWERS
FLEXIBLE APPROACH THAT CAN RESPOND TO EVOLVING NEEDS, IDEAS and OPPORTUNITIES

7 **WE CAN'T SOLVE THE PROBLEM WITH THE SAME MINDSET THAT CREATED IT**




→ DOING THE RIGHT THING CAN BE CHALLENGING
CHALLENGE ASSUMPTIONS, CULTURAL RULES and WAYS OF THINKING ABOUT PHYSICAL INACTIVITY

6 **GOING WHERE THE ENERGY IS**



FIND PLACES WHERE COMMON PURPOSE and ENTHUSIASM EXIST AND START THERE

8 **IT DOESN'T HAVE TO BE PERFECT TO BE BETTER**

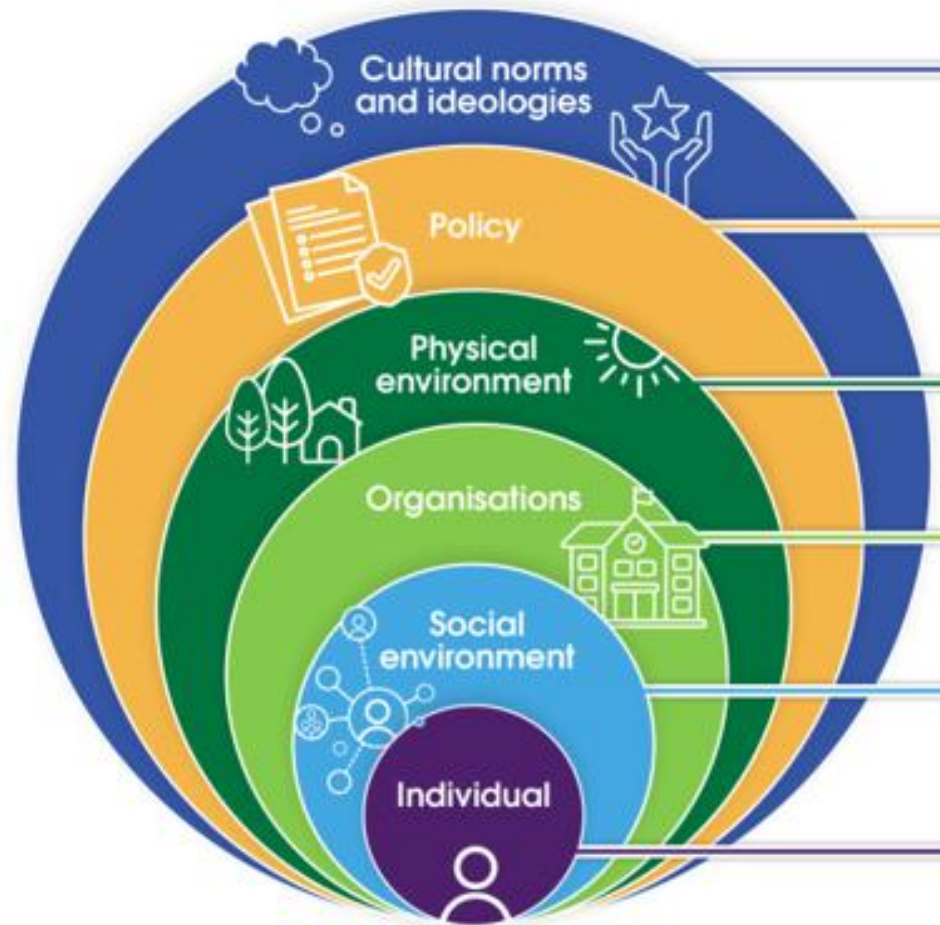
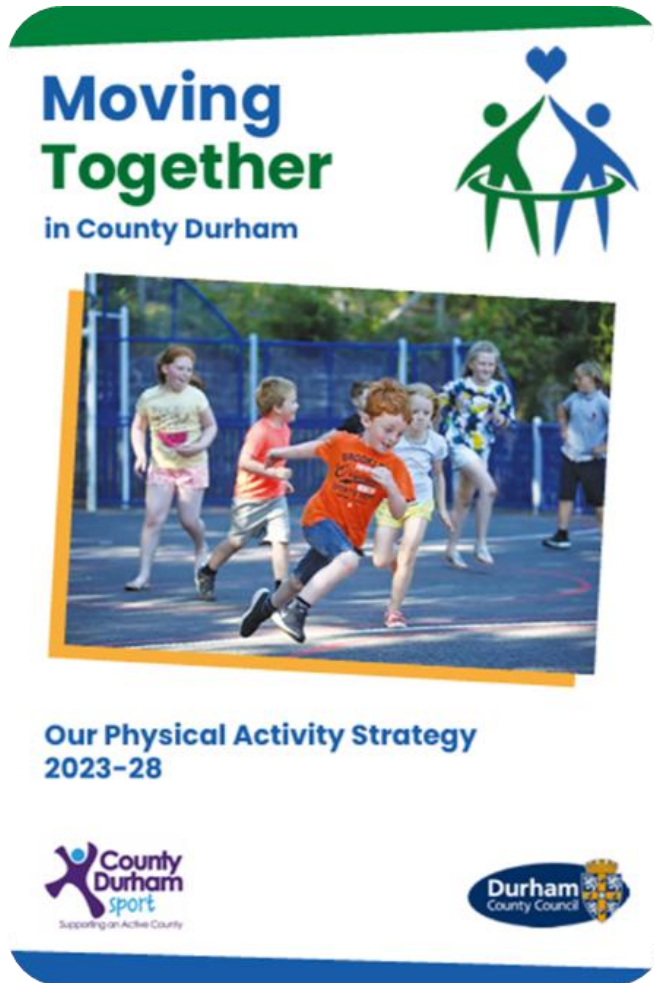


