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On the move

Director of Public Health Annual Report 2022





Foreword

Being more active is one of the best things we can do for our health. It makes us feel better and it reduces the risk of many illnesses and diseases.

Being more active isn't all about sport, or going to the gym to work out, although these are great ways for people to be active. Simply put, being more active is about getting your body moving more. It's about using your own energy and getting a bit 'out of puff', building this into our daily routine and doing it little and often in a way which suits you. There are lots of inspiring examples later in this report where individuals have

made small decisions, such as walking more, dancing or gardening, which have made a big difference to their lives.

We have the opportunity to design physical activity into our city and within our workplaces, by creating active environments, and supporting active transport options, to encourage people to walk, cycle or take public transport, even for just a portion of their journey. Factoring physical activity into daily life doesn't have to be a drastic change. Simply choosing to take the stairs rather than the lift or escalator whenever possible contributes to an active lifestyle.

For employers, a physically active workforce is more likely to be a healthy workforce, so it's in everyone's interest.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, we experienced the importance of getting out and about and of having daily activity. As we begin to recover from the past two years and continue to adapt to Living with Covid, we all have some work to do to get back to the levels of activity we had before.

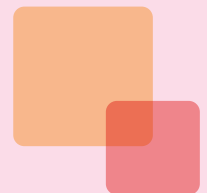
Being more active will also help us prepare for the coming winter and the impact that the cost of living crisis will have on our physical and mental wellbeing. There is a tiredness now, a

collective fatigue following the global trauma we have experienced and the other many challenges which surround us. If we can get back, and more, to previous levels of activity it will help lift our mood, give us energy and make us healthier. It's also free.

Please join the movement to be more active for Bristol by taking your own small steps. Whatever these are, you will be making a difference.

Thank you.

Christina Gray Director for Communities and Public Health, Bristol City Council



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'If physical activity were a drug, we'd talk about it as a miracle cure.'

Dame Sally Davies, Chief Medical Officer for England, 2017

Small increases have big effects

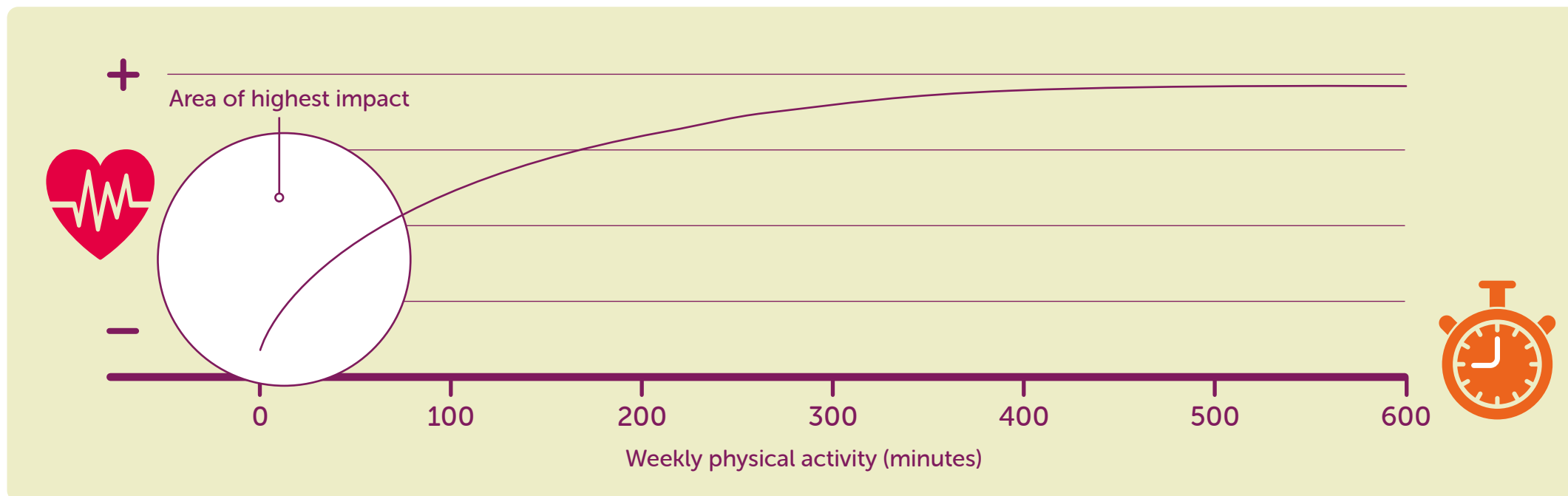
The UK Chief Medical Officers' guidelines for physical activity suggest that we should all be doing the following amount of physical activity¹:

- for adults, 150 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity or 75 minutes of vigorous intensity physical activity per week
- for children and young people aged five to 18 years old, an average of 60 minutes per day, spread across the week
- **separate guidance also exists for children under five, for disabled people of all ages, for older adults and for people who are pregnant.**

Every little helps

Every little helps. This means that it's not only the people achieving the recommended amount of physical activity that will gain any benefit. Everyone will notice health benefits from increasing their levels of physical activity. In fact, the most benefit to health is found from people who have very low levels of physical activity increasing their activity even by a small amount.

Figure one: Health benefits from different levels of activity. Adapted from the UK Chief medical Officers' physical activity guidelines, 2019².



¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/physical-activity-guidelines>

² UK Chief Medical Officers' Physical Activity Guidelines. Department of Health and Social Care, Published 7th September 2019. Available online at: [UK Chief Medical Officers' Physical Activity Guidelines \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/physical-activity-guidelines).

Physical and mental health benefits from physical activity

There are many health benefits from being physically active.

