

Gateshead Place Based Expansion

Quarterly insights pack (July 2026)

What is in this pack?

- This pack outlines the insights we have gathered as part of the Sport England Place Based Expansion Development Award between February and June 2026.
- This project aims to take a 'place-based' approach to tackle inequalities and make healthier living and an active life in Gateshead more accessible. A place-based approach is community focused and led by the insights of the people who live and work in Gateshead.
- By working with key place partners (such as Gateshead Council, the NHS, the leisure sector and the voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise (VCFSE) sector) we aim to develop a shared understanding of what helps local people in Gateshead move more as well as the barriers they face to being more physically active.

What is in this pack?



The **key insights and outcomes from the first of our 'exchange' sessions** with local partners about children and young people and parks and green spaces.

Overviews of **121 discussions** with partners and recent **research undertaken by trusted local organisations**.

A summary of **our learning about the wider physical activity 'ecosystem'** in Gateshead and steps to develop it.

How have we gathered these insights?



Through facilitating themed ‘exchange’ sessions with local partners: collaborative spaces to share knowledge, explore key issues in more depth, generate ideas, test approaches and collectively discuss next steps.



Through collating research findings from our local partner organisations and commissioning and supporting them to gather and interpret insight from their community members and service users.



Through reflecting critically on how the overall physical activity ecosystem in Gateshead functions.

Recap: emerging priorities within localities.

Felling

- Young people.
- Mental health.
- Long term health conditions.

Dunston and Teams

- Young people.
- Parks and green spaces.
- Men's mental health.

Beacon Lough and Wrekenton

- Young people.
- Women's wellbeing.
- Older people.
- Pride in Place.

Across all three areas

- Childhood obesity.
- Children with special educational needs and disabilities.
- Community cohesion.