TAKE ON REAL BARRIERS TO PHYSICAL INACTIVITY and THEIR ROOT CAUSES
DONT RUSH TO PROVIDE SOLUTIONS or INTERVENTIONS

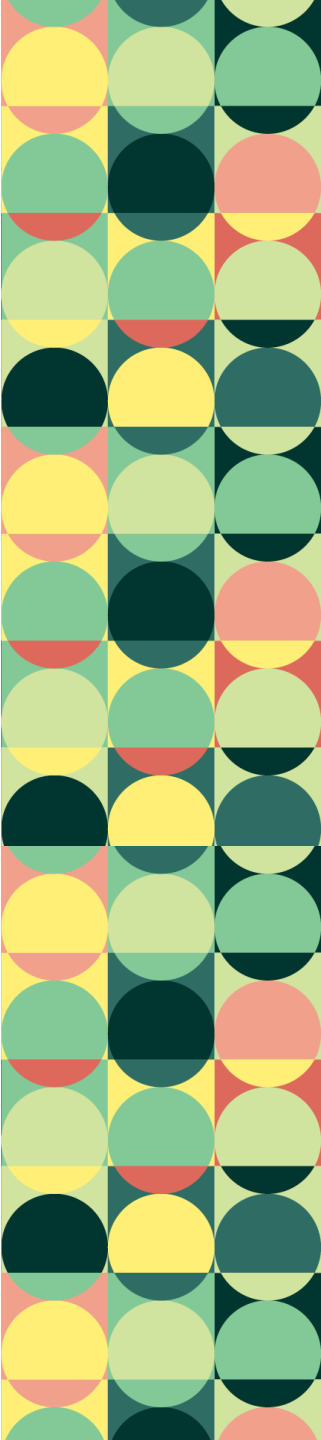
National & local Strategies – Tackling inactivity together



Moving Together in Co. Durham



With a focus on where it's needed the most.



