GATESHEAD AND SOUTH TYNESIDE PLACE PARTNERSHIPS EVALUATION AND LEARNING SUBMISSION – APRIL 2025

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report explores the work undertaken at Rise since securing Sport England place-based expansion development award funding in September 2024, and the insights gained through this process. Firstly, this report provides an overview of the work undertaken thus far towards understanding the barriers that people in Gateshead and South Tyneside face to becoming more physically active, which has primarily consisted of:

- Strengthening relationships with place partners and helping to deepen their understanding of whole systems and place-based approaches.
- Recruiting two 'active communities engagement lead' positions to gather insights on the barriers to physical activity faced by residents of Gateshead and South Tyneside.
- Recruiting a 'research and insights manager (place)' role to ensure that evaluation and learning is at the forefront of this work in Gateshead and South Tyneside.
- Developing collaborative relationships with other organisations working to address barriers to physical activity beyond Gateshead and South Tyneside at the local and regional levels.
- Beginning the process of asset mapping in Gateshead and South Tyneside.

The report then outlines what Rise and place partners have learnt so far from undertaking this work, focusing on collaboration, organisational policies, procedures, structures, and ongoing efforts to map physical activity assets across the priority areas. This learning is the outcome of a series of reflective interviews with participating place partners from Gateshead and South Tyneside, similar sessions with Rise's new active community engagement leads, and a Rise team critical appraisal of asset mapping work so far.

In reflecting on the work undertaken during this period, this report identifies several characteristics associated with collaboration that have manifested during the development award phase, namely respect and reciprocity, the benefits of resilience, and recognising a shared purpose. Additionally, the report's reflections on Rise's work with partners to develop and recruit for the active communities engagement lead and research and insight manager (place) roles have shown how collaboration can model and reinforce whole systems and place-based principles, in ways both Rise and partners intend to replicate going forward. Finally, in evaluating progress made towards asset mapping, this report concludes that initial assumptions that the exercise would help Rise to identify key assets to develop relationships with and identify gaps in knowledge, appears to have proven correct and has provided Rise and partners with clarity regarding next steps.

OVERVIEW

At the end of 2023, Sport England announced that it was seeking to work with Active Partnerships and Local Delivery Pilots (LDPs) across England to invest £250 million in 80 new places and expand existing place investments across the country. This investment is part of Sport England's Uniting the Movement strategy which uses place-based approaches to transform lives and communities through sport and physical activity.

In January 2024, Rise received notification that Sport England had identified the local authority areas of Gateshead and South Tyneside as Phase 1 place-based expansion locations. Within both local authority areas, Sport England applied proportionate universalism and a place needs classification (PNC) tool to prioritise specific middle layer super output areas (MSOAs).

In Gateshead, the MSOA areas identified are:
- Felling
- Beacon Lough and Wrekenton
- Dunston and Teams

In South Tyneside, the MSOA areas identified are:
- Brockley Whins
- Biddick Hall
- Hebburn
- Horsely Hill
- Simonside
- South Shields

As such, although Rise's place partnership work in Gateshead and South Tyneside will take a whole systems approach and will aim to achieve change across the wider local authority areas, additional focus will be given to the priority MSOAs in the first instance.

Establishing place partnership steering groups

In April 2024, Rise established place partnership steering groups in both Gateshead and South Tyneside. This approach to establishing these steering groups was informed by key concepts from whole systems and place-based approaches to understanding and addressing barriers to physical activity, namely that achieving population level change requires the engagement of individuals, communities, anchor institutions and policy makers from across the entire local physical activity system.

As such, the place partnership steering groups in Gateshead and South Tyneside currently involve partners from a range of sectors including the Active Partnership (Rise North East), local authorities (including public health, leisure leads, and anti-poverty leads), the voluntary, community, social enterprise (VSCE) infrastructure organisations,

the NHS Integrated Care Board (IBC) and the Police and Crime Commissioner Violence Reduction Unit.

The place partnership steering groups meet on a quarterly basis, chaired by the strategic lead for place at Rise. These meetings have been instrumental in initiating conversations on key concepts such as whole systems and place-based approaches, leadership, and system maturity.

In September 2024, Rise, with support from the place partnership steering groups, successfully secured Sport England development award funding to invest in Gateshead and South Tyneside over an initial 18-month period. This phase of the funding will be used to deepen the understanding of the barriers that prevent residents in those priority places from becoming more physically active. During this phase Rise will also work to strengthen the strategic approach to place partnership by working with the steering groups to embed and understand the nine conditions for tackling inequalities in physical activity, as outlined by the National Evaluation and Learning Partnership (NELP).[1] Specifically, Rise intend to improve the collective understanding and knowledge around the following conditions:

- Identifying the barriers and enablers of physical activity in the local context.
- Distributed and collective leadership.
- Collaboration within and across organisations.
- Cycles of learning and action.

To achieve the outcomes of the development award and fulfil the pre-conditions for full award, Rise has dedicated a proportion of the development award budget to additional capacity to drive this work forward through the creation of the following roles:

- A strategic lead for place.
- Active communities' engagement leads for Gateshead and South Tyneside.
- A research and insight manager (place).