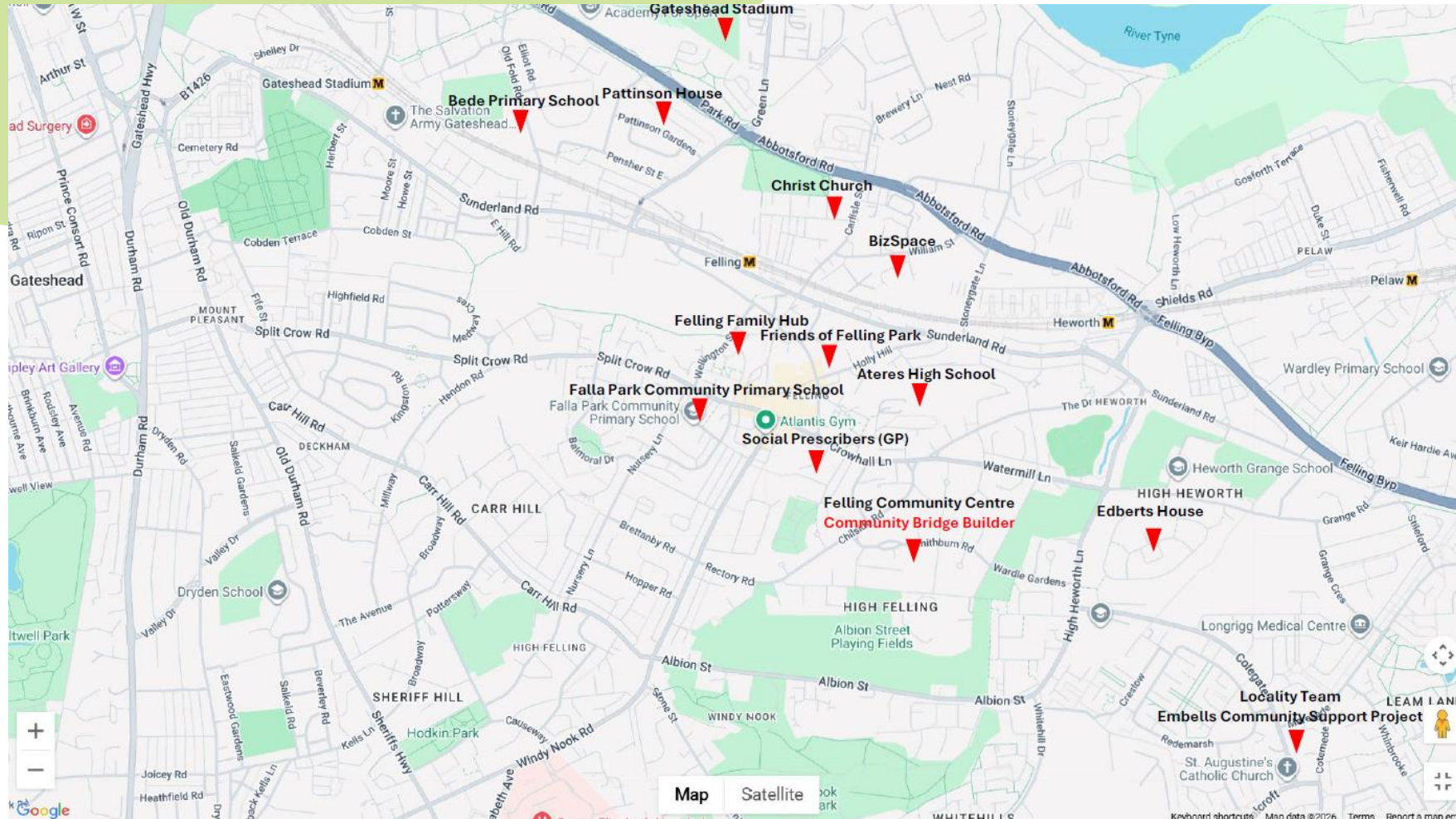
Children and Young People Exchange

May 2026

Background.

- This exchange session took place in, and focused on, Felling.
- Exchange participants were drawn from Rise, Gateshead Council, Youth Focus North East, GLL, and Edberts House.
- Rise shared local data and youth voice from local schools.
- Discussions explored antisocial behaviour, leisure offers, and potential actions around detached youth work and Play Streets initiatives.

Mapping relevant organisations in Felling.



*The Community Bridge Builder project is coming to an end.

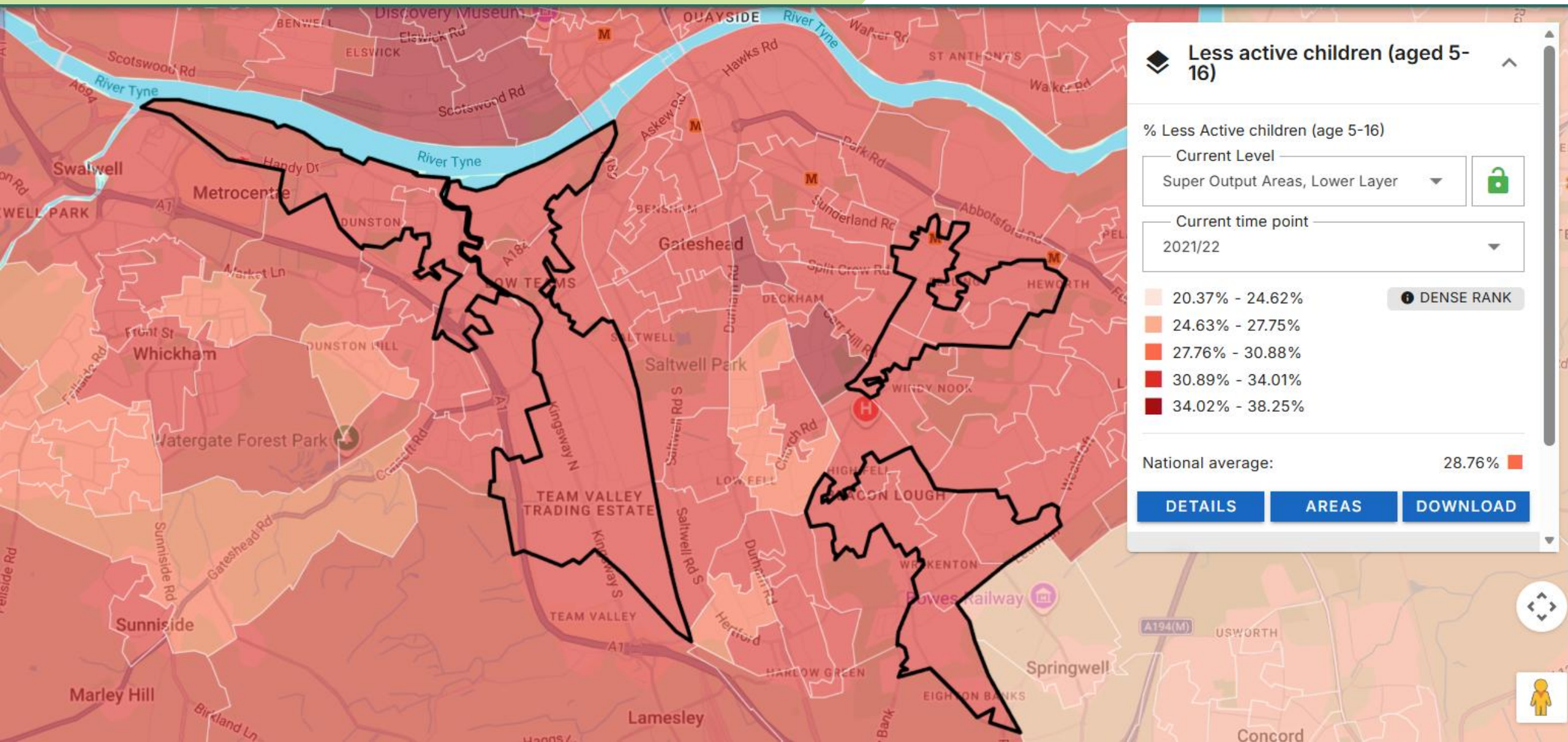
Children and young people in Gateshead: inactivity levels.