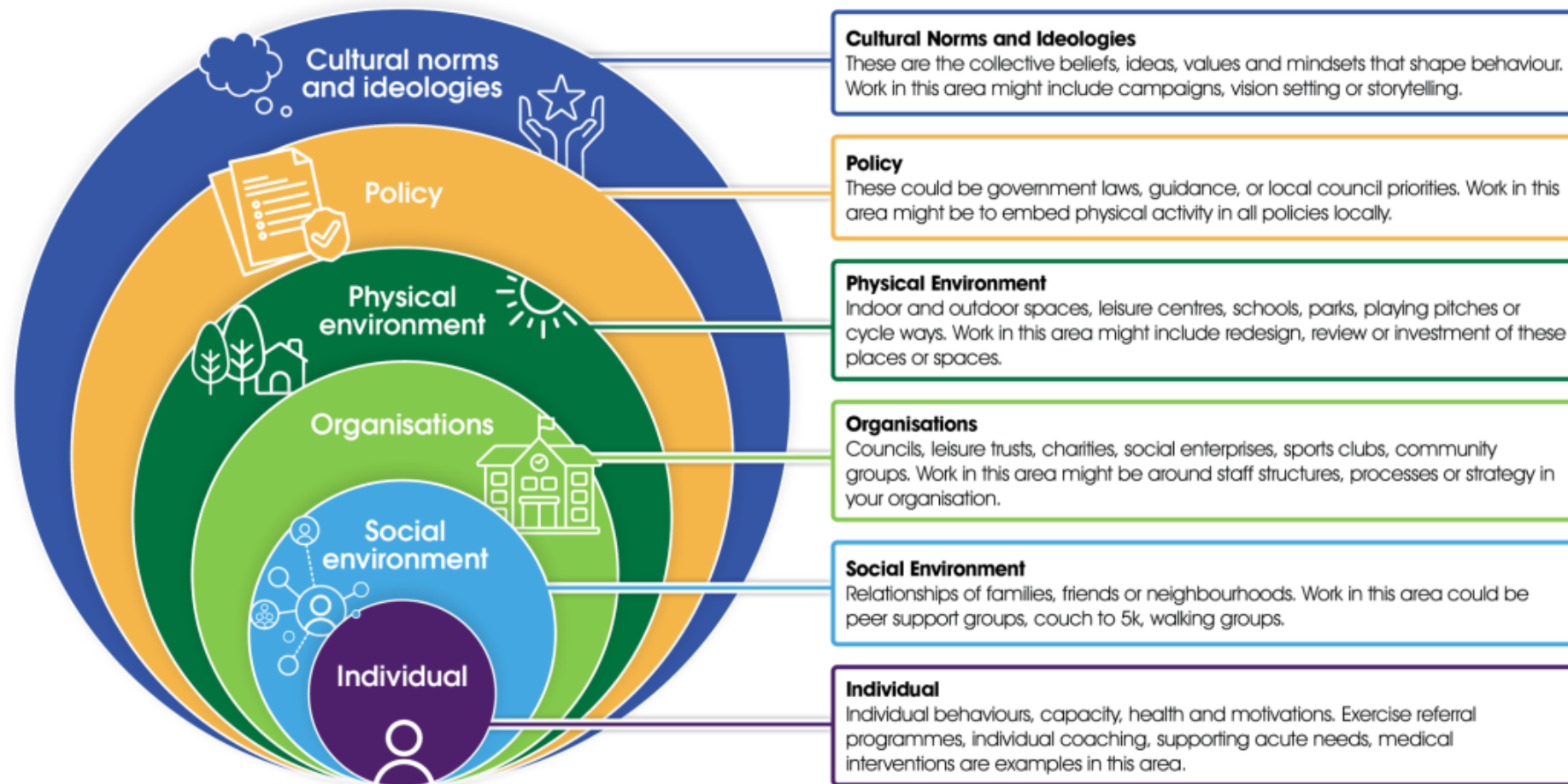
Strategic Priorities

- **Embed Moving into Everyday Life**
- **Reduce Inequalities and Support Those Who Need It Most**
- **Create Supportive Environments and Places**

Doing this through 'system change' & stronger collaboration / partnership working

How are we tackling this problem?