Physical activity:

- changes the chemicals in the brain and is proven to improve mood, reduce anxiety and improve sleep. It helps boost brain function and helps with concentration and thinking. It also can support greater confidence and self-esteem
- strengthens muscles, bones and joints, and keeps them healthy. This helps ensure you can keep doing your daily activities and things you love throughout your life. It also prevents against developing joint problems and osteoporosis. Being physically active can help prevent falls in later life, as can specific physical activities in older adults
- supports weight loss and the maintenance of healthy weight
- can be fun and is a great opportunity to meet people.

Disease prevention

Physical activity gets your heart pumping, and the blood flowing around your body. It burns calories and strengthens your circulatory system. The result is lower blood pressure, lower blood cholesterol levels and a stronger heart. This can prevent against a variety of diseases which are the biggest causes of people dying early or living in poor health for a significant proportion of their lives. Being more active reduces the risk of developing:

- heart disease and a stroke
- type 2 diabetes
- 13 types of cancer, including the three most common cancers that cause death in the UK (for a full list of cancers prevented, see footnotes)³.

Disease management and recovery

When we engage in physical activity, it changes the chemical activity in our brain. More blood pumps to the brain, and feel-good hormones like serotonin and endorphins are released. Levels of stress hormones can also go down. Physical activity is also a great distractor from the issues and worries we face and can be a positive coping strategy for difficult times. Overall, physical activity can help prevent and support the management of conditions and illnesses. Physical activity can:

- improve mood, reduce anxiety, and help combat depression
- reduce pain and improve function for adults with arthritis by reducing stiffness, strengthening muscles, stabilising the affected joints, and improving joint-cartilage health

- help control blood sugar levels for people with diabetes by increasing how sensitive your body is to insulin
- support people to recover better from periods of hospitalisation by helping your body be more prepared and resilient to the challenges it faces when you are unwell or undergo surgery
- help to increase mobility, confidence, and independence for people with chronic health conditions.



³Physical activity and maintaining a healthy weight can help prevent cancers: breast, bowel, pancreas, oesophagus, gallbladder, womb, ovary, kidney, liver, upper stomach, myeloma (a type of blood cancer), meningioma (a type of brain tumour), thyroid.



'We are the first generation to have to work to build physical activity into our daily lives.' Public Health England, 2016

It is estimated that the UK population is 20 per cent less active than in the 1960s. There are many reasons why this is the case. Technology has changed the way we work and the way we spend our leisure time, and fewer of us have manual jobs than in the past. Many more of us now rely on cars as our means of transport. In 1961, only one in three households owned a car or a van⁴, but by 2012, three in four households owned a car or van. Our cities have become more spread-out, which builds reliance on cars and motorised transport. Busy roads, lack of access to green space, poorly lit streets, and lack of benches or resting points can all act as barriers to people doing physical activity as part of their daily life⁵.

The result is that many things in our society, culture and built environments have become barriers when it comes to leading physically active lifestyles. Consequently, we are the first

generation in human history to need to make a conscious decision to build physical activity into our daily lives.

Physical activity in Bristol, and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic

Local data and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic

Sport England monitors how much physical activity adults do across the UK in their Active Lives survey. Between 2015 and 2019, this showed that roughly three out of four adults in Bristol (73 per cent to 74 per cent) were reaching the recommended levels of physical activity.

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused physical activity to decrease in both adults and children⁶. Despite some initial

increases in the amount of physical activity people did outside during the lockdowns⁷, research by Sport England showed that overall, there has been a decrease in physical activity uptake since the start of the pandemic. Several reasons for this decrease in physical activity have been established. These include restrictions and the requirement to stay at home, the closure of shops and other facilities as well as a decrease in people's motivation and sense of capability to be active⁸.

Our best estimate of how levels of activity have changed in Bristol during the years of the pandemic comes from the Bristol Quality of Life Survey. This is a yearly survey completed by about 4,000 people from across Bristol each year. Since 2019, this survey has asked how many people do the recommended amount of exercise each week, and how many are 'inactive'. Inactive is defined as participating in less

than 30 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity per week⁹. The survey has shown that since 2019, there has been a drop in the number of adults reaching the daily recommended target for physical activity, and an increase in the number of people who are inactive.



⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-matters-getting-every-adult-active-every-day/health-matters-getting-every-adult-active-every-day>

⁵ Swinburn, B.A. et al (2019) The Global Syndemic of Obesity, Undernutrition, and Climate Change: The Lancet commission report. The Lancet; 393: 791 - 846

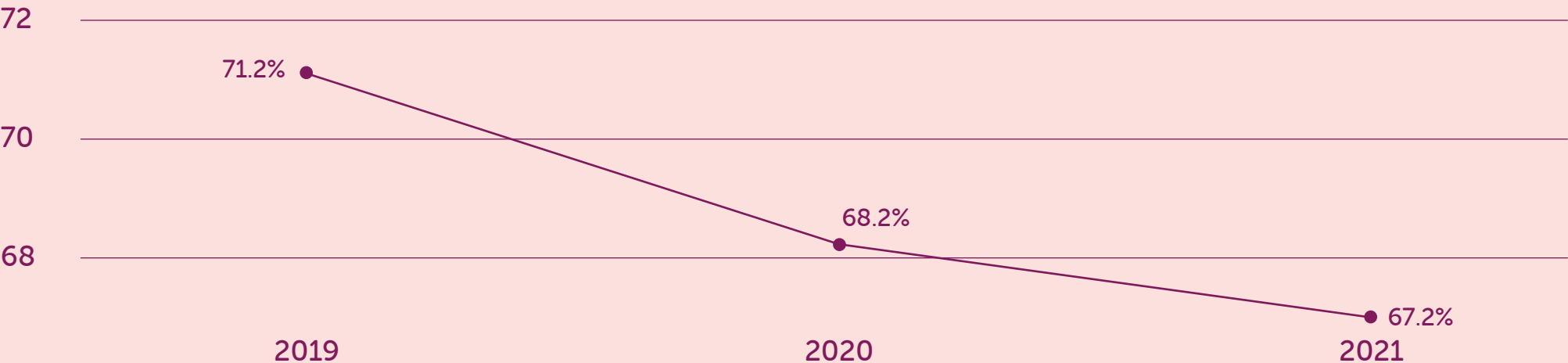
⁶ [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanpe/article/PIIS2666-7762\(21\)00251-9/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanpe/article/PIIS2666-7762(21)00251-9/fulltext)