- Data drawn from Sport England Active Lives Survey.
- Relates to physical activity undertaken by 5 -16-year-olds during the year September 2024 –July 2025.
- 'Less active' = less than an average of 30 minutes of physical activity a day.
- 522 respondents (estimated 10,500 total population).

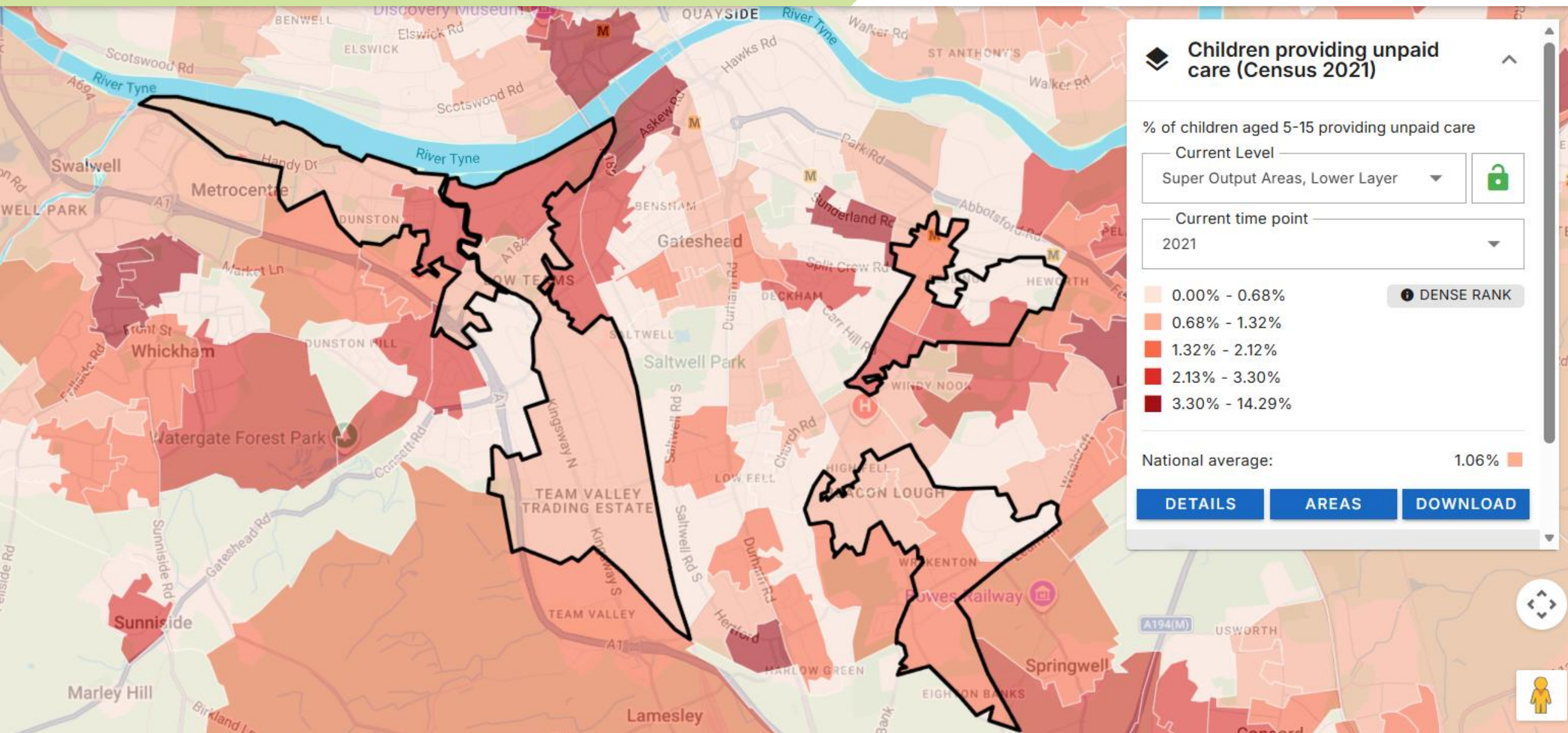
Children and young people in Gateshead: inactivity levels.