Active communities engagement lead

The decision to create the active communities engagement lead roles were the product of learning from Rise's previous experiences of place-based working. Rise has seen firsthand that having someone embedded within a local community is far more

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[1] NELP (2024a) *Overview of NELP Conceptual Model and Conditions for Tackling Inequalities in Physical Activity.* Available at: https://tinyurl.com/4kxnrrrx [Accessed 27 March 2025).

effective for gathering insight into the barriers to physical activity that residents face. The active communities engagement leads for Gateshead and South Tyneside were recruited in December 2024 and commenced employment in February 2025. These roles are based within the community, enabling them to effectively engage with residents and work with communities to take a strengths-based, community-centred approach to understanding and improving health and wellbeing outcomes. The active communities engagement leads will be able to address language and communication barriers and establish feedback mechanisms. Rise and partners believe that this in turn with facilitate co-design and community decision making, which reflect the key condition of community-led action in addressing physical activity inequalities.[2]

Research and insight manager (place)

Given the importance of monitoring, evaluating, and learning from this work in Gateshead and South Tyneside, Rise has also created a research and insight manager (place) role, which will be responsible for collecting, digesting and summarising complex data and insight from a range of sources which will then be shared to a wide range of internal and external stakeholders. In addition, this role will also be responsible for ensuring evaluation and learning is at the forefront of the place partnership steering group's thinking throughout the development award phase. The research and insight manager (place) will work closely with the active communities engagement leads to coordinate approaches to local engagement and insight gathering so that they align with a local evaluation and learning framework and whole systems and place-based approaches more generally.

Additional progress and priorities

Alongside the development award submission and recruitment of new personnel, Rise has also begun asset mapping (which is outlined in more detail later in this report), worked with partners to identify key leaders within Gateshead and South Tyneside, and planned the two-day system leadership programmes.

Moreover, throughout the last six-month period Rise worked with place partnership steering groups to identify opportunities to engage the wider physical activity system and update them on the place partnership work in preparation for the development award phase. This has included presenting at South Tyneside Health and Wellbeing Board and Gateshead Healthy Weight Alliance.

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[2] NELP (2024b) *Community-led Action*. Available at: https://tinyurl.com/5xc88cz6 [Accessed 27 March 2025].

As the development award phase progresses, the priorities for the next six-month period include:

- Delivery of the two-day system leadership programmes in Gateshead (May 2025) and South Tyneside (March 2025).
- Developing a theory of change model for both places.
- Developing a 'common purpose' and agreed set of principles for both place partnership steering groups.
- Develop partners' understanding of system maturity.
- Undertake configurational comparative analysis (CCA).
- Begin consultation and insight gathering with organisations, communities, and residents.

REFLECTING ON COLLABORATION

When identifying development award places, Sport England considered the following factors alongside those identified by its PNC tool:

- The place's readiness and willingness to engage.
- A shared purpose and values.
- Other work happening locally.
- Strategic alignment and opportunity.

In the development award submission for Gateshead and South Tyneside, Rise as lead-applicant also outlined desired outcomes around the theme of improved collaboration:

- Strengthening strategic partnerships
- Developing relationships in priority localities.
- Gaining a deeper understanding of the barriers to physical activity in priority localities.
- Influencing system change.
- Delivering a range of codesigned interventions.

Following an initial introductory meeting with Sport England, Rise convened multi partner engagement meetings in both Gateshead and South Tyneside with representatives from across the local authority, VCSE sector, health, and policing.

To embrace collaborative working and ensure proportionate, representative governance as lead applicant during the development award phase, Rise has established place partnership steering groups in Gateshead and South Tyneside. These steering groups are envisioned as a way of supporting communities and system partners to embrace place-based working and to cut across organisational silos to distribute decision making and facilitate collaboration.

Developing partners' understanding of whole systems approaches

As part of the preparatory work for the first-place partnership steering group meeting in April 2024, attendees were asked to identify key individuals or organisations who should also be involved in the place-based expansion work. Most of the organisations initially identified were traditional sport/physical activity sector organisations such as football

foundations and school sport partnerships. As a result, during subsequent place partnership steering group meetings, Rise prioritised working with partners to deepen understanding of Sport England's whole systems and place-based approaches as well as the socio- ecological model to understand levels of influence.

In November 2024, Rise replicated the activity to identify key individuals or organisations that should be involved in place-based expansion and this time partners identified a whole host of diverse and influential system partners were identified such as primary care networks (PCNs), recovery services, planning, housing, transport, parks and greens spaces, education and a much wider range of VCSE sector organisations, indicating the progress made as a shared understanding of whole systems and place-based approaches deepened.

Identifying potential systems leaders

The deepened understanding of whole systems and place-based approaches has influenced partners' thinking around which individuals should be invited to the two-day systems leadership programmes. Not only have the place partnership steering groups identified a varied array of individuals from the local authority (working in public health, planning, transport, leisure, and housing), health, employment, education and VCSE sectors, but the partners themselves have also taken a collaborative approach to inviting those potential leaders. Invitations to potential attendees were sent by the place partner who had the established relationship with said individual, so that their engagement with the systems leadership programme had strong relational foundations.

In November, the place partnership steering groups also identified specific outcomes which they hoped to achieve throughout the development award phase. Many of these outcomes placed an emphasis on improving collaboration across the physical activity system:

- A broader range of stakeholder engagement.
- A deeper understanding of assets.
- Improved connectivity across the system.
- Improved trust across organisations and communities.
- Co-production integrated from the start.
- Connection to other similar areas of work, i.e. sector-led improvement (SLI) work.

With these desired outcomes in mind, it is important for the place partnership steering group to continue to engage regularly, build on the strong foundations already established, and look to influence across the wider system by developing relationships with other stakeholders.

