



Keynote

HELEN HULL

Supporting public sport and physical activity services

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National context

- Increased political and public awareness of the importance of physical exercise and wellbeing during COVID-19
- Post-pandemic return to leisure centres
- Many buildings need upgrade or repair
- Since 2009 there has been a 60% funding cut and a 40% loss of staff
- Councils are set up to provide sport and physical activity services and do so because of why they exist (it is not a statutory provision)
- Benefits include: physical and mental health and wellbeing, community cohesion and reducing inequalities
- Barriers include: costs (particularly energy), skills, deteriorating estates and lack of support within wider organisations

Making the case for sports and physical activity services

- The LGA has been working with partners including the Chief Cultural and Leisure Officers Association (CLOA), Sport England and the Association for Public Sector Excellence (APSE)
- ‘Securing the future of public leisure services’ report (commissioned by LGA, CLOA and APSE) launched in parliament in September 2021.
- The report speaks on behalf of the public sport and leisure sector, based on an extensive consultation with over 260 local government representatives, leisure providers, arms length bodies, national governing bodies and the Local Government Physical Activity Partnership
- **The recommendations reflect what the sector told us needs to change**, in order to make public sport and leisure services sustainable, and to realise its potential to deliver on a wide range of national and local policy objectives.

Summary of key findings

1. Public sport & leisure services (PSLS) are unique for their reach & support of communities.

2. Systemic funding issues & COVID-19 have left PSLS at immediate risk of operational failure/damage.

3. Increasing financial returns risks losing focus on those most in need of the service.

4. Leadership & skills development across PSLS, health & workforce is needed to drive collaboration & integration.

5. Councils have the central leadership role in creating active places & connecting diverse Government objectives.

6. Community sport & physical activity development is essential to expand the reach of PSLS & address health inequalities.

7. Children learn essential water safety & swimming skills in publicly provided swimming pools. This cannot be fulfilled by private operators..

8. Ageing leisure assets make a significant contribution to councils' carbon emissions.

9. The sector's voice is fragmented, weakening its influence at local & national levels.

10. Leaders of PSLS want to expand on existing work & collaborate more with partners, particularly with health.

11. PSLS are integral to COVID-19, recovery supporting communities, reducing the burden on NHS & social care.

Reasons to act

85% young people
learn to swim in public
pools.

14m people participated
in swimming pa Pre-
COVID.

Strong return to leisure
centres by **users** from more
deprived backgrounds
since **reopening**.

(Moving Communities)

86% people **prefer** to
exercise in **leisure**
centres.

(Moving Communities)

£9.5bn - Physical activity's
value to the economy. Of this -
£5.2 bn - health care savings
£1.7bn - **social care** savings
£20bn in social value incl. **10,000 fewer**
crime incidents, improved levels of social
trust, **belonging**, community engagement
(Sport England)

Councils are the
biggest spenders of
PSLS, parks & green
spaces spending
£1.1bn pa

Exercise referral,
social prescribing &
66% cancer pre/post
rehab. services all
delivered in public
leisure facilities

Almost 5m school
swimming
lessons lost due
to COVID-19

Support for the sector

LGA's lobbying and partnership work also includes:

- Briefings on alternative funding sources for sport and physical activity, community ownership, climate change and transformation
- Lobbying, which has resulted in £100m from the national recovery fund and a £63m swimming pool support fund

Keep talking to us about the issues that matter most to you

LGA/Sport England leadership programmes

- Leadership Essentials for councillors
 - Advocacy, leadership and partnership working
- Leadership programme for senior officers
 - Systems leadership, working with partners (for example, health)
- Officer alumni programme
- An emphasis on networking and sharing good practice