	England	Gateshead
Active: >60 minutes per day	49.1%	43.0%
Fairly Active: 30-59 minutes per day	22.5%	25.5%
Less Active: <30 minutes per day	28.4%	31.5%

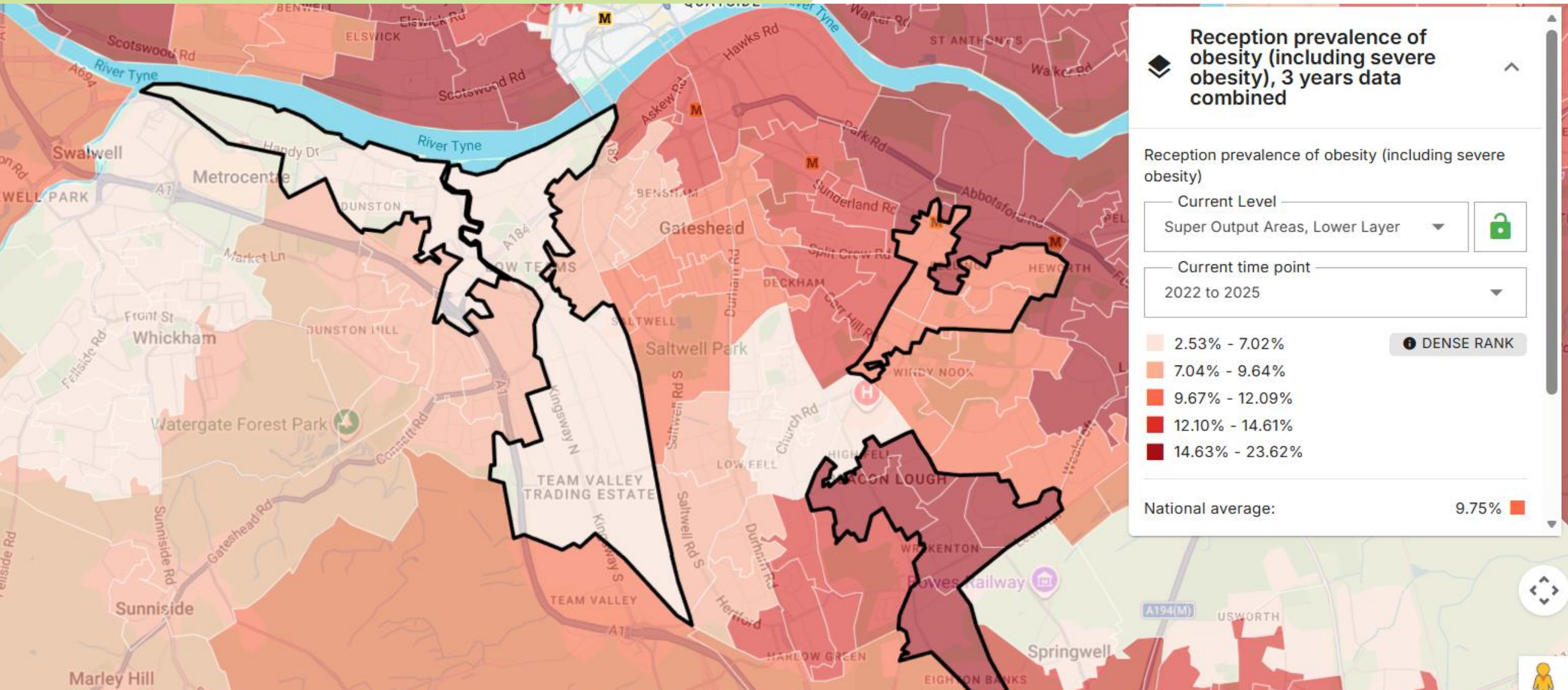
Less active children (2022) in Gateshead.



