South Tyneside Place Based Expansion

Quarterly insights pack (February 2026)

RISE.

What is in this pack?

- This pack outlines the insights we have gathered as part of the <u>Sport England Place Based Expansion Development Award</u> as of February 2026.

- This project aims to take a 'place-based' approach to tackle inequalities and make healthier living and an active life in South Tyneside more accessible. A place-based approach is community focused and led by the insights of the people who live and work in South Tyneside.

- By working with key place partners (the Local Authority, health, Violence Reduction Unit, and the voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise (VCFSE) sector) we aim to develop a shared understanding of the barriers residents in South Tyneside face to becoming more physically active.

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What is in this pack?

The key themes relating to local physical activity barriers and enablers identified between November 2025 and February 2026.

A recap of the recurring themes identified between February – October 2025.

A summary of **learning about the wider physical activity ecosystem** in South Tyneside and steps to develop it.

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How have we gathered these insights?

One-to-one conversations with individuals representing South Tyneside Council, the NHS and other statutory services, and local VCFSE organisations.

In-depth reflection and evaluation sessions with key stakeholders from across South Tyneside.

Research findings from work carried out by local organisations.

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Key themes

November 2025 – February 2026

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Accessibility and inclusion
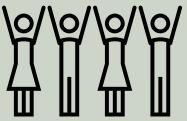
LGBTQ+ inclusion – challenges around clothing and changing rooms in exercise spaces can be difficult for some LGBTQ+ people to navigate.

Lack of inclusive cultures within sports clubs can also act as a deterrent.

Walking in parks appeals to young LGBTQ+ as it combines movement with social connection and belonging.

Accessibility of spaces– the Deaf community reports feeling left out of local strategic planning and delivery discussions.

There is a perception that permission is required to use hoists in local swimming pools, which deters some disabled people from swimming.

Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic safety and cohesion– discussions to improve cohesion and tackle tensions have identified the importance of 'open door' programmes, family events, connection days, and organisations being willing to step outside of their respective 'comfort zones' to increase cross-community interactions.

Green and blue spaces– there is a lack of green space in Biddick Hall and Simonside.

There is a perception that green and blue spaces are being used more by those from outside South Tyneside than local residents, especially those from high deprivation households.

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Health

Falls and frailty – plan to commission deeper insight gathering into local older residents' perspectives and experiences.

Further discussion is needed to decide how to use strength and balance initiatives to support older people and to identify what preventative work for home environments could be carried out.

Long term health conditions – respiratory patients with multiple health issues feel too unwell to engage with rehab pathway.

Some respiratory conditions do not perceive their conditions as being as serious as heart conditions due to differences in language (i.e. 'COPD exacerbation' sounds less severe than 'heart attack').

Some parents and professionals looking after children with congenital heart conditions lack knowledge and training to support them to undertake safe physical activity.

Rehab pathway aftercare – hospital rehab pathway includes exercise education and demonstrates positive health outcomes for patients who complete it.

Doctors report however that these benefits can be lost once programme ends if patients have not established a plan more maintaining activity.

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Children and young people

"It's not for me" – physical activity is associated with competitive team sports, gyms, and "getting sweaty".

Do we have any insight into how children and young people want to be active?

Do we have examples of supporting children and young people to broaden their understanding of physical activity?
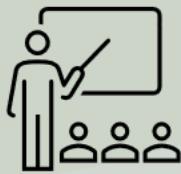
Challenges around schools – some children and young people are deterred from cycling to school because they fear their bikes won't be secure.

Local organisations and professionals who want to do physical activity work in schools struggle to gain access.

Increasing numbers of children and young people are not attending school.

Wellbeing and behavioural challenges – the impact of the pandemic and social media on children and young people's social skills makes engagement with physical activity harder.

The impact of toxic masculinity on and boys' and young men's mental health, social skills, and behaviours.

Communication challenges – how do we best engage with children, young people and their families about existing physical activity opportunities?

What insight will help us get the language right in our communications to different audiences (e.g. parents, teenagers)?

Pockets of good practice – the work that is being done to support children and young people to be active is not always shared and joined up.

A lack of a Council Play Strategy means that, despite good youth provision, it is not delivered in a targeted way.

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Active uniform pilot survey findings
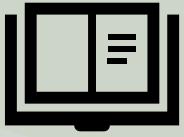
Background – these findings are drawn from surveys of staff and governors (21 responses) and parents (145) at primary school participating in active uniform pilot.

These surveys were carried out by South Tyneside Council who are a partner organisation in this pilot.

Comfort and movement – the majority of surveyed staff, governors and parents believed that introducing an active uniform would likely improve pupil comfort and encourage them to move more.

