**Analysis of LDP Coordinator Conversations 2018-19**

The Essex Local Delivery Pilot (LDP) is focused on tackling persistent social inequalities, which prevent people in Essex from enjoying the physical, social, and mental health benefits of an active lifestyle. The vision of the Essex LDP is to tackle the issues of inactivity in Essex head on and for the county to become a beacon for best practice in reducing inactivity.

As part of this pilot, 3 LDP coordinators have been deployed into Basildon, Colchester and Tendring to gather insight from local residents and community groups, particularly focussing on areas of deprivation, older people, families and those with poor mental health.

Summaries of their conversations were recorded by 3 LDP Coordinators using a template between October 2018 and August 2019. 270 conversation summaries were coded, looking for text that related to ‘assets’, ‘barriers and challenges’, ‘opportunities’ and ‘use of physical activity’. These excerpts were then grouped into themes and sub-themes by two researchers. A focus group with the LDP coordinators was held to play back and agree the findings of the analysis where some small amendments were made where additional context was given. Three themes were identified; Context is Crucial, Engaging Individuals in Physical Activity and How Groups and Projects Work.

***Context is Crucial***

**There is a desire for local, community-led activities that build on strengths**

Across all areas, a sense of community and community events and activities are seen as assets. There were several examples of community-led approaches such as a community-owned lido, a local youth group and the curation of museums in Colchester. There also seemed to be a desire for more community-led projects which bring the community together, build on strengths and local passions and take a hyperlocal approach.

*“The community will be leading this and telling us what they want not the other way around” (Project Lead, Tendring)*

*“The service empowers people with dementia to develop their own solutions and responses to meet their needs and wishes, and supports people with dementia to identify their own personal talents, strengths and capabilities, and what they can bring to their peers and the wider community” (Project Lead, Colchester)*

*“I am passionate about where I live and want to change the views people have about the area following recent TV programmes where [local area] was shown to be negative” (Project Lead, Tendring)*

**There is appetite for different sporting activities in different LDP areas**

There is an appetite for boxing in Basildon among the general population as well as groups such as travellers, and examples of this happening i.e. family run boxing club.

Cycling was not mentioned in conversations with Basildon groups and residents. Good ‘backdrop’ for cycling in Colchester - a CBC priority and services delivering bike checks and advice and training in bike repair with suggestions of a bike hiring / loan scheme. There seems to be a desire for cycling in Tendring although there are challenges with negotiating shared usage of seafront paths; multi-use paths along the seafront and cycle friendly cafes were both suggested.

Several football and walking football groups were identified in Colchester and Tendring, although this was not so much the case for Basildon. County-wide providers confirmed that there is more appetite for football in North East Essex compared to Basildon.

*“Walking football is really strong in the North” (Staff Member, Essex)*

*“Linking football into Sport for Confidence has been difficult in Basildon” (Staff Member, Basildon)*

**Physical assets differ between LDP places**

Across all areas, schools are seen as an opportunity to reach children and families and as a space for delivery. Current delivery of school-based physical activities seems to be particularly high in Tendring and includes activities such as dance, martial arts and self-defence, gymnastics and yoga. Projects report having good links with schools in Colchester and there are examples of schools being used as community hubs in Colchester (Paxman Academy) and Basildon (Vange Community Pre-School).

Similarly, libraries are seen as safe spaces, community hubs and as an asset that could be better used for physical activity.

*“The great thing about using libraries to incentivise people to get active is that you already have the infrastructure there, and you have the professional staff who know how to make libraries safe spaces for people with mental health problems, for families and children.” (Community Member, Colchester)*

There were very few conversations in Basildon that spoke about large outdoor spaces other than parks not being used as a result of fear of crime. There were however positive conversations about smaller outdoor spaces such as a garden created by the community and allotment spaces.

*“Me and my family do like going for walks in Wat Tyler Park and Langdon Hills Park not Gloucester park as that is dodgy and not Northlands Park due to problems recent flasher” (Community Member, Basildon)*

Several indoor venues for activities were mentioned including the Basildon Sporting Village as well as several community centres and a space within a local Tesco; some of these are available for hire and some are free to use.