Reflecting on what collaboration means

In February and March 2025, Rise held reflections sessions on the topic of collaboration with place partnership steering group members. Themes emerging from these sessions reflect some of the features of the condition of collaboration as outlined by NELP, particularly "mutual understanding, respect, and reciprocity", "recognition of a shared purpose" and "resilience, fuelled by comradery".[3] With regards to respect and reciprocity, a recurring insight from partners was that their already established strong relationships with Rise provided the necessary trust and willingness to collaborate more widely across the sector as part of the development award phase:

> *"I've done a lot of work with Rise in the past and they've been absolutely amazing so this was a really welcomed opportunity because I think a lot of the conversations we've had in the past about different projects […] there was a real need for some more funding to come into the borough and […] I suppose it's from previous relationships and programmes that are taking place."*

> *"We've got some really good examples already of this (collaboration) happening on a really small scale, I suppose I'm just a little bit more excited about what we can do on a bigger scale."*

In terms of recognising the shared purpose around addressing barriers to physical activity, partners identified the difference that a burgeoning understanding of whole systems and place-based approaches can potentially make, reflecting the insight from NELP that "an appreciation of the scale and complexity of the challenge leads to conviction that collaboration is essential".[4]

> *"Before the Sport England project [we participated in an] SLI approach to physical activity [...] focusing on the whole systems approach to physical activity and delivering different workshops. So, we had whole school programmes, community activities, healthcare, active travel, et cetera. And just bringing partners on board to help them understand what their role is within the physical activity framework [...] was something that was really important and I think for me it helped me understand what other people's perspectives were and also what potential opportunities there could be with that whole systems approach."*

With regards to resilience, partners recognised that collaboration across complexity requires resilience, patience, and an ongoing commitment to maintain dialogue and deepen understanding:

> *"We're not there yet but we're having very different conversations to what we were a while ago."*

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[3] NELP (2024c) *Collaboration.* Available at: https://tinyurl.com/mr38dz6r [Accessed 27 March 2025].
[4] Ibid.

"And we kept saying, 'well, it's not all about the transport, it's around how does the wider system help people get to where they need to go?' And I think there's been a huge shift in [local authority transport colleagues'] thinking in in these three years since and I think that's really helped us collectively –public health and transport and others– really think about what's possible."

Partners also highlighted how this approach requires participants to build trust when undertaking new approaches to local collaboration:

"The whole process of place-based expansion is new to us. And so, it's okay that everyone's going to be learning together."

Finally, it is worth reflecting on a key insight gained from collaboration across the physical activity system during the development award phase thus far; namely, the prevalence of the tendency to presume that increased investment is the primary solution to physical activity inequalities generally and barriers to increasing physical activity specifically. That Rise has encountered this perspective across a range of sectors and contexts reinforces the importance of continuing to deepen and embed a shared understanding of whole systems and place-based approaches to making systems change around physical activity.

Further collaboration addressing barriers to physical activity

This learning about collaboration in addressing barriers to physical activity extends beyond the development award phase work in Gateshead and South Tyneside. Alongside representation from Gateshead and South Tyneside, Rise is heavily involved in the North East cluster, a regional network of Active Partnerships, LDP colleagues and local authorities looking to collaborate to improve mutual understanding and support around addressing barriers to physical activity. Rise's strategic lead is part of the cluster coordination group, which co-designs and facilitates quarterly cluster meetings. Cluster meetings have involved collaboration with the Local Government Association in the form of a 'navigating the political landscape' workshop and NELP who have delivered sessions around CCA and understanding place maturity.

In December 2024, alongside support from other cluster members, Rise as lead applicant applied for Sport England cluster investment, which was awarded in February 2025. The investment will support the cluster to expand its current work with a focus on collaboration and connection, sharing and learning, people development, and advocacy and influence. In particular, the collaboration and connection section will ensure that the cluster is appropriately connected to all relevant regional and national stakeholders by developing a shared understanding of the system beyond place and establishing a strategy for regional and national engagement and connection.

Rise's involvement with the North East cluster has opened up further opportunities for collaboration, learning and sharing, particularly through participation in the NELP place expansion cohorts and systems leadership programmes. These opportunities have included:

- Rise facilitating a session with You've Got This (South Tees LDP) to share learning and insight with partners from Gateshead, South Tyneside and Newcastle.
- Rise planning the local two-day systems leadership programmes with facilitators from Get Doncaster Moving LDP and Active Calderdale LDP.
- Attending a regional CCA moderation workshop facilitated by NELP.
- Collaborating with Urban Foresight on the This Girl Can Newcastle project aligned to Newcastle's Core Cities programme.

Applying insights gathered from collaboration

Rise is now reflecting on how to apply the insights gathered from these ongoing collaborative opportunities to specific aspects of the development award phase and, moving forward, the full award phase:

- From involvement in the regional CCA moderation workshop, the NELP Place Expansion Cohort and work with Urban Foresight, Rise gained insights into how to approach facilitating the place partnership steering groups to evaluate place maturity.
- From work with Urban Foresight as part of the This Girl Can Newcastle programme, Rise observed how to co-develop a theory of change and facilitate ripple effect mapping: methods which will be integrate into the local monitoring, evaluation and learning framework for the development award phase and beyond.
- From conversations with North East cluster members and systems leadership programme facilitators from Get Doncaster Active and Active Calderdale, Rise adapted its thinking around potential attendees for its own systems leadership programme. Priorities as a result of this learning are individuals who are influential in the local system (rather than those who hold nominally senior roles within it), those who understand the physical activity landscape but may need to gain a better understanding of whole system approaches and those who are influential within the system but do not necessarily appreciate the significance of physical activity.
- From facilitating the session with You've Got This, Rise gained insights into the types of data to capture during the full award phase when trying to influence change in certain sectors or parts of the system. For example, from liaising with Rise colleagues working in health spaces, there is an awareness of a shift away from placing value on qualitative measures such as patient experience testimonies towards quantitative measures, specifically health utilisation resource costs (GP visits, prescription costs, hospital-related costs). Going forward, Rise will

implement types of impact measures that are more likely to be relevant to decision makers within the integrated care system as well as other contexts.