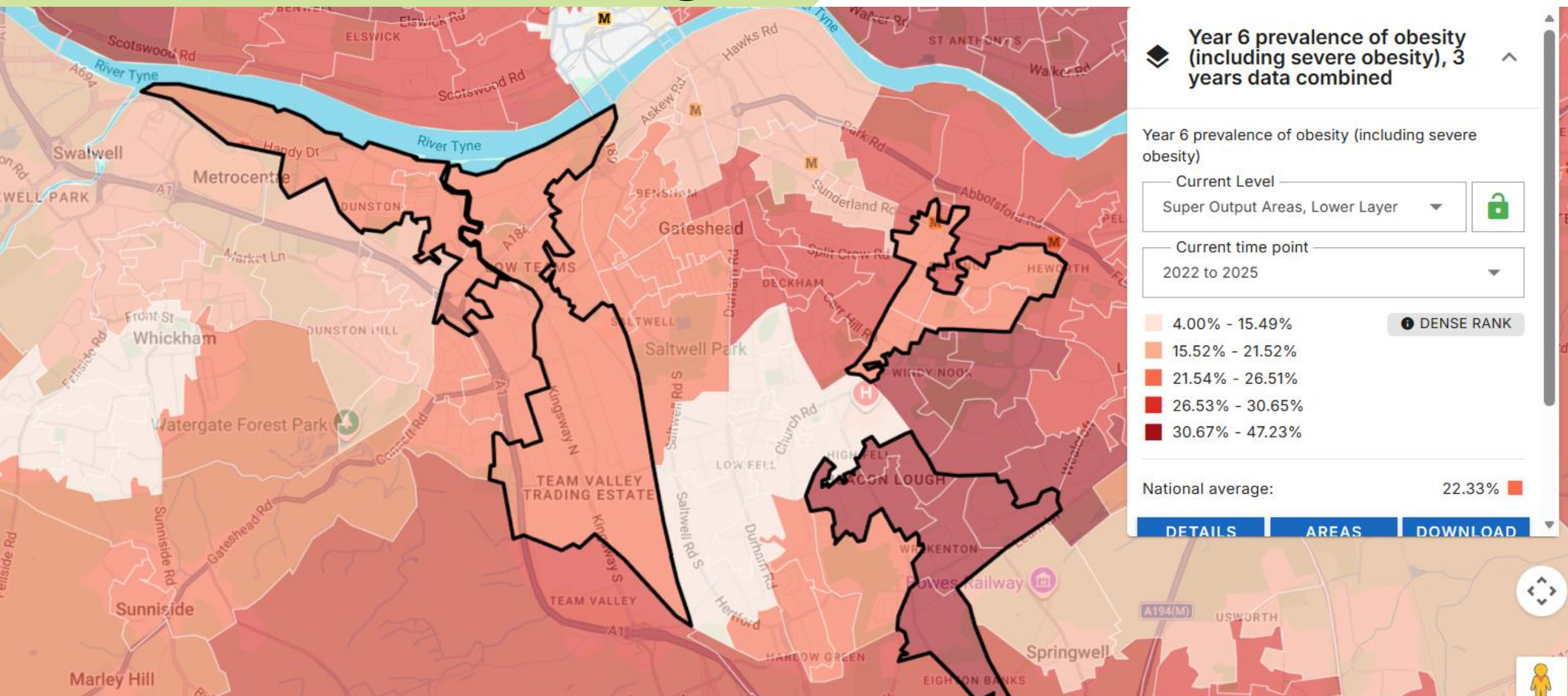
Children in Gateshead providing unpaid care.



Prevalence of obesity in Gateshead children, aged 4-5.