⁷ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/environmentalaccounts/articles/howhaslockdownchangedourrelationshipwithnature/2021-04-26>

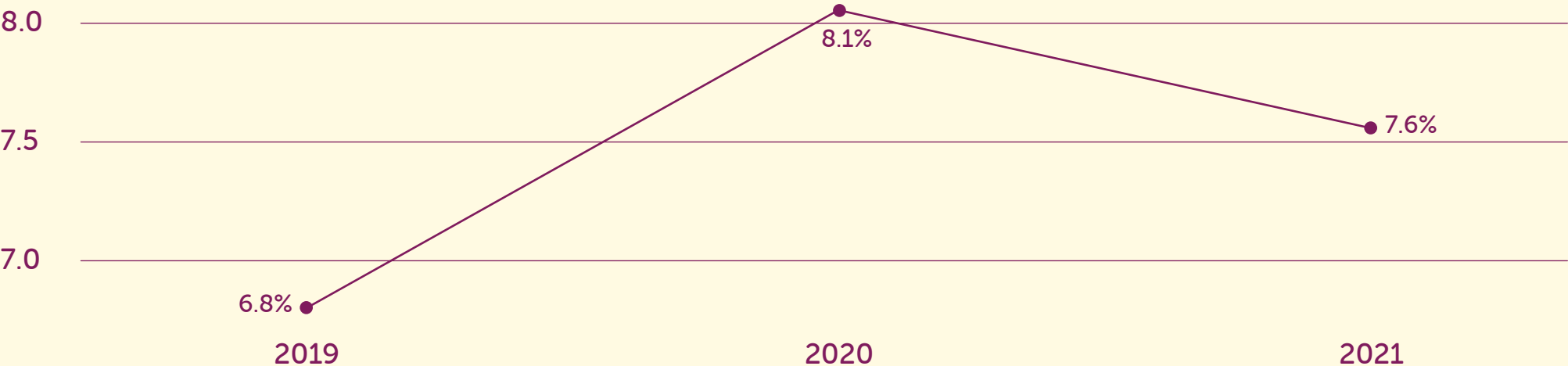
⁸ https://sportengland-production-files.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/2021-04/Understanding%20the%20Impact%20of%20Covid%20April%202021_0.pdf?VersionId=rD3kuKjVEnrsQYsDn9nSYezUmXlu6ZK9

⁹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/physical-inactivity-levels-in-adults-aged-40-to-60-in-england/physical-inactivity-levels-in-adults-aged-40-to-60-in-england-2015-to-2016#inactive>

Graph indicating the percentage number of people who do the recommended amount of regular exercise each week in Bristol, according to the Quality of Life survey.

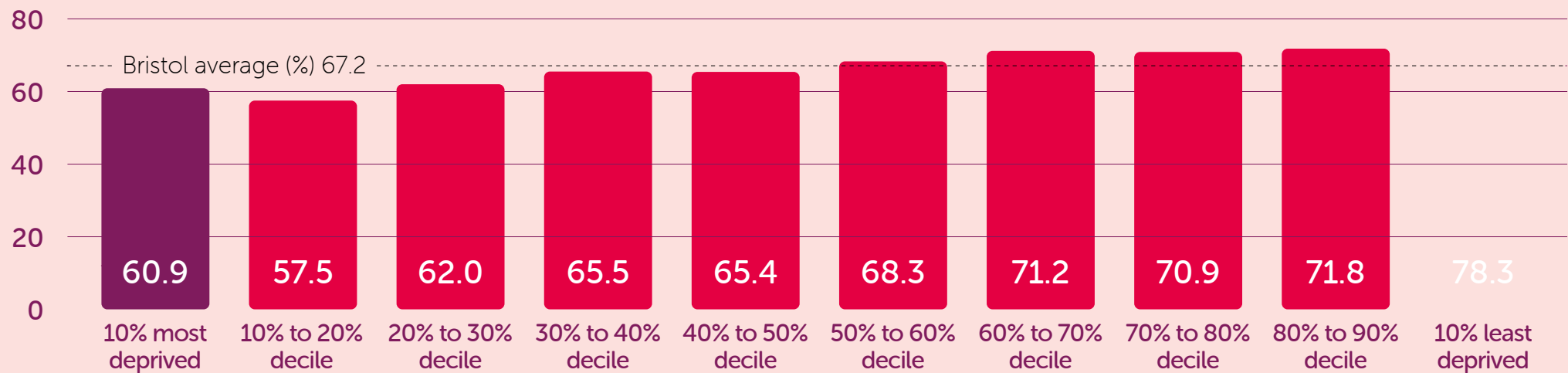


Graph indicating the percentage number of people who are inactive in Bristol, according to the Quality of Life survey.