ORGANISATIONAL POLICIES, PROCEDURES AND STRUCTURES

As NELP highlights through the condition of organisational policies, procedures and structures, the ways in which organisations work together and engage with communities are often shaped by their structures, policies and practices and, as such, place based, systemic ways of working can be enabled or obstructed by information and financial systems, team structures, commissioning and decision-making processes, job descriptions and performance measures.[5]

It was thus crucial that when recruiting to the active community engagement lead and research and insight manager (place) roles, Rise considered how its own recruitment processes, hosting arrangements and role-scoping enabled place-based systemic working rather than hindered it. Through developing the role descriptions and person specifications with place partners (see Appendices 1-4 for full job descriptions and person specifications), Rise ensured that they reflected the collaborative nature of the role and attracted applications from individuals who were passionate about making a change within Gateshead and South Tyneside.

Enhancing collaborative working through the recruitment process

As the place partners who participated in reflection sessions in February and March 2025 highlight (see below), collaboration with place partners through steering group meetings also led to omitting terminology and jargon from the role descriptions and vacancies which could potentially deter local, enthusiastic, influential community members from applying and this even led to the initial role title of community development managers being changed to active communities engagement lead.

> "Everything that we took to Rise, they did take it on board and did make changes to the job profile and stuff as we went along."

> "We had quite a conversation at the place-based meeting about the job title and to think about how that would land with people either already working in or wanting to work in South Tyneside so it kind of felt very thoughtful as their process."

> "We didn't want to deter people so from applying and to have it as an open process as possible and to recognise the different experiences that people might have had to date and how that could be applied in the role. So, we had a

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[5] NELP (2024d) *Organisational Policies, Processes, and Structures Enable Place-Based Working*. Available at: https://tinyurl.com/478c7j2j [Accessed 27 March 2025].

conversation about making wanting to make sure that it didn't sound too corporate too restricted."

"When we were discussing the job title even role words like 'practitioner,' we thought 'is that going to put people off?'"

To reflect the consensus established through collaboration with place partners, the active communities engagement lead role descriptions and person specifications did not focus on experience of working in the physical activity sector and made no reference to place-based working or whole systems approaches. Instead, descriptions focused on an applicant's ability to establish and maintain working relationships, undertake community engagement and an ability to adapt communication and language to reach inactive residents in Gateshead or South Tyneside who are currently facing the highest level of health and social inequalities. Partners who reflected on their involvement in the recruitment process highlighted the importance of this:

"I asked whether we should think about if [it was important whether] people are talking about physical activity in their answers and I think we came to a conclusion that it wasn't, obviously it's great if they do, but it wasn't one of those things that would say, 'well, if they never mentioned physical activity, then they can't get the job' because we're aware that if they've got amazing experience in terms of that engagement, we can align that with physical activity conversations".

This was also reflected in the shortlisting process, which awarded higher scores to person specification competencies such as:

- Experience of working with voluntary and community groups.
- Experience of collaborating with partners/stakeholders to develop community opportunities.
- An excellent knowledge of Gateshead/South Tyneside in relation to social issues and challenges faced by residents and be able to clearly demonstrate an ability to build relationships and identify community skills, assets, issues, and needs across the area.
- A commitment to the philosophy that changes are best brought about by the community themselves, and that efforts to improve an area must be driven and led by local people to have lasting success.

As opposed to the following competencies which scored lower:

- Experience of preparing and presenting reports.
- An awareness of relevant local, regional and national strategies for health and wellbeing, with a particular emphasis on physical activity.
- Good IT skills and knowledge, commensurate with an office environment.

Beyond the role development and shortlisting stages, Rise similarly involved representatives from the place partnership steering group and the wider sector in the

interview and appointment stages of the recruitment process. The active community engagement leads interview panels consisted of Rise's strategic lead for place as well as representatives from public health and from the local VCSE infrastructure organisations while the panel for the research and insight manager (place) consisted of both Rise's strategic lead for place and research and insight strategic lead as well as the programme manager at the Active Partnership Network who brought experience of research and insight, place working and Active Partnerships.

In involving multiple agencies in this way, Rise and partners aimed to further enhance collaborative working and embed the underpinning ethos of whole system approaches into the recruitment process, the benefits of which were acknowledged by those who participated in it:

> *"The inviting in of an external perspective really reflected that collaborative approach, bringing that diversity of thought and bringing that added different perspective outside of the organisation."*

> *"Rise came out to ask who would like to be part of that process [...] it wasn't just [Rise and] the Council, it was very much a partnership approach. I think that worked really well within the process as well with all kinds of different backgrounds and hats on."*

Redesigning practices to enable equitable, place-based working

As NELP point out, a key approach to ensuring that organisational policies, processes and structures enable place-based working is to "assess and redesign existing policies and processes to build in place-based, systemic and equitable ways of working".[6] Accordingly, Rise experimented with redesigning its practices more equitably in the context of recruitment by sharing the interview questions with all shortlisted candidates 24 hours in advance of the interview. Participating partners reflected positively on this decision, as well as other aspects of the recruitment process that were changed to achieve greater flexibility and equity:

> *"Rise gave the candidates the interview questions before the interview and that's something that I've not done before [...] I suppose it probably makes people feel a little bit more comfortable and bit more relaxed and being able to show their best selves."*

> *"One of the real positive strengths was the sharing of the interview questions ahead of the interview process because I think what that does is really provides a positive candidate experience but also supports inclusivity and neurodiversity. It really helps with that inclusive practise and also helps when you're on the panel really get the best from the candidates. That's what we want a recruitment*

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[6] Ibid.

process to be, we want it to be getting the best out of the candidates. It's not to put people on the spot […] You wouldn't have someone going to a meeting unprepared or not have been able to think about what they're going to be asked, so I think providing the interview questions is best practise for inclusivity."