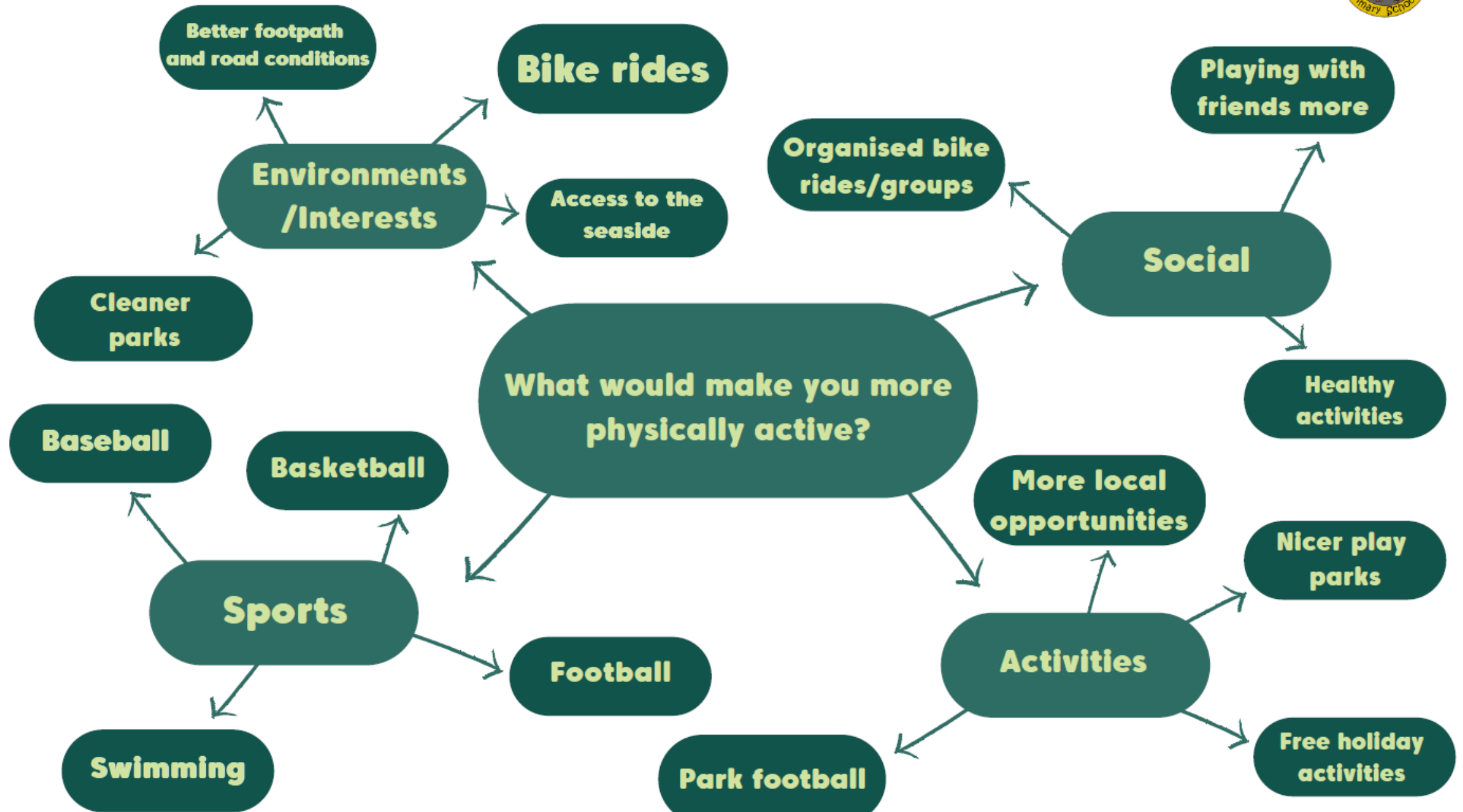


Prevalence of obesity in Gateshead children, aged 10-11.





**A group of 10 Y5/6 children were asked the above question and this is their answers and summaries of discussions that took place.



Youth Voice

Captured at ARMS group in Bede Community Primary School

What do you enjoy about sport and physical activity?

Dog Walks

Football

Active Play

Like to run

Playing in the park

Playground games like tag

What would make you participate in more physical activity?

Active Interactive Whiteboard Games

Places to go in the car

Activities with friends

More playgrounds

Ways to be active in my house

Discussion and potential actions.

- Not all partners are aware that families with a [Max Card](#) (a discount card for foster families and families of children with additional needs) can register for a Better leisure centres [SEND Leisure pass](#), for free casual swimming, gym use and fitness classes as well as 50% discount on swimming lessons.
- There is a shared awareness of youth antisocial behaviour in the Salvation Army park/woods area, Felling Square, around transport hubs, and in Windy Nook (particularly involving bikes).
- There is potential to explore ways to meet this identified gap in youth provision in Felling.

Discussion and potential actions.

- GLL potentially have capacity via their volunteer hours programme to provide additional reassurance/security for coaches and young people at outdoor sessions. It was also suggested that the Council could explore support from Community Security Trust.
- It was suggested that a potential Local Authority seminar could be used as an opportunity for Gateshead Council officers to learn more about, and potentially observe, the North Tyneside Council's Play Streets initiative.

Parks and Green Spaces Exchange

May 2026

Background.

- This exchange session focused on Dunston Park and was attended by representatives from Rise, Gateshead Council, GLL, and community organisations.
- The exchange reflected on the status of the park, explored issues around community involvement in shaping the park, and potential next steps.

Current status of the park.

- The depot and toilets are operational and inspected daily.
- Solar-powered CCTV and new signage are expected to be installed by the end of the summer.
- Gateshead Council is supporting a grassroots football club with an application to the Home Advantage Fund to support short-to-medium-term management and development of the site.

Current status of the park.

- Wider decisions about development of the site are currently pending while the Council completes its internal restructuring process.
- The current Council policy is to maintain the tennis courts, skate park and play area as part of the fixed play offer.

Discussion points.

Community involvement.

- It was agreed that the first step is to understand what local residents want to see in the space, before potentially developing options and bringing these back to the community for further feedback.

Perceptions of anti-social behaviour.

- There is a perception the park is a site of anti-social behaviour. It was recognised that improving activity, visibility, and community ownership within the park could help address some of these issues over time to fulfil its potential as a community asset.

What should a 'good park' include?

Ideas raised included:

- A café or community hub.
- Multi-use community spaces.
- Improved outdoor activities and facilities.
- Opportunities for events and volunteering.

Key considerations.

- The bowling green would require significant investment to restore.
- One of the existing buildings may be brought back into use with substantial investment, although the condition of other buildings is unclear.

Key considerations.

- Any new buildings or major refurbishment projects would involve considerable costs and long-term planning considerations.
- Any future regeneration or asset transfer would require a strong organisational structure, clear responsibilities, and a sustainable long-term business plan.
- Considerations such as planning permissions, ongoing maintenance costs, and future funding opportunities will also be important.

Next steps.

- Creating a working group.
- Exploring the development of a volunteer group or 'Friends of Dunston Park' group.
- Planning ways to gather views from a wide range of residents about the park and how it could be used.
- Exploring opportunities to work with partners on local engagement and research.