*“There are around 24 members of staff and 85 customers using the centre each week with a range of disabilities and needs” (Staff Member, Basildon)*

Conversations in Colchester spoke of parks, green spaces and 17 woodland country parks as an asset, however these are not always well used, promoted or maintained and it was mentioned that these could be better used for activities such as Catch 22 activities, Holiday hunger programmes and forest schools. Examples of physical activity equipment built into the outdoor environment were also seen as an asset in Colchester such as outdoor gyms, play areas and skate parks, although this provision is not across all areas of Colchester.

*“The green gym is delivering positive outcomes.” (Staff Member, Colchester)*

*“I feel like less money and resources are being spent in the Central Colchester locality. There is no outdoor gym in Shrub End and no promotion of Gosbecks Park. Also, the Shrub End tennis courts, the only municipal tennis courts in the borough, have become run down, despite hosting private tennis clubs.” (Councillor, Colchester)*

Several indoor spaces were also identified as assets which are being used for activities in Colchester, these included Leisure World and the Mercury Theatre dance studio as well as community spaces, pub function rooms, scout huts and charity premises; use of these community venues are frequently given free of charge. A few concerns were raised about the suitability of the pool at Leisure World and the challenges with trying to hire it for group activities.

*“Several sessions are hosted from the function room for free such as darts, bingo, women's guild and veteran's breakfasts… I am passionate about wanting to support the community, about social isolation being a big problem in the area.” (Pub Landlord, Colchester)*

*“The pool, notably the wave machine, is not appropriate for older ladies.” (Project Lead, Colchester)*

Conversations in Tendring spoke of the seafront as an outdoor asset and there were several suggestions about how to use this to increase physical activity including active travel, coastal walks and cycling. There were also a few examples of farm land being used for activities in Tendring. A desire was expressed for physical activity equipment to be built into the outdoor environment such as outdoor gyms, a park for young people and a strip of tarmac for young people to do wheelies on their bikes. A small number of examples of indoor spaces being used for activities was given; these include pub function rooms, church buildings and other community venues.

**There are transport and accessibility issues across LDP areas but these are different**

Some activities are difficult to get to, particularly in in more rural areas of Colchester and Tendring. One conversation mentioned access to a minibus as a key asset which enabled transport to the project.

*“One of the biggest problems older residents, especially in rural Colchester, face not just around nutrition but also accessing services to include physical activity.” (Staff Member, Colchester)*

*“Some service users would like to attend activity sessions in their area, but their barriers are that they don’t know what groups are out there and they do not drive so cannot access all activity.” (Project Lead, Tendring)*

Public transport was given as a barrier to accessing physical activity opportunities across all area. Buses were seen as a particular issue due to a lack of bus services to key assets such as Watt Tyler Park and not being available when needed ie after after-school clubs and at weekends. Transport was mentioned most frequently as an issue in Basildon, although what these issues are was infrequently mentioned within conversations.

*“Some of the main barriers for older people reaching community services is transport and mobility issues. There are limited transport buses that collect from the home to the take them to the activity which in turn prevents older people from leaving their homes.” (Project Lead, Basildon)*

*“Services are restricted at weekends, not least for public transport.” (Community Member, Colchester)*

*“A lot of students would attend more after school activities if there were later buses from the school.” (Teacher, Tendring)*

**Crime is seen as a barrier to activity, particularly in Basildon**

The perception that there is high crime rate was mentioned in Basildon (with Pitsea and Vange specified in conversations) and Tendring, specifically Clacton; in saying this, crime was very infrequently mentioned as an issue in Tendring.

*“I did like living in Basildon because there were lots of shops and I was ignorant to what was really happening regards to crime. I want to move out of the area desperately because I want more for my son and keeping him safe as there are high crime levels which is frightening for me as a parent.” (Community Member, Basildon)*

*“I would like volunteers or ‘Town Ambassadors’ to maintain [raised beds] as well as to raise the profile of the town and make people feel safe in Clacton town centre.” (Staff Member, Tendring)*

There is little on where this perception has come from other than one mention about Basildon’s Crimewatch Facebook page promoting fear of crime. Where concerns about safety were expressed, these were linked to knife crime, gangs, drug use, smashed glass, groups of smokers and antisocial behaviour. In several conversations, this fear of crime was directly linked to physical activity assets not being used, for example the outdoor gym not being used and parks not being used. There were very few suggestions made about how safety fears could be reduced, other than through additional lighting.