"To make it more equitable [for] people [with] neurodiversity […] to make sure it's fair and that everyone got the questions beforehand just so they could prepare and actually excel on the day because everyone gets nervous with interviews, but having that the questions beforehand can put people at ease a little bit more".

"It wasn't a gatekeeper-y kind of interview."

"It was very systematic [...] there was a clear scoring criteria [...] there was a clear rationale, so it felt a very kind of fair and equitable system."

Similarly, the successful applicants to the active communities engagement lead roles showed an awareness of how commonplace recruitment processes can limit equity and place-based working and reflected positively on this approach to recruitment. Applicants specifically identified the format of the application form and the provision of interview questions in advance as being key enablers to them performing well:

"[There is] a lot of stigma around how an interview should be, and the way that power sits in an interview, and things like that, so I think [Rise has] dismantled that and they're reshaping what that even looks like"

" I was so excited when [the email containing the interview questions] did come because I just felt like I wasn't stressed for the weeks prior [...] I was able to just do some actual focused work on the questions, so I think on a health and well-being perspective it was really positive."

"I think probably by getting those questions in advance, I gave a better performance in the interview then if I have been on the spot."

"It was great that I could have my notes [in the interview]. I didn't actually look at them [...] but then I think just knowing that they were there was a comfort to know that if I needed to [...] even the way they sent the questions, they talked about how they're not trying to catch anyone out, all these sort of [...] statements that were in the recruitment process just made you feel a bit more at ease."

"I've got the feeling that Rise put the community at the heart of the work that they were doing and particularly in this role and it appealed to me because I've always had a person-centred approach in my previous roles."

"I loved how [the EDI information section of the application] was for Rise to take on as a part of their EDI Strategy, so I answered it really honestly because I felt like they were being truthful, and it wasn't going to impact my application."

Key learning and insights

The key learning and insights gained from these reflections, and which will influence Rise and partners' work going forward include:

- That it is crucial to involve partners from the start of the process to ensure collaboration and to model and reinforce the underpinning principles of whole systems and place-based approaches. If, upon moving into full award phase and the need for additional capacity is identified, should Rise be the lead applicant, Rise would seek to take the same approach to recruitment.
- The anonymised approach to shortlisting and EDI was well received by partners and will become a standard part of Rise's recruitment process.
- Sharing questions prior to interview was perceived by all involved as making the process more equitable and there was a general sense this allowed people to perform to the best of their abilities in what can be a stressful situation.
- Partners characterised Rise's recruitment processes as highly professional and streamlined and some reported that they have applied or have considered applying them within their own organisations:

"I think there's lots that I took away that I'll probably feedback to the Council's recruitment side of things."

"I was asked to interview for [a volunteer-run] organisation not long after [recruiting the active communities engagement lead]. For me, having experience [from the Rise recruitment] I was able to organise and influence their recruitment process which turned out to be really positive [...] It was a learning experience for me and then I've been able to then influence other organisations to do it that way because it worked really, really well."

"It was a very smooth process from my perspective. In terms of giving the questions in advance, we had started doing that at [my organisation] but up until my Rise experience [our approach had been] half an hour before their interview we'd give them the questions then but there's absolutely no reason why we can't just do it the day before."

ASSET MAPPING

In October 2024, Rise's research and insight strategic lead formulated an asset mapping plan which was informed by NELP guidance and resources, wider literature, collaboration with key place partners, and internal discussions within Rise.

Rise's plan recognised from the outset that asset mapping is an ongoing process that remains unfinished. The plan also outlined a rationale for asset mapping which can also be understood as a hypothesis to be tested. This hypothesis states that, when aiming to develop a deeper understanding of the barriers that residents face to becoming more physically active within the priority places, then documenting these places' existing assets will enable the identification of gaps, those specific assets with which Rise would need to develop positive relationships, and which might be able to play a proactive role in this work. This section of the report concludes by testing this hypothesis according to the progress made so far with asset mapping.

This initial plan also proposed a structure for identifying and labelling assets, consisting of an asset label[7] as well as a record of an asset's target audiences.[8] Rise staff then created a test database in the form of an Excel spreadsheet reflecting this approach to labelling. In November 2024, Rise contacted all place partners with details about the purpose of asset mapping and requested them to provide information on any relevant assets within the priority areas and feedback on the database itself. Rise received responses from four partners based in the local authority and health sectors (two from Gateshead and two from South Tyneside), who provided a total of 37 individual assets spanning several labels. These partners also signposted to public directories for health and physical activity. Given this relatively low number of responses, it may be that partners have faced barriers in efficiently extracting and sharing their internal data within the timeframe provided, and that, going forward, it could be helpful for Rise to explore some of these barriers with partners. Nevertheless, the data provided was sufficient for Rise to populate the test database along with further data obtained from local authority and voluntary and community sector websites and via Google searches using agreed upon search terms.