Systems have layers – The Socioecological model



Example – biking through the system

Driver behaviour towards Cyclists

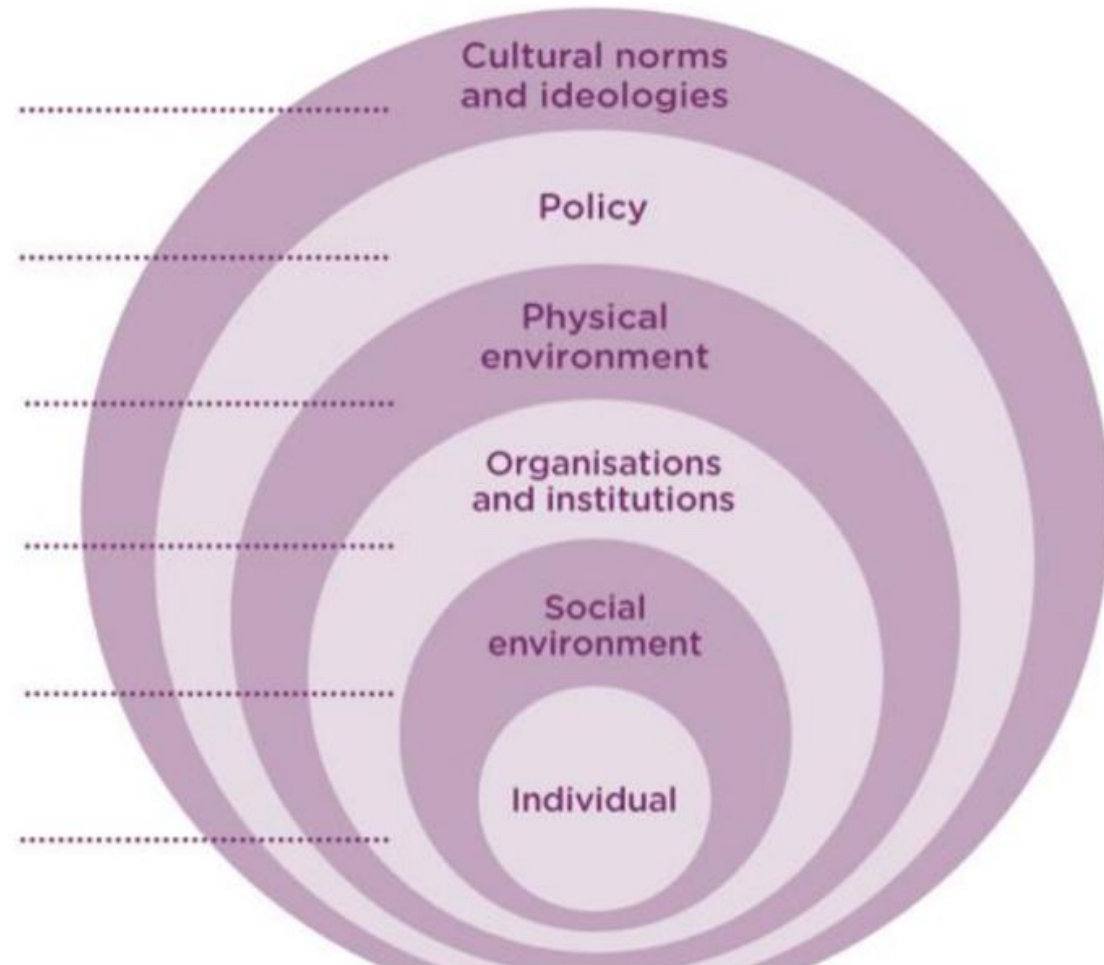
Policies around Active Travel

Infrastructure

Access to bike repair

Perceptions of safety

Self confidence



Working in place in Co. Durham

Through system change

Place work in Co. Durham - background

- Sport England – Uniting the Movement – Local Delivery Pilots
- Small scale pilots – Active Shildon & Active Valleys (2020 – 2024) Focus on learning / system working
- Moving Together in Peterlee (Feb 24 – present)
- Place Expansion (further Sport England investment)
- Expansion to include continuation in **Peterlee** (widening to include **Horden** and **Blackhall**).
- Plus **Bishop Auckland, Shildon, Newton Aycliffe, Stanley & Seaham**
- Full Award in Dec 26 (for funding to March 28 (2031))

Lessons from the LPD & Our 1st Place work



Active
Valleys



Active
Shildon

The mistakes we made 1st time round

Didn't give time required to bring communities/partners on board to help understand what 'change' needs to look like.