*“I live in Pitsea now and I don’t feel happy or safe there as there is a lot of knife crime. I feel stop and search could help to make the community feel safe… I look at the Basildon Crimewatch page online and had to stop looking at it as it was making me feel anxious.” (Community Member, Basildon)*

*“Me and my family do like going for walks in Wat Tyler Park and Langdon Hills Park not Gloucester park as that is dodgy and not Northlands Park due to problems recent flasher.” (Community Member, Basildon)*

*“A barrier for some of the families was that there were no walking routes or parks around the area and felt scared to go due to anti-social behaviour and gangs which led to some mothers not wanting to walk alone, therefore need a volunteer to go out” (Project Lead, Basildon)*

***Engaging Individuals in Physical Activity***

**Activity needs to be accessible and inclusive**

Walking is seen as a physical activity option that is enjoyable and open to all. Walking groups are happening across all areas; these include Nordic walking, health walks, history walks and walk & talk groups. Suggestions for further improvements included walks for people on crutches, improve routes for pushchairs and wheelchairs and having safe places to walk dogs.

Walking was frequently suggested as a way to include physical activity in current groups and activities such as mental health interventions and community groups. There were also several suggestions that park & walk or walking busses could be used, particularly to and from schools, to both increase physical activity and reduce issues with parking.

Running is not frequently mentioned and conversations that mention running refer to opportunities for people who ‘don’t run’ such as group ‘couch to 5k’, fun runs, colour runs and how to make ‘Park Run’ more accessible for those who want to walk.

*“'Park Run' can sound daunting for people who just want to walk, although walking is allowed the name of the popular event does not indicate this, park run is also very competitive.” (Project Lead, Tendring)*

*“When the Harwich Runners added a Facebook post for people who would like to start/join a couch to 5k group, the take up for this was 100's of people!” (Community Member, Tendring)*

Suggestions were also made about how to make cycling more inclusive. These included women’s only rides, a cycling club for families and having tandem bikes for disabled people.

Football was frequently mentioned as an enjoyable activity however several conversations mentioned a need for opportunities for those who are ‘not good enough’ to play football. Suggestions for this included fun football, care home football, veterans’ football and intergenerational matches.

Dance is seen as an enjoyable and accessible activity which is applicable across multiple generations and across groups with specific needs such as older people, young people with disabilities and people with Alzheimer’s. Several conversations mentioned that more opportunities for dance were wanted, even if this was simply by providing music at existing activities which would encourage movement.

*“We initially tried to tie the 'Dance with Parkinson’s' event held at the castle in with history but found that attendees only came for the dancing.” (Staff Member, Colchester)*

*“We would like music. If there was music we would be moving in the chair and some would even get up to dance. We would like our own instruments to play. Tambourines etc.” (Dementia Café Attendee, Tendring)*

**Incentives and ‘Gamification’ work**

Several projects referred to incentives that are used to get people to activities – these all involve food and drink i.e. ‘the cake escape’ in Tendring which gives stamps for cyclists to get free cake and ‘Move it or Lose it’ in Basildon which provides free coffee after the session. Suggestions for other ways to incentivise activity included use of cash rewards and earing money for a chosen charity. However, in other conversations it was stated that there was not a need to incentivise activities either because the activity was rewarding in itself or because these do not fit in with the setting’s culture or way of working.

*“Most parents usually come to events which involve food.” (Project Lead, Tendring)*

*“I encourage everyone to stay for a free coffee and a natter at the end of the class to get to know me and other members to help combat social isolation.” (Project Lead, Basildon)*

*“I have an idea around a sum of money being put aside that can be awarded when a certain number of steps are achieved, i.e. walk 3k and 30 pence is donated in your name to your chosen local charity/club etc. You can then link in social interaction on platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat etc. 'I just walked 3k and 30p has been donated in my name'.” (Project Lead, Tendring)*

*“The school does not use any rewards. Pupils are just expected to do what they should be doing.” (Teacher, Tendring)*

Beat the Street and other ‘gamified’ interventions were mentioned in several conversations with young people within Colchester and Tendring and additional suggestions were made by them about how to add a competitive element to activity such as a manhunt club or league.