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[7] Community association, individual, institution/organisation/physical space.

[8] Universal, male, female, children and young people, older people, Black, Asian and minority ethnic, LGBTQ, disability/long-term health condition, mental health/wellbeing, deprived households

In February 2025, Rise's research and insight manager and active communities' engagement leads began to review this data, checking that assets are correctly labelled, up-to-date, and accurate. Further reflection led to the revision of asset type labels to make for a more useful level of detail at the visual mapping stage.[9] Reviewing the current database has also identified several key organisations with whom it could be beneficial to develop and/or deepen relationships to progress this work. These key assets fall into three broad categories: community associations, local authority programmes or initiatives, and GP surgeries or social prescribing services. In addition, Rise's active communities' engagement leads have also highlighted the importance of building relationships with residents to map grassroots assets currently missing from the map.

Moreover, at a team reflection session in March 2025, Rise staff recognised that it would be beneficial from a monitoring, learning and evaluation perspective, to complement the asset database with community engagement logs for Gateshead and South Tyneside, which active communities' engagement leads will populate with insights and learning gained for meetings with stakeholders and residents. As a result, Rise has developed a spreadsheet log that enables the active communities engagement leads to record the type and purpose of each engagement as well as the topics discussed, the target communities of the asset in question, and notes on relevant insights gathered. The research and insight manager (place) will regularly analyse the data gathered through the community engagement logs (by, for example, undertaking thematic analysis of meeting summaries and categorising any potential work relating to logged barriers and solutions as short-term, medium-term and long-term), so as to structure ongoing approach to further insight gathering.

As of writing, the breakdown of assets mapped across the priority areas within Gateshead and South Tyneside are as follows:

	Total assets	Locality	Asset type (based on initial labels)
Gateshead	96	Beacon Lough and Wrekenton: 21 Dunston and Teams: 22 Felling: 18 Other location: 35	Community association/group: 39 Individual: 2 Institution/organisation: 26 Physical space: 29
South Tyneside	159	Biddick Hall: 27 Brockley Wins: 1 Hebburn: 9	Community association/group: 12 Individual: 1

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[9] Changing them to individual community connector, policy, programme, green space, blue space, active travel infrastructure, leisure centre/community hall, class/activity session, other service/organisation.

		Horsley Hill: 3	Institution/organisation: 17
		Other location: 47	Physical space: 2
		Simonside: 27	Unspecified: 127
		South Shields: 34	
		Unspecified: 11	

Evaluating progress in asset mapping

From a practical perspective, progress made so far in asset mapping has been satisfactory, consisting of creating a test database, making partners aware of its purpose, and gathering and checking initial asset data. Reviewing asset mapping from a more reflective perspective –specifically in relation to the hypothesis implied by the original rationale– the exercise has as predicted identified key assets with which to develop relationships and have also highlighted gaps and the need to develop relationships with grassroots organisations. While more progress needs to be made to fully evaluate this hypothesis (and can be returned to in the next report), the insights gained so far are nevertheless promising.

Next steps

Rise is now considering which digital platform would be best to visually map these assets, as well as aiming to share the database and visual map with place partners to stimulate further reflection and sharing based on the gaps identified. As asset mapping is a process and is therefore always unfinished, the ambition is for this map to go beyond the scope of existing directories to identify and help promote grassroots, emerging or otherwise less well-known assets.

CONCLUSION

Since securing development award funding in September 2024, Rise and its place partners have focused on undertaking the foundational work that will facilitate an understanding the barriers that people in Gateshead and South Tyneside face to becoming more physically active. This foundational work has taken the form of:

- Rise strengthening relationships with place partners and helping to deepen their understanding of whole systems and place-based approaches.
- Recruitment of two active communities' engagement lead roles to ensure that insights into the barriers to physical activity that people within Gateshead and South Tyneside face are gathered by individuals based within these communities.
- Recruitment of a research and insights manager (place) role to develop an overall learning and evaluation framework for the work in Gateshead and South Tyneside and ensure that this framework and its supporting methodologies are embedded into and help to structure engagement work in these places.
- Deepening of collaborative relationships with other organisations working to address barriers to physical activity beyond Gateshead and South Tyneside at the local and regional levels.
- Asset mapping in Gateshead and South Tyneside.

In reflecting on this work with some of the participating place partners, Rise has identified some characteristics associated with collaboration that have manifested during the development award phase so far, namely respect and reciprocity, the benefits of resilience and recognising a shared purpose. In addition, reflections on working with partners to develop and recruit the active communities engagement leads, and research and insight manager (place) roles have identified how collaboration can model and reinforce whole systems and place-based principles, in ways both Rise and place partners intend to replicate going forward.

Building on these foundations, the aim for the next six-month period, are to:

- Update and visualise the asset maps for Gateshead and South Tyneside.
- Develop a local evaluation and learning framework.
- Work with place partners via the place partnership steering group meetings to develop theories of change for Gateshead and South Tyneside and begin evaluating system maturity.

REFERENCES

NELP (2024a) *Overview of NELP Conceptual Model and Conditions for Tackling Inequalities in Physical Activity.* Available at: https://tinyurl.com/4kxnrrrx [Accessed 27 March 2025).

NELP (2024b) *Community-led Action.* Available at: https://tinyurl.com/5xc88cz6 [Accessed 27 March 2025].

NELP (2024c) *Collaboration.* Available at: https://tinyurl.com/mr38dz6r [Accessed 27 March 2025].