Similarly, the majority of surveyed staff, governors and parents did not believe an active uniform would affect pupil discipline.

Confidence and behaviour – a minority of surveyed staff, governors and parents believed that active uniforms would improve pupil behaviour and confidence, with the majority either stating that they were unsure or disagreed with this proposition.

The majority of surveyed parents also reported that they are happy with the current school uniform.
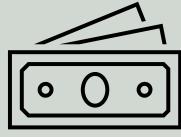
Support for families and staff – staff, governors and parents identified the need for an active uniform pilot to be explained clearly to parents and pupils, consider and address the affordability implications and provide parents with information, guidance and support.

Potential problems – some surveyed staff, governors and parents expressed concerns around whether an active uniform would adequately prepare pupils for the transition to more formal uniforms at secondary school.

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Recurring themes

February – October 2025.

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Accessibility and inclusion.
- Digital exclusion.
- Gym-timidation.
- Women feeling unsafe/intimidated.
- Multiple barriers faced by women from South Asian communities.
- Trusted organisations engage in 121 'handholding' to help addressing these barriers.

Poverty and cost of living.
- Day-to-day pressures.
- Cost of equipment/sessions/memberships.
- Fear of entering spaces perceived as catering to more affluent residents/families.
- Fear that benefit eligibility will be affected by being seen to be physically active.

Transport.
- Poverty as barrier to use.
- Perceptions of lack of safety deterring use, despite positive trends.
- Journey planning tools to support active school travel.
- Accessibility is an emerging theme in transport needs assessment which has also shared local good practice.

Siloed working.
- Smaller VCFSE organisations competing for funding rather than collaborating.
- Breakdown in relationships between community groups.
- VCFSE organisations caught between slow LA processes and short funding deadlines.

Antisocial behaviour.
- Older residents intimidated by crime and drug and alcohol-related antisocial behaviour.
- Perception that antisocial behaviour (including towards community assets) is caused by lack of youth provision.

Children and young people.
- Need for opportunities for children not in school due to emotionally-based school avoidance.
- Lack of outdoor spaces for teenagers.
- Teenagers congregating in public perceived as antisocial behaviour.
- Collaboration around active uniform pilots in two primary schools.

Parks and green spaces
- Reduction in accessible outdoor spaces due to growth in housing and commercial developments.
- Lack of play spaces in Biddick Hall and Horsely Hill.

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Learning about the wider physical activity ecosystem

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How have learned about the wider system?

- This learning is underpinned by the Sport England National Evaluation and Learning Partnership's conceptual model for tackling inequalities in physical inactivity.

- Between July – October 2025, place partners met to evaluate the current capacity and potential within the South Tyneside physical activity ecosystem to bring about positive change.

- This work found that some of the features that are needed for positive change in South Tyneside are only just beginning to emerge, while other features are more developed and embedded system-wide.

- As part of our learning, we have also developed a 'theory of change' for South Tyneside (see Appendix 1), which outlines what we want the physical activity ecosystem to look like and what actions we think are needed to bring about change, as well as an interactive map of physical activity assets in South Tyneside (Appendix 2).

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Where are the strengths in the system?

Key stakeholders within the system (e.g. South Tyneside Council) work with local people to understand what supports or prevents them from being active.

To build on this, we are providing trusted local organisations with support to gather deeper insight from their communities.

We will continue to share these insights so that we can deepen our shared local understanding of the factors shaping physical inactivity.

Key stakeholders adapt strategies, practices, and communications about physical activity based on the insights they gain from working with local people who are less likely to be active.

To build on this, we will need to ensure that the branding and communications for this project are coproduced with people from South Tyneside to ensure the language that is used is relevant, accessible and engaging for local people.

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What features do we need to develop and embed?

Opportunities for local people to influence decision making.

To develop this, we plan to map all the local stakeholders in South Tyneside, identify gaps in the membership of our Steering Group and Leadership Group and expand these memberships accordingly.

How else can we embed these opportunities?

Policies, processes and resources which enable power sharing with disadvantaged groups and communities.

To develop this, we plan to share learning from isolated examples of where this is happening locally.

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What do we need to develop and embed?

A local learning culture in South Tyneside that helps us capture, share and evaluate data and insight.

To develop this, we will support trusted local organisations to carry out their own insight gathering and continue to share our learning through quarterly insight packs and 6-monthly reporting.

When undertaking the annual evaluation of the physical activity ecosystem in the summer of 2026, we plan to engage with a wider range local voices and perspectives.

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What do we need to develop and embed?

A consistent shared understanding of how social, cultural, and economic constraints may affect physical activity levels.

To develop this, we plan to undertake audits of women's physical activity and children's and young people's active travel in South Tyneside.