*“We would like more parks to access and also more competitions like Beat the Street and Clacton Finds (painting stones, hiding and finding them).” (School Council, Tendring)*

**Individual Barriers**

A lack of motivation was mentioned in conversations across all areas as a barrier to activity; be that community projects, attending non-physical activity activities or ‘exercise’.

*“Barriers to engaging in activities include lack of money, mental health and motivation to leave the house.” (Service User Group, Basildon)*

*“A lot of service users could do with being more active but they often don’t turn up to appointments for various reasons including motivation, being addicted to gaming and also confidence.” (Staff Member, Tendring)*

*“…older people are notoriously difficult to convince about exercise.” (Project Lead, Basildon)*

In saying this, there were also conversations that highlighted people’s desire to increase activity and/or socialising but a perceived lack of opportunity.

Additional needs mean that access and taking part are more challenging however there were several well-attended activities identified for people with additional needs such as Dance with Parkinson’s, guided running park run, COPD activity sessions and outdoor activities for people with dementia.

*“Having sight problems means I worry about being able to take part in activities.” (Service User, Tendring)*

*“We help a range of individuals and organisations to negotiate the barriers which prevent people from living well with dementia.” (Staff Member, Colchester)*

Low confidence or loss of confidence was identified as a key issue in several conversations about barriers to being physically active. This lack of confidence was not specific to any area or age group nor was there a consistent cause.

*“I’ve got no hope of being active.” (Community Member, Basildon)*

*“Some of the barriers for older people to join in with community groups and activities are that they could have experienced a fall which can leave an older person with low confidence or they at times have fear of becoming incontinent whilst out of the home.” (Staff Member, Basildon)*

*“There are a lot of anxieties around physical activity in the pupils” (Teacher, Tendring)*

Other barriers identified included the cost of activities, particularly indoor activities; lack of time and other responsibilities such as caring; isolation and mental health issues making leaving the house difficult and practical issues such as not having appropriate clothing.

***How Groups and Projects Work***

**Partnership working is happening, but there is opportunity for more**

There was evidence from conversations with project leads that partnership working is happening. This includes co-funding, sharing of specialist staff and use of space.

There was an acknowledgement that partnership working is fragmented and there is duplication happening due to organisations working in silo. There is, therefore, a desire for more partnership working. In several conversations, suggestions were given by the LDP coordinators of ways that groups and community members could develop their partnership working.

Some barriers to partnership working were discussed including working with schools and CCGs.

**Sustainability is a concern for many activities, but not all**

Funding was discussed in several conversations across all areas, although less so in Basildon. The majority of activities and groups had received funding from various sources including Sport England, Essex County Council, Active Essex, The Youth Service and Big Lottery. The need for ongoing or additional funding was also discussed within several conversations alongside concerns about the sustainability of projects. Examples were given of groups and activities that were either stopped due to funding ending such as buggy walks, bike club and yoga sessions at mental health hub or stopped after the cost was transferred to attendees.

Alternative and creative funding methods were also discussed. For example, a boxing club in Basildon was created following a leaflet being posted through the door of a local resident who took up an offer of free training for her and her family. Boxing training was delivered by Sport Inspired and a space to deliver the boxing club has been provided by Swan Housing. Additional funding was required for t-shirts for the members of the boxing club and these were purchased with money from sponsorship money from a local shopkeeper who owns the off-licence and the chip shop. Another example in Tendring is a women’s group which is provided for free and covers costs through fundraising activities in the local community. A further example of innovative cost covering is from a fitness group in Tendring uses a bonus ball scheme in which the group have an opportunity to win a cash reward. They also run their body fit challenge; an 8-week challenge in which members pay a fee and have an opportunity to win a cash reward if they lose the most body fat. There were also ideas for innovative fundraising opportunities including for forest school costs to be covered in a sustainable way through matched crowd funding through schools.