NELP (2024d) *Organisational Policies, Processes, and Structures Enable Place-Based Working.* Available at: https://tinyurl.com/478c7j2j [Accessed 27 March 2025].

APPENDICES

1. Active communities engagement lead job description

Job Title	Active communities engagement lead (Gateshead)
Salary	£28,129 - £32,456 The role is 1.0 FTE and is for an initial fixed term of 18 months. However, it may be extended subject to future funding.
Responsible to	Strategic Lead for Place
Key External Partners	Gateshead Local Authority; residents of Gateshead, Gateshead Voluntary Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) organisations in identified Medium Super Output Areas (MSOA's); Northumbria Police and Crime Commissioners Office Violence Reduction Unit; Integrated Care Board (ICB), Local Employers; Primary Care Networks; Housing Associations; Department for Work and Pensions etc.

Purpose

The active communities engagement lead role will enhance and support Rise's place-based expansion work in conjunction with partners including Gateshead Council, Health, Northumbria Police and Crime Commissioner's Violence Reduction Unit and the VCSE sector.

Based within the community the role holder will engage with residents and work with communities in Gateshead (with a particular focus on Dunston and Teams, Felling, and Beacon Lough and Wrekenton) to take a strength based, community centred approach to understanding and improving health and wellbeing outcomes.

The central focus of the role requires strong collaboration with local stakeholders and residents of Gateshead to understand the systemic barriers to physical activity. The role will focus on consulting with partners and residents and using the insight gained to influence future decision-making and influence system change.

The role holder will need to fully embed themselves within the community, developing a strong relationship network with residents, statutory partners, the VCSE sector and other stakeholders to fully understand the inequalities the community of Gateshead face.

Key Themes & Responsibilities

1. Establish and maintain working relationships with residents, partners and stakeholders within the local community.
2. Enhance community engagement with the support of other neighbourhood-based agencies.
3. Ensure that Rise fully understands the need(s) of residents and that the community are involved in the co-design of consultation approaches.
4. Working with inactive residents in Gateshead who are currently facing the highest level of health and social inequalities, alongside other agencies:
   - apply varied and creative methods to strengthen community groups and increase people's participation in local activity.
   - plan, attend and coordinate meetings and consultation events.
5. Working with Rise's Research and Insight function, produce reports to highlight the impact of the work undertaken, results achieved, and lessons learned.
6. Regularly feedback data, insight and learning to the place partnership working group
7. Undertake self-reflection in order to assimilate feedback and evaluate own performance.
8. Contribute to an inclusive working environment where diversity is valued and each team member is able to contribute to, promote and uphold equality, diversity and inclusion through everyday actions.
9. Attend training and development opportunities relevant to the post and/or self-development opportunities.

   Any other duties as reasonably required, commensurate with the grade and remuneration of the post.

Number of Reports

Direct Reports: 0

Indirect Reports: 0

Practical Requirements

The post holder must:

- Operate firmly within the charity's Behaviour Framework at all times.
- Be a leading advocate for the benefits that physical activity and sport can play in developing communities and individuals.
- Ensure compliance with Rise's internal procedures and all legal requirements.

2. Active community engagement lead person specification.

Competency	Role specification	Evidence/demonstration of meeting specification	Essential	Desirable
Experience	Experience of working with voluntary and community groups.	Application Form, Interview, References	✔	
	Experience of collaborating with partners/stakeholders to develop community opportunities.		✔	
	Experience of preparing and presenting reports.			✔
	Experience of co-design and co-production with local communities.			✔
	Experience of co-design and co-production with local communities.			✔
Skills, knowledge & aptitude	An excellent knowledge of Gateshead in relation to social issues and challenges faced by residents and be able to clearly demonstrate an ability to build relationships and identify community skills, assets, issues and needs across the area.	Application Form, Interview, References	✔	
	A strong ability to communicate with the community, adapting language and style to relevant audiences. Understand the information requirements of a wide range of communities and make all information accessible.		✔	

Category	Criterion	Assessment	E	D
	Good IT skills and knowledge, commensurate with an office environment.		✔	
	An awareness of relevant local, regional and national strategies for health and wellbeing, with a particular emphasis on physical activity.			✔
	An understanding of the community and physical activity landscape in Gateshead.			✔
	An understanding of welfare plans and undertaking risk assessments.			✔
Motivation & working practices	A strong passion for making a difference to the lives of residents in Gateshead and be committed to work for a more just and equal society.	Application Form, Interview, References	✔	
	A commitment to the philosophy that changes are best brought about by the community themselves, and that efforts to improve an area must be driven and led by local people in order to have lasting success.		✔	
	Resilient, proactive and self-motivated – able to work alone with minimum supervision and on own initiative, responding to the needs of the community as they arise.		✔	
	Committed to equality, diversity, inclusion and safeguarding.		✔	
Other	Committed to continuous professional development and maintaining pace with industry trends and developments.	Application Form, Interview	✔	
	Able to meet the travel requirements essential to the post, including managing time and regular travel between the Charity's office and partner locations across Gateshead (and sometimes further afield).		✔	

	Willing and able to work between an office and a home environment, with a flexible attitude.		✔	

3. Research and insight manager job description.

Job Title	Research & Insight Manager
Salary	£29,536.20 – £34,079.09 The role is 1.0 FTE and is for an initial fixed term of 18 months. However, it may be extended subject to future funding.
Responsible to	Research and Insight Strategic Lead
Key External Partners	Local Authority; local VCSE organisations; Police and Crime Commissioners Violence Reduction Unit; Health (including ICB/ICS and Primary Care Networks; other Active Partnerships and Place Partnership teams; Sport England and other partners' insight teams.