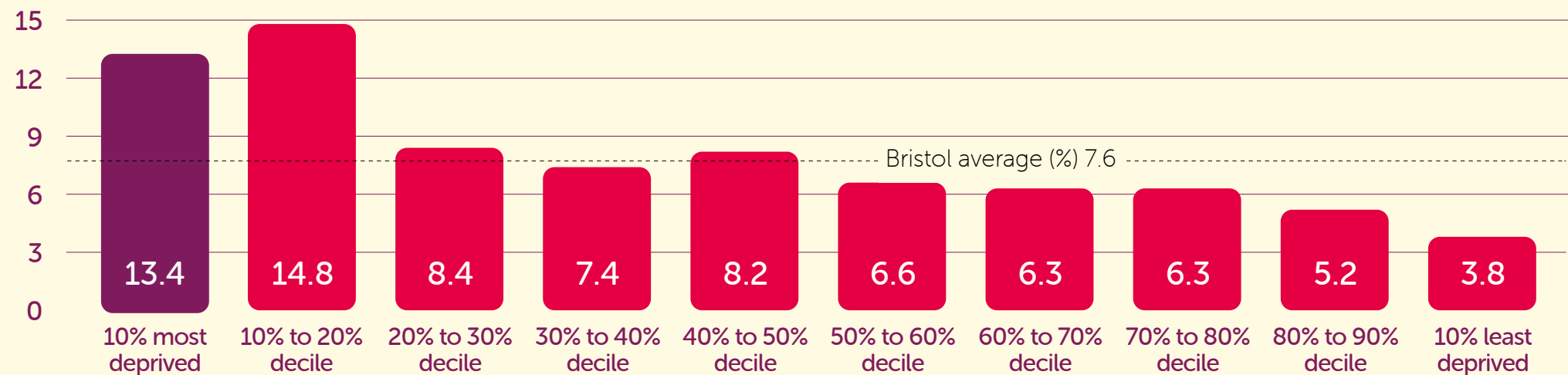


These figures for the city only tell half the story. The Quality of Life survey shows us that physical activity levels are not evenly distributed across the city. People who live in the most deprived areas of the city are more likely to be inactive, and people in the least deprived areas are more likely to do enough physical activity.

Graph indicating the percentage number of people who do the recommended amount of exercise each week in the most and the least deprived areas of Bristol.



Graph indicating the percentage number of people who are inactive in the most and the least deprived areas of Bristol.



The Quality of Life survey also highlighted certain groups who were less likely to be physically active. Black/Black British or Asian/Asian British respondents to the survey were less likely to be physically active, with less than half Black or Black British adults reporting doing the recommended level of physical activity. Women, disabled people, older people, single parent families, full time carers, and people renting from council housing were all less likely to achieve the recommended levels of physical activity.

Removing the barriers and making physical activity possible

While everyone in society can greatly benefit from being more active, not everyone is able to do so equally. There are many reasons why this inequality exists, and it reflects the broader disadvantage of some groups in society. But there are also specific barriers which people and communities face to being physically active. Some of the common barriers are listed below. It is important to note that these barriers will be experienced unequally across the city, and some people may face the overlap and 'intersection' of many of these factors.

General barriers include:

- **cost** – formal or organised activities often cost money to participate. There can also be indirect costs, such as travelling to and from a setting
- **time** – many people face time pressures, whether that's work, family and/or caring commitments and household work

- **lack of confidence** – many people have a negative relationship with physical activity, especially if they think of it only as 'sport'. Additionally, a fear of judgement from other people, as well as the feeling of 'not being fit enough' are also barriers when it comes to taking the first steps to becoming active
- **fear of injury** – it may be particularly difficult for those with a previous injury or a chronic condition
- **the weather or environmental conditions** – when the weather is bad or the days are very short, it can be difficult to find opportunities to partake in physical activity outside.

Social barriers include:

- specific barriers which are unique to one particular community or area. To understand and address these we need to talk directly with community members to find out what matters to them

- not feeling comfortable or feeling that there is not a suitable activity. People are more likely to feel safe in spaces where they feel represented and included. People are more likely to participate in physical activity if it is something widely participated in by their community and social networks.

Environmental and physical barriers include:

- **disabling barriers** – disabled people face environmental, cultural, social, economic and attitudinal barriers to participation in physical activity. These include assumptions that disabled people would not want to or be able to participate, physical access barriers, unwelcoming and patronising attitudes and behaviours, cost and getting there. Increasing access to physical activity is about addressing these disabling barriers

- **facilities** – the more facilities that cater to a wide range of physical activities and interests, the more opportunity people have, to engage and find something that they enjoy
- **physical environment** – the lack of access to green space, lack of space, or lack of lighting, are significant barriers to people feeling they are able to undertake physical activity
- **dirty environments or pollution** – people are less likely to want to partake in physical activity in an environment they feel is dirty or polluted
- **safety** – people need to feel safe to partake in whatever physical activity they choose. Many things can cause a person to feel unsafe. Reckless or fast drivers in local streets, poor lighting, crime, or a lack of social cohesion can make people wary about walking, playing, or doing physical activity outside.



Ten inspiring real-life stories

These inspiring real-life stories about physical activity show what is possible. They are stories of courage, determination and most of all, possibility. What is striking about all the stories is the sense of joy and fun from being active.

For each of these stories, we have highlighted a key message about the benefits demonstrated by the case study and identified an opportunity that we can build on.

We are grateful to the individuals, communities and employers who have shared their stories in this report.

What will your story be?