Community led

We didn't immerse in the community. Didn't get a deep enough understanding of place, community & local system

Understand local system

Quick fixes not effective. Recognition but provided with 2 years funded with no clear long-term plan

Long term commitment

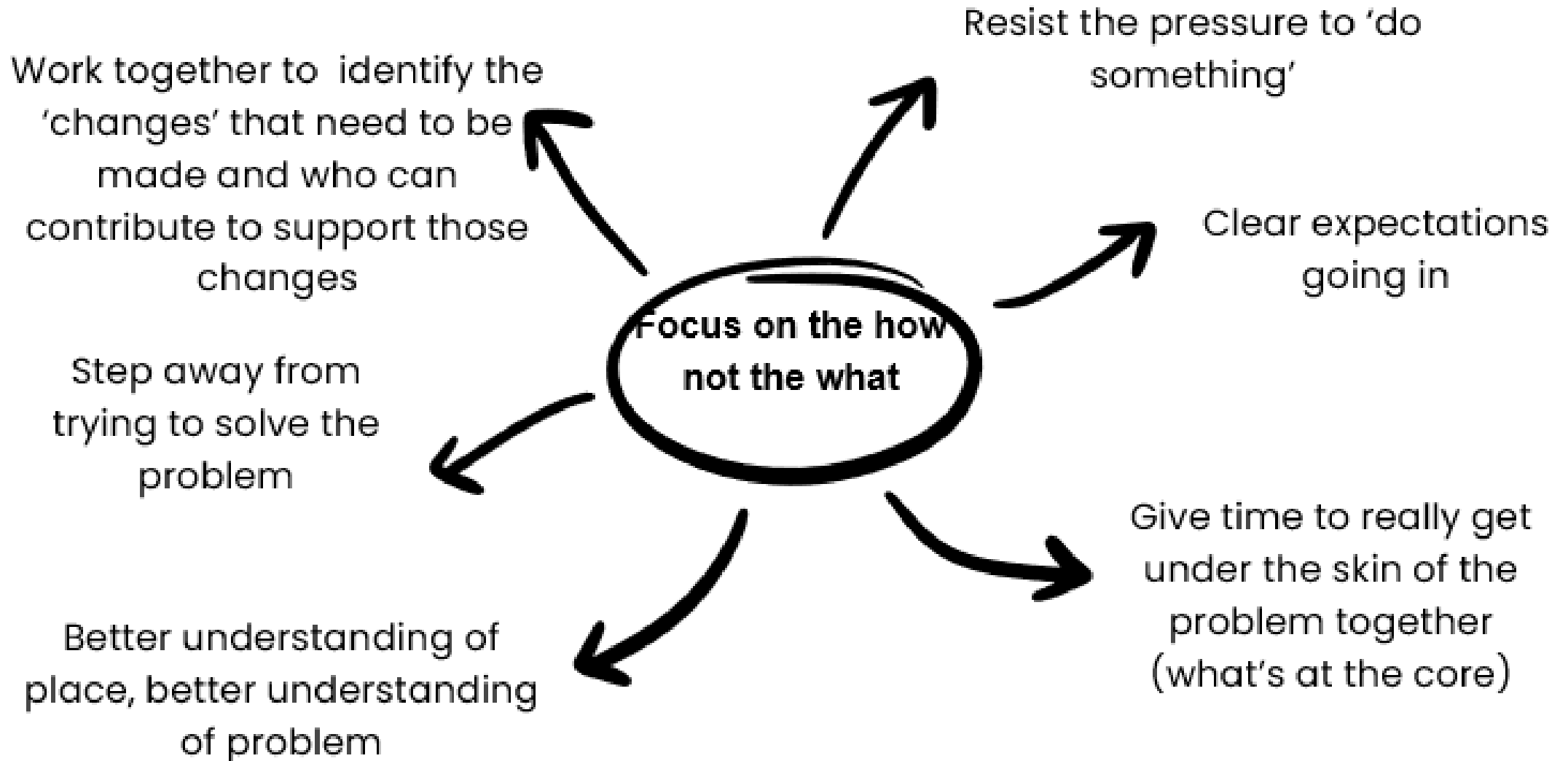
Build relationships

Requires time & commitment. Requires a presence in the community.