Buy-in from senior leaders to promote place-based working.

How can we encourage leaders to support honest reflections on failed approaches?

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What do we need to develop and embed?

Access to parks and open spaces.

While work is underway to make some parks and open spaces more accessible, we also need to work with communities to identify ways to make access to these spaces across South Tyneside more equitable in general.

Action to address the structural inequalities reflected in living environments.

Some actions are being planned or undertaken to improve the condition or safety of the built environment and infrastructure where disadvantaged people live.

We need to work with residents in these communities to understand how we build on these improvements to increase people's ability to move more.

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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 South Tyneside, please contact:

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Appendix 1 – South Tyneside theory of change

INPUTS	ACTIVITIES	OUTPUTS	OUTCOMES	IMPACTS
- Sport England investment. - Other funding opportunities through collaboration. - Place partnership steering group, leadership programme attendees, place partnership catch up group. - Rise Strategic Lead for Place, Active Communities Engagement Lead, Research and Insight Manager, other Rise staff. - System partners. - Living Well Alliance. - Pledge partnership South Tyneside. - Residents. - Grassroots organisations. - Our target communities (e.g. CYP, families, people with disabilities).	- Develop a branding/comms strategy. - Developing a theory of change. - Evaluating system maturity. - Producing 6-monthly evaluation and learning reports. - Compile quarterly insight packs. - Micro commissioning project. - Stakeholder mapping to develop/expand steering group. - Barrier mapping. - Women's physical activity audit. - Mapping active travel for CYP. - Use Healthy Schools Award annual review process to link up to place work. - Frailty and falls mapping. - Present Healthy Places Alliance with maturity ranking and theory of change. - Identify 'hooks' for engaging departments/organisations who don't prioritise physical activity, such as planning. - Create evidence base on what does/doesn't work well in current physical activity interventions. - Link project to 3 programmes to tackle health-related economic inactivity.	- Brand/comms strategy. - Theory of change diagram and narrative. - System maturity packs and rankings. 6-monthly evaluation and learning reports. - Quarterly insight packs. - Micro commissioning process. - Stakeholder map and list of who's missing from steering group. - Regular opportunities for partners and community to come together. - Shared resource for removing barriers. - Asset map of accessible and appropriate venues and services for women (PA). 'Hooks' for engaging other departments and organisations. - Evidence base of what increases physical activity. - Training needs assessment of current physical activity staff/provision.	**SHORT-TERM** - More CYP actively travelling to school. - Place partnership developed with strategic leaders, community members and wider partners all feeding in through network meeting and working groups. **MEDIUM-TERM** - Senior buy-in for embedding PA in all policies. - Working with employers to increase knowledge around benefits of physical activity and this supports workforce and employers. - More schools taking part in active travel initiatives. - Public parks to have more facilities and equipment for older children and young people. **LONG-TERM** - PA embedded in planning and regeneration services/leadership. - Decreasing trends around falls/frailty (midlife to reduce risk). - An environment that makes active travel the norm and easiest option. - Women and girls feel safe, secure and more confident to physical activity. - Providers able to adapt provision for different population cohorts. - Venues and provision providing physical activity opportunities to offer safe spaces for women to access. - Residents feel connected to their neighbourhoods and assets. - Increased connectivity in population via physical activity and reducing social isolation and loneliness.	**HEALTH AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY** - Increased physical activity levels in areas where levels are low. - Reduced physical activity inequalities. - Local children get the best start in life and have improved physical literacy. - Local people are supported to live longer, healthier, and more independent lives. **CULTURAL/SOCIAL** - Physical activity programmes are inclusive and accessible. - Communities are empowered to self-advocate for their physical activity needs. - Improved cohesion between communities, reduced community tensions and reduced anti-social behaviour. **ECONOMIC** - Increased levels of economic activity for health-based reasons. **ENVIRONMENTAL** - The built and natural environment in South Tyneside encourages physical activity and active travel.

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Appendix 2 – South Tyneside asset map

- Access the South Tyneside physical activity asset map via this link.

- The map is a tool to support our understanding of the local physical activity ecosystem, rather than a public directory. We interpret 'asset' in a broad sense so that it encompasses things like community organisations as well as gyms and green spaces.

- To view the map, choose 'Custom areas' from the sidebar, then, under 'Rise Place-Based Expansion Work - Gateshead and South Tyneside', check 'South Tyneside – Middle Layer Super Output Areas (MSOAs)'. To then add the assets to the map, choose 'Services' from the sidebar, then 'select all' and then 'view'.

- The map is an evolving tool and is by no means comprehensive. If you spot any gaps or errors, please contact us.

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