Laura's story: Addressing type 2 diabetes

"I was terrified of exercising. It seemed to be for other people, fit-bodied Lycra-clad types. What on earth would they make of someone like me in their world? When I got diagnosed with type 2 diabetes, I realised things had hit critical.

"At nearly 23 stone, I took the first step. Terrified, but determined. I waddled around the block, my eldest cheering me on. The next step was easier. I began to walk quickly, then jog, building it up slowly. I joined a local gym and took up yoga too, following YouTube videos in my living room, and I tackled my portion size. Within ten months I had lost eight stone, and my diabetes.

"I'm not fit-bodied or Lycra-clad, but I am running. And I've discovered that the fear of what others would think of me was far more to do with me, than them.

"For me now, it's all about the feeling I get from exercise. The joy it has given me means more than the weight being shed. My focus isn't about being slim, it's about being healthy as well as having fun."

Key messages

There are lots of lessons we can draw from Laura's story. Firstly, it was the diagnosis of diabetes that jolted her into action. There is good evidence that any significant life event, including a diagnosis of a new illness, is a good opportunity to make a change in lifestyle that will really stick. Most importantly, Laura has overcome the fear she felt at taking the first steps to becoming physically active and found that most of her fears were unfounded.

Opportunities

Laura's story can inspire others to take the first steps, no matter how small. Healthcare colleagues can maximise the opportunity to promote physical activity at the times where they will have most impact, such as after a new diagnosis of diabetes.¹⁰

¹⁰ [https://observatory.derbyshire.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/reports/documents/health/Teachable_moments_literature_review\(08012018\).pdf](https://observatory.derbyshire.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/reports/documents/health/Teachable_moments_literature_review(08012018).pdf)

Maroua's story: A busy mum taking the stairs

"I am a mum of two boys aged six years old and 34 months. They are both very active, but they never seem to get enough!

"One day I had an idea that we could climb the stairs to the eighth floor where our flat is based because that is really the only daily activity that I could do as a mum of two kids. During the pandemic when it was lockdown there was nothing else to do with them. Luckily my boys really loved the idea and even today if I forget or we're running late, they get upset when we take the lift.

"Staying active makes me feel really happy and busy. I don't notice the time when I'm active and it is something fun to do instead of staying in with the boys or cooking and cleaning which can be boring."



Key messages

This is a fantastic example of using what is available to us. Maroua has identified that the stairs she has in her environment are an opportunity to build physical activity directly into her daily routine. It's also great that her children are getting involved. This a brilliant opportunity to create a culture of physical activity which they will carry forward into their later lives. Research shows that at all ages, having the support from family members, partners, or friends is a great way to keep up motivation and engagement in physical activity.

Opportunities

We can share Maroua's example of building physical activity into daily life in a way that is free and literally, on her doorstep.¹¹

Sam's story: Getting active to help recover from COVID-19

Sam's health was rapidly declining after suffering from COVID-19 for a second time. He would struggle and get out of breath just walking up the stairs or very short distances. Sam was fed up with how he was feeling and was ready to make a change. After reading about the FIT ROBINS programme, he thought it seemed to offer a good balance of education and fitness. FIT ROBINS is a completely free health programme for men and women aged 30 to 65 who are looking to lose weight, get fitter and lead a more active life. The programme aims to help Bristol City football fans make changes to their lifestyle to live a fitter and healthier life.

Unlike other diet programmes he had tried in the past, this felt like it would provide him with the tools to make permanent changes rather than temporary ones.

¹¹ <https://ageing-better.org.uk/sites/default/files/2021-09/Keep-on-moving-physical-inactivity.pdf>

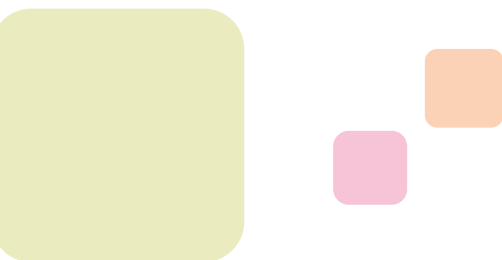
Sam now plans his meals in advance to ensure he eats healthier and makes better choices with food, as well as finding time to exercise, even if it's just a case of parking his car further away to get in those extra steps.

Key messages

There are many people across Bristol who are experiencing ongoing effects from COVID-19 or living with other long-term conditions. People with long-term conditions may be worried about starting physical activity in case their condition worsens. However, there is a lot of evidence to suggest that starting slowly and building up physical activity is safe and can greatly aid recovery. Sam recognised that physical activity could be part of his recovery. He started with small changes, but they have added up to great results. Parking slightly further away from your destination or getting off the bus one stop early and walking the final stretch is a great way of building physical activity around your normal life.

Opportunities

Physical activity is for everyone, and we need to make sure people don't feel excluded. We need to ensure we are promoting, encouraging, and supporting people with long-term conditions to increase their physical activity in a safe and manageable way.¹²



Inclusive community tennis

This initiative, supported by grants from John James Bristol Foundation and Sport England, aims to provide people from all backgrounds with opportunities to access tennis in their local park. It is tackling preconceived views people may have around tennis being an elite sport, requiring lots of equipment and money to take part.

There are several different programmes offered, aimed at supporting different members of the community such as walking tennis, inclusive tennis for children with complex needs, mental wellbeing tennis, women's only tennis, and youth tennis. The sessions have a strong social element too and promote forming connections within communities. They also offer complimentary membership and equipment to community organisations to enable people to access the courts at times which suit them.