Next steps.

- Identifying future match-funding and partnership opportunities.
- Considering short-term projects or activities that could help activate the park while longer-term plans are developed.
- Gathering data around park usage, local needs, and priorities to help support future planning and funding applications.

**121 discussions with
local partners**

Beacon Lough and Wrekenton.

- As young people are frequently invited to take part in consultations it is important to explore a range of engagement methods to support meaningful participation.
- Concerns around some primary school children's nutrition: junk food-based packed lunches and children entitled for school meals not claiming them due to sensory needs, limited access to fresh healthy food, or being unfamiliar with certain meal options.
- Finances and lack of family capacity are barriers to children participating in extracurricular physical activity opportunities.

Beacon Lough and Wrekenton.

- Key issues affecting some young people on the Springwell Estate include vape addiction, the impact of intergenerational substance misuse, barriers to career aspirations and opportunities, involvement in organised crime, and antisocial behaviour from young people and adults using motor bikes in green spaces.

Beacon Lough and Wrekenton.

- Cost is a barrier to participating in fitness classes.
- Safety is a concern for those living and working in the community, with drug and alcohol-related antisocial behaviour and concerns about the safety of women being prominent issues.
- There is a high percentage of children with special educational needs and disabilities and some parents and carers could benefit from additional support and access to appropriate services.

Beacon Lough and Wrekenton.

- There is no direct access from the high-rise flats in Beacon Lough to the nearby field, park, and walking route, which means that residents must take a longer route to reach these spaces. A bench outside the flats has also been removed, presenting a barrier for people with reduced mobility.
- There may be opportunities to strengthen community connections and reduce social isolation through local activities and shared spaces. Further exploration is needed around potentially developing accessible opportunities.

Dunston and Teams.

- A local personal trainer and mental health coach has started a weekly men's mental health walk from Dunston Staithes and would like to offer more.
- Some community organisations and their volunteers find themselves undertaking signposting responsibilities due to gaps in local provision.

Felling.

- There is a lack of green space around the Old Fold and Nest estates for outdoor football sessions. Anti-social behaviour near local multi-use games areas is a barrier to usage.
- Local organisations emphasise the impact of living in adverse circumstances on children and young people's confidence and motivation to be physically active.

Gateshead-wide.

- People from diverse ethnic backgrounds, including refugees and asylum seekers, appear to be underrepresented in referrals to recovery services; more work needs to be done to understand the causes of this disparity.
- LGBTQ+ young people face a range of barriers to being physically active and many have disengaged by the time they reach secondary school. Again, more insight needs to be gathered to understand these issues locally.

Deaf & Hard of Hearing Inclusion Programme.

- **Lead organisation:** Gateshead Football Foundation working with Gateshead Community Bridgebuilder.
- **Funding:** 12 months via Community Foundation VCSE funding.
- **Target group:** Deaf and Hard of Hearing (D/HoH) children aged 5–16.
- **Participation:** 35-40 children attending Gateshead Leisure Centre weekly.
- **Purpose:** To improve access to community sports for deaf and hard of hearing children who are unable to participate in mainstream sports outside school settings.

Deaf & Hard of Hearing Inclusion Programme.

Key themes emerging:

- Access gap outside school provision.
- High delivery costs for inclusive sport.
- Strong demand and growth potential.
- Identity, aspiration, and peer connection are central outcomes.

Deaf & Hard of Hearing Inclusion Programme.

Key themes emerging:

- Cost of BSL lessons for parents of D/HoH children can lead to communication barriers.
- Wider adult exclusion and economic opportunity gaps.
- Need for sustained funding / long term sustainability beyond pilot period.

Community insight gathering

Context.

- The following insights were gathered by local organisations directly commissioned by Rise on behalf of the place partnership.

Children's experiences of parks and green spaces in Dunston and Teams.

- In May, a local artist worked with a group of children aged 6-11 from Teams Life Centre to co-produce a zine illustrating their insights into local parks and their ideas of what a 'dream park' would look like.
- Contact joe.barton@risenortheast.co.uk to request a PDF version of the zine.

What would happen if a group of curious aliens landed in Teams and Dunston and wanted to learn all about our parks and green spaces?
That's exactly where this adventure begins.

Children sent aliens created during those short sessions on a journey through the parks and green spaces around them. They shared what they think about these places, what they like to do there, and what frustrates them.

From the get go it was clear that the green spaces available in the area did not spark any excitement, though one interesting insight from the project was how the children chose to rate the spaces. Despite lack of enthusiasm about those green spaces, parks received top marks. The ratings alone do not tell the full story. The real insight comes from the children's drawings, conversations, and ideas, which reveal both what they value in their local spaces and what they would like to see improved in the future.