**Volunteers and workforce development are seen as key for sustainability**

There is a reliance on volunteers to run groups and lead activities – they are seen as an asset that contribute to sustainable delivery; particularly as paid staff are stretched. Challenges were identified in recruiting and retaining this workforce. Formal volunteers were spoken about more in Colchester than other areas.

*“Local volunteers are key to supporting vulnerable families” (Project Lead, Colchester)*

*“Staff work pressures limit morale and hinder enthusiasm to motivate the residents” (Project Lead, Basildon)*

Opportunities for workforce development were also identified including opportunities to train up new coaches and lifeguards but also to upskill non-physical activity workforces. For example, it was suggested that care home staff could be trained to deliver seated yoga and teachers could be trained to lead sports and/or activities for their students.

*“We are training staff at a residential home to continue and support the sustainability of the fitness sessions” (Project Lead, Basildon)*

**Groups are hopeful about opportunities to scale and replicate**

Several project leads spoke of having a successful model and some spoke of evaluation demonstrating positive outcomes.

*“Being outdoors saw [participant’s] wellbeing increase by 95% within 6 weeks for those reporting low wellbeing at the start… When people committed to [the project] participants still reported improved wellbeing 2 months later.” (Project Lead, Colchester)*

There were also conversations about the potential for scaling and/or replication and the hope that this would happen.

*“Before I leave this world, I intend to have a holiday [hunger] programme in every deprived area, in every town across the UK!” (Project Lead, Colchester)*

There were some examples of scale and replication through organic growth, such as a team relay event in Tendring, an allotment project in Colchester and a walk & talk group for men in Tendring. Examples also given of attempts to replicate into other nearby areas that did not work, although the reasons for this were unclear.

*“The event is getting bigger and bigger each year with more teams coming on board and more members joining existing teams” (Project Lead, Tendring)*

*“I tried to set this up in Walton but haven’t had success” (Project Lead, Tendring)*

*“Clubs are well attended in Harwich, not so much in Clacton” (Project Lead, Tendring)*

**There are lots of opportunities to gain insight and share messages**

Coordinator conversations were useful in identifying individuals and groups with good insights into specific areas and communities including travellers, BAME communities in Colchester, families from deprived backgrounds and with complex needs, carers those with mental health and substance misuse issues and PRU pupils.

*“They [project leads] are a local couple with a family accessing local services and as such understand the challenges and opportunities in Greenstead” (LDP Coordinator, Colchester)*

*“We have a great knowledge of health and social care as well as community resources available to the carer and the individual being cared for” (Project Lead, Colchester)*

Several conversations also revealed opportunities to identify inactive people and engage with LDP target groups. For example, it was suggested that teachers would be well placed to identify children and families who are inactive, the fire service frequently identifies those who are isolated and inactive through ‘safe and well’ visits, and LDP messages could be communicated to target groups and partners through existing channels such as twitter feeds and newsletters. In saying this, ongoing challenges reaching specific groups, demographics and areas were also discussed.

*“The Fire service are prevention experts and a trusted ‘brand’ and as such are in a prime position to engage ‘hard to reach’ community members” (Project Lead, Colchester)*

*“I could support the LDP by sending an email to 400 people including CVS, schools, health, youth service, GPs and probation” (Project Lead, Basildon)*

*“We are having difficulty engaging with some members of the local community, for example young mums and young people” (Community Centre Lead, Tendring)*

**There are opportunities to add physical activity to non-physical activity activities**

Coordinators spoke to groups who provide non-physical activity activities such as Essex Wildlife Trust, schools and preschools and an English as a Second or Foreign Language (ESOL) group as well as local councillors. They also spoke to groups providing physical activity opportunities that are not traditional sport and exercise activities such as gardening and conservation activities.

Many of these groups spoke positively about the possibility of adding a physical activity element. There were several suggestions that a walk could be added to current provision and a desire was expressed by many for health walk leader training. Other ideas included providing seated yoga after bingo, choir attendees getting active while singing and IT support being a hook into other activities.