¹² <https://www.sportengland.org/news/physical-activity-benefits-outweigh-risks-people-long-term-health-conditions#:~:text=A%20new%20consensus%20statement%20from,with%20symptoms%20of%20multiple%20conditions.&text=The%20benefits%20of%20taking%20part,with%20long%20term%20health%20conditions.>



Accessible Multi-Sport Festival in Southmead

Several times a year, a Multi-Sport Festival for disabled children and young people is held in Southmead. This brings lots of different organisations and providers together to showcase what disability inclusive sport and physical activity is available. They are all part of the Ignite Bristol Network which aims to give greater choice, quality and accessibility opportunities for disabled Bristolians to be active. A total of 22 local clubs delivers different sports and activities throughout the day. Sessions are pan-disability, with all needs and abilities welcome. There are activities for all ages, and families and carers are welcome to join in too.

Key messages

These events showcase a range of inspirational opportunities for disabled people to get involved in physical activity. It gives people the opportunity to try different activities and find one that suits them. The feedback from the events is that it is a great way to socialise, and for whole families to participate in activities with their child, which can often feel isolating.

Opportunities

Physical activity is for everyone. Opportunities like this break down the barriers that disabled people face in participating in physical activity and offer young people the opportunity to find an activity that suits them. It demonstrates what can be achieved when barriers are removed to allow everyone to participate.

Key messages

This programme gets to the heart of addressing inequalities in physical activity by basing activity in a location that is known and well used by members of the community. By working with the community physical activity programmes can be developed to appeal to and expand the reach to different people.

Opportunities

There is no 'one size fits all' approach to physical activity. This initiative has identified multiple groups who may be excluded from physical activity and developed specific sessions to appeal to them and suit their needs.



Healthy Schools¹³

The Bristol Healthy Schools Programme provides support for all schools and education settings to improve the health and wellbeing of pupils, staff and families. Schools can work to an 'Essential Award' which ensures all pupils access at least 30 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity per day, at no cost to the pupil. Or they can work towards a 'Physical Activity Specialist Award' which involves taking more actions to increase pupils' physical activity and reduce barriers to being active.

This programme helps schools build a culture of physical activity throughout their school day. By addressing some of the barriers that pupils might have to being active, schools can encourage pupils to enjoy physical activity and travel to school actively.

Examples of initiatives that schools have introduced to increase physical activity opportunities for their pupils include:

- running structured lunchtime activities and forest school activities
- introducing the **Daily Mile**
- 10-minute Shake Ups (Public Health England)
- introducing the active travel initiative **Modeshift Stars**.

Key message

The Bristol Healthy Schools Programme has been shown to increase participation in opportunities for children and young people to be physically active in and out of schools. It also helps improve links between schools and communities that promote physical activity.

Opportunities

The Bristol Healthy Schools Programme is an example of how small and achievable changes can be made in a school day to encourage and promote physical activity in children. Local schools can participate in both the 'Essential Award' and 'Physical Activity Specialist Award'.

Using data to guide action¹⁴

To understand the impact of the pandemic on physical activity in children, a research programme called Active-6 was devised for children in schools across Bristol. This research measured the physical activity of 393 children aged 10 to 11 years old, recruited from 23 primary schools in the Bristol area between May and December 2021. They were compared with data from 1,296 children aged 10 to 11 and their parents from the same schools, gathered in 2018.

The research found that children are less active now than before the pandemic. The data shows that in 2021 children did eight minutes less of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity per day compared to before the pandemic. This is despite most COVID-19 restrictions being lifted by the time this data was collected.

Children, parents, and school staff described how the continued lockdowns led to a lack of motivation and inactivity. This was also shaped by the limited access to facilities in the home and community and the role parents and carers played in encouraging activity. When children returned to school, they described a fatigue which impacted negatively on their experiences of physical activity.

¹⁴ Salway, R.; Foster, C.; de Vocht, F.; Tibbitts, B.; Emm-Collison, L.; House, D.; Williams, J.G.; Breheny, K.; Reid, T.; Walker, R.; Churchward, S.; Hollingworth, W.; and Jago, R. (2022). 'Accelerometer-measured physical activity and sedentary time among children and their parents in the UK before and after COVID-19 lockdowns: a natural experiment.' *International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity*, 19(51). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12966-022-01290-4>.

Walker, R.; House, D.; Emm-Collison, L.; Salway, R.; Tibbitts, B.; Sansum, K.; Reid, T.; Breheny, K.; Churchward, S.; Williams, J. G.; de Vocht, F.; Hollingworth, F.; Foster, C.; and Jago, R. (2022). 'multi-perspective qualitative exploration of the reasons for changes in the physical activity among 10-11-year-old children following the easing of the COVID-19 lockdown in the UK in 2021.' *International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity*, 19(114). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12966-022-01356-3>.

¹³ More information is available at www.bristol.gov.uk/bristol-healthy-schools



Gardening for health in South Bristol

In April 2017 a passionate group of volunteers came together to turn a disused bowling green into a vibrant project called Redcatch Community Garden.

Four years later, with huge community support, it is a thriving space. Redcatch Community Garden is a Community Benefit Society (CBS) with charitable status and a member of Cooperatives UK. It's a place where communities come together to connect, learn, socialise and share skills and experiences.

They aim to promote a healthy, happy and cohesive community, by connecting with others, establishing a great awareness of where people are coming from and empowering them to reach their full potential. The garden has evolved to include a cafe offering healthy and sustainable food, workshops, art therapy and events.

Key message

This was an important study to help understand the impact that the pandemic has had on physical activity in children in schools across Bristol. Additionally, it also highlighted the emotional and mental health impact that children have experienced during the pandemic.