Holistic & sustainable change

PA & movement needs to be embedded into the work of a wide range/ broad range of partners – didn't engage diverse enough partners

Love the problem – not the solution. Taking the learning into Peterlee



Challenges we've continued to face

- Articulating system change
- Jumping in with solutions
- Know where you are – before setting off on your journey
- Stand back to understand the problem
- Keeping people engaged when they don't see things happening.
- Bringing people in along the way.
- Holding our nerve
- Weak links from learning to influencers

Addressing the challenges & lessons learnt

- National Place Learning Network
- Regional Place Clusters
- Recognition of similar challenges across the country.
- SE Leadership Programmes (CD – Miova - Strategic & Place)
- Development of resources to support the messaging (areas of challenge)
- Ripple effect mapping to help understand and track change
- Strong emphasis on learning and using it as we move forward
- Developing consistent voices / messaging (principles of system change)
- Development of stronger links from learning to influencers (MTSG)
- A shift in mindset/culture around MEL – Not ‘reporting’ success. **Shared learning and feedback loops**

Sport England's System Leadership Programme (Miova)

Systems Leadership

Part 1:

- Understanding Context
- Systems Have Layers and the Socioecological Model
- Different Types of Problems
- Cycles of Learning and Action

Durham • December 2025



Systems Leadership

Part 2:

- Establishing Networks
- Building Common Purpose
- Identifying Leverage Points
- Influencing Change

Durham • December 2025



Leadership programme - resources

Understanding the Context

Understanding the Context



Knowing where you are, and the things affecting life in this area, is key to knowing where to go



Leadership Programme - resources

Working in Systems



Understand the
Complexity



Identify the right
places to make a
difference
(Leverage Points)



Act in Collaboration
across the system
(Networks)


Holding onto the principles

1 PROGRESS MOVES AT THE SPEED OF TRUST



START WITH BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS and TRUST
IT TAKES TIME
THIS CANNOT BE SKIPPED TO MOVE PROGRAMMES FORWARD

3 HOLDING OUR NERVE



BELIEVING IN OURSELVES and STAYING TRUE TO OUR GOALS IS ESSENTIAL TO PREVENT DEFAULTING TO OLD WAYS OF WORKING

2 STUBBORN ON THE VISION FLEXIBLE ON THE DETAIL



BE FLEXIBLE ALONG THE WAY and LET INVESTMENTS BE GUIDED BY NEED

4 BRIDGING THE EMPATHY GAP




→ ENGAGING COMMUNITIES
→ PUSHING ASIDE PRECONCEPTIONS AND ADAPTING THE WAY WE COMMUNICATE
→ SUPPORT CHANGE EMERGING FROM COMMUNITIES

5 SAY 'YES' TO MESS



NO SIMPLE ANSWERS
FLEXIBLE APPROACH THAT CAN RESPOND TO EVOLVING NEEDS, IDEAS and OPPORTUNITIES

7 WE CAN'T SOLVE THE PROBLEM WITH THE SAME MINDSET THAT CREATED IT




→ DOING THE RIGHT THING CAN BE CHALLENGING
→ CHALLENGE ASSUMPTIONS, CULTURAL RULES and WAYS OF THINKING ABOUT PHYSICAL INACTIVITY

6 GOING WHERE THE ENERGY IS



FIND PLACES WHERE COMMON PURPOSE and ENTHUSIASM EXIST AND START THERE

8 IT DOESN'T HAVE TO BE PERFECT TO BE BETTER



→ TAKE ON REAL BARRIERS TO PHYSICAL INACTIVITY and THEIR ROOT CAUSES
→ DON'T RUSH TO PROVIDE SOLUTIONS or INTERVENTIONS

Any Questions?

