

South Tyneside Place Based Expansion

Quarterly insights pack (July 2025)

Introduction

- This pack contains insights gathered between February and June 2025 as part of the ongoing place-based expansion work in South Tyneside.
- The insights in this pack reflect the current scope of engagement with local organisations and community leaders. Engagement at this stage is more developed in some priority localities than others. Physical activity is not necessarily the focus of initial discussions.
- These insights should therefore be seen as representing an emerging and fragmentary picture of physical activity in South Tyneside. Given the broader scope of some discussions, the enablers and barriers identified do not always directly relate to physical activity.

Methodology

- The Rise Active Community Engagement Lead in South Tyneside logs a summary of each meeting with individuals and organisations, recording key data including:
 - Individual/organisation's target communities (where applicable).
 - Locality (i.e. all South Tyneside or a specific target locality).
 - Key topics discussed, including barriers to and enablers of physical activity.
- These logs pertain to 35 conversations held between February and June 2025.
- Logs are collated and thematically analysed by the Rise Research and Insight Manger (Place).

Key themes identified: enablers of physical activity

Theme	Definition
1. Proactive outreach and/or relationship building.	Organisations/services engaging directly with individuals to support and facilitate their initial interaction with physical activity-related services.
2. Social spaces.	The role played by social spaces in promoting awareness of/access to physical activity opportunities.
3. Community hubs	The role played by designated community hubs in promoting awareness of/access to physical activity opportunities.

Key themes identified: barriers to physical activity

Theme	Definition
1. Antisocial behaviour	The perceived impact (or potential negative impact) on physical activity and movement of antisocial behaviour in or around green spaces, play areas and other community spaces.
2. Processes as barriers.	Established organisational processes, policies or other ways of working acting as barriers by unintentionally hindering actions or efforts to increase physical activity.
3. Lack/loss of green spaces.	The negative impact on opportunities for physical activity and movement from the reduction in or loss of green spaces.
4. Siloed working.	Organisations and departments working independently of one another without effective communication and/or collaboration.
5. Poverty	The impact of poverty on the capacity of individuals and communities to be physically active and/or create opportunities for physical activity and movement.

Key themes identified: groups and communities

1. Women and girls.
2. Older people.
3. Children and young people.
4. Faith groups.
5. Ethnically diverse communities.

Top five themes in South Tyneside

1. Proactive outreach and relationship building

2. Antisocial behaviour

3. Processes as barriers

4. Women and girls

5. Lack/loss of green spaces

Themes by localities

Locality	Themes identified
Biddick Hall	Antisocial behaviour, migrant communities, processes as barriers, drugs and alcohol, mental ill health, community hubs, proactive outreach/relationship building.
Hebburn	Older people, social spaces, proactive outreach/relationship building, antisocial behaviour, poverty.
Horsley Hill	Antisocial behaviour, community hubs, women and girls, men, lack/loss of green spaces.

Themes by localities, continued

Locality	Themes identified
Simonside	Lack/loss of green spaces, faith groups, communication issues, antisocial behaviour, need for physical venues, siloed working, children and young people, built environment, joined up working, processes as barriers, social spaces, older people, grassroots, poverty.
South Shields	Women and girls, special educational needs and disabilities, proactive outreach/relationship building, transport issues, older people.

Spotlight on enablers

Proactive outreach and relationship building

- Local authority (LA) and VCSE sector organisations attribute low engagement with available activities (e.g. HAF programme, courses, walks) to a 'fear of the unknown' effect.
- LAs and VCSE organisations are aware that, where there is staff/volunteer capacity to undertake 1-2-1 'hand-holding' outreach work to support individuals through initial introduction phase, this can improve engagement and participation in activities.
- Examples: Community organisations taking flexible, encouraging 1-2-1 approach to engaging individuals with activities.

Spotlight on enablers

Social spaces and community hubs

- Community hub staff note that residents unexpectedly discover and engage with other services when visiting GP surgery on same site. The centre also makes its multi-use games area available for families to hire when not in use.
- Older residents in Simonside attribute the sense of a decline in community capacity and resilience to the loss of the shared social spaces.

Spotlight on barriers

Antisocial behaviour

- Some residents attribute antisocial behaviour (including vandalism and arson directed towards community assets) to lack of youth provision and believe that an increase in provision may help tackle this.
- Members of a community group for older residents in Simonside report being intimidated by crime and drug and alcohol-related antisocial behaviour.

Spotlight on barriers

Processes as barriers

- LA colleagues aware of how bureaucratic processes can cause delays in service approvals which in turn can negatively impact community support delivery.
- GP surgeries reprimanding patients for missing appointments rather than gathering data on the barriers to attendance (such as transport, mental ill-health, emergencies).
- Form-filling functioning as a barrier to accessing services for residents with limited literacy.

Spotlight on barriers

Lack/loss of green spaces

- Reduction in green/accessible outdoor space due to growth in housing and commercial developments.
- Wards lacking play parks or other free outdoor facilities (i.e. Horsley Hill) require families to travel further afield.

Spotlight on barriers

Siloed working

- Smaller community organisations working within same sector finding themselves competing for funding rather than collaborating.
- Breakdown in relationships between community groups leading to missed opportunities for collaboration.
- Training providers operating out community hub settings not necessarily working in a way that aligns with a whole-person/community-focused approach (i.e. cutting off access when programme is completed and offering no follow-up/check in).

Spotlight on barriers

Poverty

- The day-to-day pressures and challenges of poverty prevent residents from becoming more physically active.
- A manager of a community centre that was transferred to community ownership via Community Asset Transfer reported challenges with meeting core costs in a low-income area, which raises concerns over sustainability.

Spotlight on key groups

Women and girls

- Community organisations report that some women feel intimidated by, or unsafe in, unfamiliar public/community spaces functioning as a barrier to accessing physical activity opportunities.
- Trusted organisations can help to encourage and facilitate opportunities for their members/service users.

Older people

- The importance of support networks for enabling social connection, movement and activity as well as physical premises to host this.
- Some Happy Hub service users choosing taxis over minibus provision because buses are not sufficiently accessible.

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