Opportunities

The study highlights a need to help more children be physically active. Ways to do this include:

- changing after-school activity provision to appeal to the widest group of children, especially those who do not enjoy team sports
- encouraging active travel to and from school and maximizing the potential of school travel plans and travel strategies such as play streets
- providing continuing professional development training for school staff to improve the quality of physical education provision.



Key messages

Gardening is a great way to keep active and connect with nature, which can improve physical and mental health as well as promoting biodiversity. Food growing enables us to know where our food comes from, from field to fork.

Communities can lead the way in turning disused spaces into valuable community assets. Community gardens, allotments and projects provide opportunities to bring communities together, making people feel connected which can reduce feelings of loneliness and isolation.

Opportunities

There are green spaces across the city ranging from parks, local woods to smaller grass verges and community gardens in our local areas. Are there any opportunities near you to get involved in community projects to develop and maintain green spaces in your neighbourhood? There are lots of examples of this happening across the city, with residents volunteering at **community gardens** and **vegetable patches** as well as **helping to plant trees** across the city. This can make these spaces feel more enjoyable, promote physical activity and offer somewhere for people to go to relax, especially those who do not have a garden.

Creating safer and healthier communities

This project has helped to transform a section of the railway bridge opposite a primary school in Easton. The railway arch opposite the Bannerman Road Community Academy was dark and off-putting for people to walk under. A community-led project has transformed it into a bright and attractive space which feels like an extension of the classroom as well as a public space for playing and gatherings.

The main changes include introducing a raised table to slow traffic, reducing parking directly outside the school, and incorporating bright and colourful art to make the area feel more inviting and useable. Studio Ard designed a bespoke Frog Marsh typeface that stretches along the bridge.

Key messages

Traffic on local streets has risen steadily and the main roads becoming more congested. This makes it more difficult for people to walk, cycle and wheel for short trips.

Local communities can play a key role in co-designing solutions and influence how we can balance how streets are used for people and traffic. Making changes to local spaces, whether that be pedestrianizing, improving street lighting, or creating new crossings, can have a huge impact on how spaces are used by communities. By providing safer spaces for children and young people to walk or cycle to school, we are offering more opportunities for children and young people to be physically active.

Opportunities

There are lots of opportunities to make sure our neighbourhoods are safe, healthy, inclusive, and attractive places where everyone can breathe clean air, have access to better quality green spaces, safe spaces to play, and feel a part of a community. These are the key principles of the Liveable Neighbourhoods project, which is being piloted in Barton Hill, Redfield and St George.

Understanding neighbourhoods and how they could become safer, more attractive, and inclusive is vital to enable communities to be healthier, more active, enjoy and use their local spaces. Communities know their neighbourhoods best and can play a huge role in transforming their local spaces.¹⁵

¹⁵ <https://www.bristol247.com/news-and-features/features/frog-marsh-a-new-community-space-for-easton/>

Connecting with green spaces in the workplace

Southmead Hospital is working to create an environment where people can connect with nature to increase resilience and reduce stress, while being physically active. They are doing this by managing the site for wildlife, creating new habitats, and improving green spaces – as well as encouraging staff and patients to explore the site and spend time outside.

New opportunities are being developed to encourage both staff and patients to connect with nature, by offering:

- weekly butterfly walks for staff. These are organised walks around the site through the wildflower meadows. This can be playful and fun and encourages staff to walk and connect with nature to benefit their physical health and wellbeing. This is also a great way to monitor the species at the hospital, by counting the number of butterflies seen along the way
- an Explorer Map that illustrates green spaces, meadows, orchards and allotments, whilst showing the walking routes available across the site. The map shows what the site has to offer and encourages staff and patients to get outside when able to
- a large allotment which was created in 2019 and expanded in 2022 to include a new greenhouse, 13 raised beds of varying sizes, 26 fruit trees, a small meadow and living willow structure. It is for staff and patients to use, with 44 staff currently volunteering after work or during their lunch breaks and patient groups visiting and tending to the allotment.



Key messages

This is a great example of how organising activities can encourage people to get outside, be active and connect with nature. Being part of a group can also help people to feel more confident to do things outside of their comfort zone, feel more connected to people around them as well as having a positive impact on wellbeing.

Opportunities

There are lots of opportunities for workplaces to encourage and support their employees to be more physically active by encouraging them to take regular breaks, organising regular walks, utilising any green spaces they have or making activities more accessible.



The role of local policy in getting everyone active

As this report has demonstrated, increasing levels of physical activity will have economic, social and health benefits for the whole city. We need to spot the opportunities to align our ambitions across different sectors and workstreams. Much more will be achieved from joining up and working together. This section highlights a few policies which outline Bristol's commitment to increasing physical activity, and the opportunities to improve this alongside other work.

Bristol Sport and Physical Activity Strategy 2020 to 2025

The **Bristol sport and physical activity strategy** sets out a vision: "To ensure that all Bristol citizens have the encouragement, opportunity and environment they need to lead active, healthy and fulfilling lives. By working collaboratively and cooperatively,

as a whole system, we will seek to transform attitudes and behaviours and make it easier for residents to enjoy sport and physical activity and embed it into their everyday lives." The strategy identifies four themes to help achieve this: active people, active partnerships, active environments and active places.

This strategy sets out clear aims and the direction we need to take in order to achieve this inspiring vision. We need to ensure all of our key partners are aware of this strategy and vision to guide our actions. We also need to evaluate our success in achieving the aims set out in the strategy.

Bristol One City Plan 2050

The **Bristol One City** plan 2050 sets a vision that by 2050, Bristol is a fair, healthy and sustainable city. Physical activity touches on many of the aims set out to achieve this vision. In particular:

- citizens thrive in a city that supports their physical health and mental health equally
- health inequalities are identified and acted-on through continually monitoring the health, social and economic landscape
- the city focuses on early help and prevention and its interventions are tailored and person-centred.