Purpose

To identify, collect, digest and summarise complex data and insight from a number of sources, and effectively communicate insight and learning to a wide range of internal and external stakeholders to support our place-based expansion work in Gateshead and South Tyneside.

To contribute to the gathering, assessment and reporting of information and learning which will contribute towards improving the planning, delivery and evaluation of sport and physical activity for communities facing inequalities across Gateshead and South Tyneside.

Key Themes & Responsibilities

1. Manage the undertaking of quantitative and qualitative research and evaluation of Rise's place based partnership programme to inform future planning and investment decisions; demonstrate impact and build an evidence base.
2. Identify gaps in existing insight and take the lead in addressing these gaps where appropriate.
3. Manage the planning and conducting of research with groups to gather and interpret data and learning in order to produce reports for other team members and/or our partners/stakeholders.
4. Collate and interpret insight relevant to identified places, which are the focus of our place-based expansion work, and target groups involved in Rise's place based partnership programme to support and evidence our work and ensure the team are up to date and are using this insight in their day-to-day work.

5. The ability to evaluate and articulate the difference that the place partnership work is making to the system in which it operates within the context of physical activity levels, as well as economic, health, social, educational and other relevant indicators in the region.
6. Utilise a range of insight resources to gather and interpret data to produce reports and mapping for Rise and our partners/stakeholders and identify current key issues or future trends/needs to inform future planning and investment decisions.
7. Utilise appropriate software to display research and insight information in a visually appealing and easily digestible format.
8. Collaborate and engage with the National Evaluation and Learning Partner (NELP) and other Research and Insight teams across other place partnerships in England to share best practice and drive organisational improvement in this area.
9. Where necessary, provide training and workshops on the theories, principles and methods of research and insight for internal and external audiences.
10. Provide leadership and advocacy in relation to the ongoing development and utilisation of the place partnership local Learning and Evaluation Framework and Theory of Change Model across the internal team and local partners.
11. To attend training and development opportunities relevant to the post and/or self-development objectives.
12. To engage with the National Learning and Evaluation Partner (NELP) to understand the conceptual framework and all the key components, for example, Theory of Change Models, local evaluation and learning frameworks, the 10 conditions for tackling inequalities in physical activity etc.
13. Any other duties as required which are commensurate with the grade and remuneration of the post.

Number of Reports

Direct Reports: 0

Indirect Reports: 0

Practical Requirements

The post holder must:

- Operate firmly within the charity's Behaviour Framework at all times.
- Be a leading advocate for the benefits that physical activity and sport can play in developing communities and individuals.
- Ensure compliance with Rise's internal procedures and all legal requirements.
- Have a minimum of 3 years' experience of managing research or evaluation projects relating to sport or physical activity and/or social policy, disadvantage or community development or community consultation.

4. Research and insight manager person specification.

Competency	Role Specification	Evidence/Demonstration of meeting specification	Essential	Desirable
Qualifications	Educated to degree level in a related area, or comparable learning and experience in a related area such as research, data collection and analysis or social sciences.	Application Form, Certificates	✔	
	Educated to master's level in Research level or similar			✔
Experience	Significant (minimum of 3 years) experience of leading on the planning and execution of research and/or monitoring and evaluation projects.	Application Form, Interview, References	✔	
	Experience of identifying and gathering data, research and insight from a number of sources to support research/organisational objectives.		✔	
	Experience of empowering and enabling others to adopt an evidenced-based approach to their work.			✔
	Wide ranging experience of identifying, gathering and presenting data, research and insight from several sources to inform and influence decision making.		✔	
	Line management experience or experience of leading and directing others to complete research and/or evaluation tasks.			✔
	Experience of maintaining databases of information and analysing and reporting the data and research clearly and concisely.			✔

Category	Criterion	Assessment Method	Essential	Desirable
	Experience of contributing to the planning, monitoring and evaluation of projects or programmes.		✔	
	Experience of successfully communicating with individuals / organisations to gather and/or provide meaningful information.		✔	
	Experience of preparing and presenting reports.		✔	
Skills, Knowledge & Aptitude	Excellent written and oral communication skills, with the ability to write and present clearly and concisely.	Application Form, Interview, References	✔	
	An understanding of issues surrounding public health, health inequalities, social inequalities, behaviour change and/or physical inactivity.			✔
	Excellent level of numeracy with the ability to translate data and qualitative information.		✔	
	Knowledge of quantitative and qualitative research tools and techniques, as well as knowledge of data security legislation and up to date practice.		✔	
	Ability to forge meaningful relationships and influence the approach of others as well as a commitment to providing high levels of customer service.		✔	
	Knowledgeable about, and skilled in using, appropriate software packages to display research and insight information in a visually appealing format.		✔	
	Good IT skills and knowledge, commensurate with an office environment.		✔	

			✔	
	Excellent administrative and planning skills.		✔	
Motivation & Working Practices	Committed to sport and physical activity, equality, diversity, inclusion and safeguarding.	Application Form, Interview, References	✔	
	Able and willing to work as part of a multi-disciplinary team and contribute effectively to the work of the team.		✔	
Other	Committed to continuous professional development and maintaining pace with industry trends and developments.	Application Form, Interview	✔	
	Able to meet the travel requirements essential to the post, including managing time and regular travel between the Charity's office and partner locations across Gateshead and South Tyneside (and sometimes further afield).		✔	
	Willing and able to work between an office and a home environment, with a flexible attitude; when required to work at third party locations. This may include working evenings and weekends on occasion.		✔	