Most importantly, they imagined their dream park. A place designed by children, for children. They focused on creating spaces that work for everyone, not just for themselves. Their vision is full of fun, creativity, enjoyment, and a well planned infrastructure!

This zine celebrates their creativity, ideas and voices. It reminds us that children are experts in their own experiences, and that when we listen to them, we can create spaces that work better for everyone.

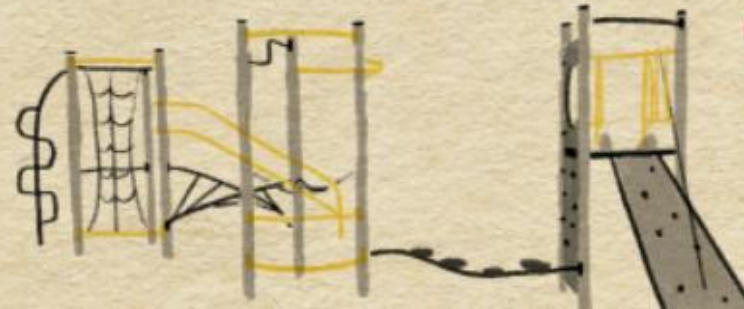
teams park



HOW CAN YOU GET HERE?



RATING out of 5!



I like it because ^{Sophia} you can supri's people by coming out of the green tube.

I can meet my friends. → ^{Emie}

I like it because it never closes but it needs Swings. → ^{mya}

I like it because its close to school and we sometimes stop there for school trips! → ^{Mory's}





Research findings from partners

Context.

- The following findings are drawn from research that has been funded and undertaken by partner organisations through projects separate from the place expansion work.
- These findings nevertheless are relevant to our shared learning about physical activity in Gateshead.

Green Health Routes North East.

- **Lead organisation:** Centre for Sustainable Healthcare (CSH) in partnership with Forestry England (funded by Sport England and Forestry England).
- **Project duration:** January-December 2025.
- **Project site:** Chopwell Wood and Guisborough Forest.

Green Health Routes North East.

Purpose

- Co-design permanent walking routes with key stakeholders, maximising accessibility and reflecting local need.
- Produce and distribute clear printed maps through GP practices and community spaces.
- Work with digital platforms to make routes freely accessible online.

Green Health Routes North East.

Purpose

- Host events across Chopwell communities to promote and celebrate the routes.
- Establish a legacy framework so routes continue to be used and enjoyed by local communities and recommended by healthcare and community services.

Green Health Routes North East.

What has changed for communities? Wellbeing and confidence:

- Participants described feeling calmer and more connected to nature.
- Clear instructions and transparent information reduced anxiety and made independent use feel achievable.
- This effect was reinforced by signs of repeat engagement, with some participants returning for multiple sessions or progressing to longer, more challenging walks.

Green Health Routes North East.

What has changed for communities? Engagement and participation:

- Greatest participation came from sessions where walking was paired with a clear purpose and theme, i.e. photography and craft-based activities.
- Sessions reduced social and confidence-related barriers associated with joining a walking group and created a more welcoming, low-pressure entry point.
- Many children and young people attended craft and half-term sessions, while adults over 50 were more likely to participate in structured walks.

Green Health Routes North East.

What has changed for communities? Engagement and participation:

- Creative themes were particularly valued. Participants highlighted the sensory and immersive experience of working with natural materials.
- Several shared that they planned to continue nature-based crafts independently, suggesting the activities extended beyond the session itself.

Green Health Routes North East.

Early behaviour change and ripple effects:

- Independent use: participants began using the routes independently beyond project events.
- Leaflets and the Go Jauntly app provided enough confidence and clarity for people to navigate on their own.
- Return engagement: individuals attended multiple sessions and increased the length or challenge of walks over time.
- Partner adoption: community organisations began incorporating routes into their own programmes and activity / events planning.
- Community visibility: leaflets required repeat replenishment in trusted venues, suggesting the routes became recognised local opportunities.

Learning about the wider physical activity ecosystem

Reflecting on the place expansion work so far.

- Despite this work being led by a steering group drawn from across Gateshead, we seem to be developing an understanding of the issues within three, distinct localities rather than a clear picture of the overall borough.
- We know that this partly because visible, Gateshead-wide leadership for tackling physical activity inequalities is only beginning to emerge.

Reflecting on the place expansion work so far.

- It is also because we are only just starting to recognise the need to change our ways of working (i.e. our organisational structures, policies, and processes) to tackle physical activity inequalities.
- Specific steps following from this include widening participation in our evaluation exercises to develop a clearer sense of place and reflecting further on the potential actions that could help to align the place expansion work with other priorities in Gateshead such as health and Pride in Place.

Contacts.

If you have any questions about the content of this pack, or would like to work with us to gather insight and deepen our shared understanding of physical inactivity in Gateshead, please contact:

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