The One City approach brings together a broad range of key partners from across the city, including Bristol City Council, to take ownership of important work needed to make a positive impact to the lives of people who live and work in Bristol. This is an excellent opportunity to make sure we're spreading the important message of the many benefits that increasing physical activity will have directly to the people and organisations who have the power to affect change across the city.

Thrive Bristol

Thrive Bristol is the city's 10-year plan to improve mental health and wellbeing. It sets out plans for achieving this for all ages and in all parts of the city. This includes considering the needs for people with serious mental illness, as well for increasing wellbeing across the city.

As outlined in this report, physical activity is an important and effective way of improving mental health and wellbeing. The Thrive strategy takes a comprehensive view, looking across all age groups, and also focuses on changes that can be made in the workplace and communities. Many of the levers they are using in this strategy are also the ones that will help us increase physical activity.

Bristol Belonging Strategy

The **Bristol Belonging Strategy** was co-created with children from across the city. It sets out a comprehensive vision for improving the lives of children across the city. It aims to make Bristol a city that all young people can be proud of, and to be a place where they and their families can thrive.

Encouraging children to be physically active has multiple benefits throughout their life. There are many ways the Bristol Belonging Strategy will help achieve this. For example, play has fantastic benefits in all aspects of a child's life. It encourages learning, social bonding and is a great opportunity for physical activity and to encourage their physical development.



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One City Climate Strategy

The **Bristol One City Climate Strategy** sets out the plan to achieve a carbon neutral, climate resilient Bristol by 2030. Many of the aims needed to achieve this would also help break down barriers to physical activity. In particular, the strategy sets out plans to enable the city to use more sustainable forms of transport, which include walking, cycling and public transport, and how to improve the natural environment. All of this would help break down some of the barrier to physical activity that have been outlined in this report.

This is an opportunity to join up two important areas of work and goals for the city. There are many things we can do which will increase physical activity, reduce carbon emissions and improve air quality all together. We need to make sure we're joining up with the work on these important aims and spotting the opportunities where combining our efforts will be the key to making step-change to these significant challenges to our city.

Local Government Declaration on Healthy Weight

Bristol signed up to the Local Government Declaration on Healthy Weight in 2020. This was supported by pledges from five local NHS organisations and support from various partner organisations across the city. The aim is to recognise the complexity in tackling healthy weight and taking action across multiple sectors through a whole system approach.

As the Mayor of Bristol Marvin Rees said: "Where people live, work, shop, go to school and exercise all play an important role in their weight. As part of this new initiative, Bristol City Council has committed to taking action as a whole city. The focus of the Healthy Weight Declaration is to create environments which make it easy for people – regardless of age, background, circumstance or where they live – to access affordable, healthy and sustainable food as well as an active lifestyle."

Opportunities in future policy

These examples illustrate the mutually beneficial impacts of increasing levels of physical activity across a range of areas such as planning, economic development, transport, education, social care, health and environment and climate change. Embedding physical activity outcomes into planning and policy as a general principle will help to build a whole system approach where an active, and accessible environment becomes part of daily life.



Summary and recommendations

The case studies included in this report provide a snapshot of inspiring stories and fantastic initiatives taking place across Bristol. They highlight some of the creative ways that individuals, communities, workplaces and public services are encouraging people to be more active.

The policy section provides some examples of ways in which, as a city, we can create accessible environments which enable people to be more active.

Physical activity is for everyone

Everybody in the city could benefit from increasing physical activity.

We need to work as a city to make sure there are physical activity options that are inclusive, accessible and available to all.

Small steps make big differences

There are huge health benefits to be found in increasing physical activity levels even by a small amount, as seen in our inspiring stories.

Finding ways to build small levels of physical activity into daily life. Having a routine is a great way to start and maintain motivation. Individuals and families can find their own ways to do this, and employers can also support this.

Physical activity doesn't have to cost anything

When we hear the term physical activity many of us think of sport, but it's so much broader than that. Huge benefits can be found in free activities which don't involve participating in an organised programme or club.

Find something that works for you. Walking, gardening, cycling, taking the stairs wherever possible. These have a huge impact in maintaining an active lifestyle.

Communities have creative solutions and know what will work for their area

There are so many inspiring stories of communities coming up with creative solutions to make improvements in their community, which support physical activity.

Activities need to be co-designed with communities, enabling them to develop solutions that are right for them.

Physical activity is everybody's business

There is no one single solution to increasing physical activity across the city. Many of the barriers prevent people from being physically active are outside the control of an individual. If we truly want to increase the levels of physical activity in our city, we will need to work together as individuals, community groups, local businesses, schools and universities along with the city council, the NHS and emergency services. In Bristol, the One

City programme to become an 'active city'.

What will you do?



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Appendix

Definitions and principles

Physical activity means different things to different people. For many people, the first thing that comes to mind when they hear physical activity may be sport. However, physical activity is much wider than this. Throughout this report, we use the following definitions:

Physical activity: The World Health Organisation defines physical activity as any bodily movement produced by skeletal muscles that requires energy expenditure. Physical activity refers to all movement including during leisure time, for transport to get to and from places, or as part of a person's work.¹⁶

Physically inactive: Defined as participating in less than 30 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity per week.¹⁷



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¹⁶ <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/physical-activity>

¹⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/physical-inactivity-levels-in-adults-aged-40-to-60-in-england/physical-inactivity-levels-in-adults-aged-40-to-60-in-england-2015-to-2016#inactive>

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