



**Sport and Physical
Activity Matters in
the Humber**

**A Kada
Research Report**
for Active Humber
March 2025



The importance of moving more in the Humber

Moving more can support individuals to live well for longer and meet sub-regional ambitions. For instance, becoming more active can support the region to transition to Net Zero, a regional priority for the Yorkshire and Humber Climate Commission. Moving more can also address the priorities of the Humber and North Yorkshire Integrated Care Partnership, such as cancer, mental health, cardiovascular health, and frailty, enabling people to start, live, age and die well.

This advocacy document highlights why increasing health and wellbeing by encouraging more people to engage in sport and physical activity is good for individuals, families, and communities. As the Humber moves towards a devolved future in both Greater Lincolnshire and Hull and East Yorkshire, harnessing the social, economic, and environmental benefits of physical activity will make the sub-region a happier and healthier place to live, work and visit.

Active lives in the Humber



30.9%

of Humber residents do less than 30 minutes of physical activity each week compared to 25.7% across England (a 20% difference)



72.6%

of Humber residents participated in physical activity at least twice in 28 days compared to 76.8% across England



85.1%

of local residents who are inactive feel they do not have the opportunity to be active



37.3%

of residents hold a club membership compared to 42.8% in England



Physically active people in the Humber see a life satisfaction score of **7.18 out of 10**, compared to 6.69 for those who are inactive



Active people in the Humber report feeling **less anxious** than those who are inactive

East Riding Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy

All residents will have the opportunity to fulfil their potential in relation to health, wellbeing, and participation across their life span. Systems will be interconnected to deliver community-based support and help people to remain healthy for longer. Support will be tailored to the person, the family, and the community. The aim is that young people will be supported to start well, working age adults to reduce their risk of developing ill health, and residents to age independently and reduce health outcome inequalities.

Hull Leisure Strategy

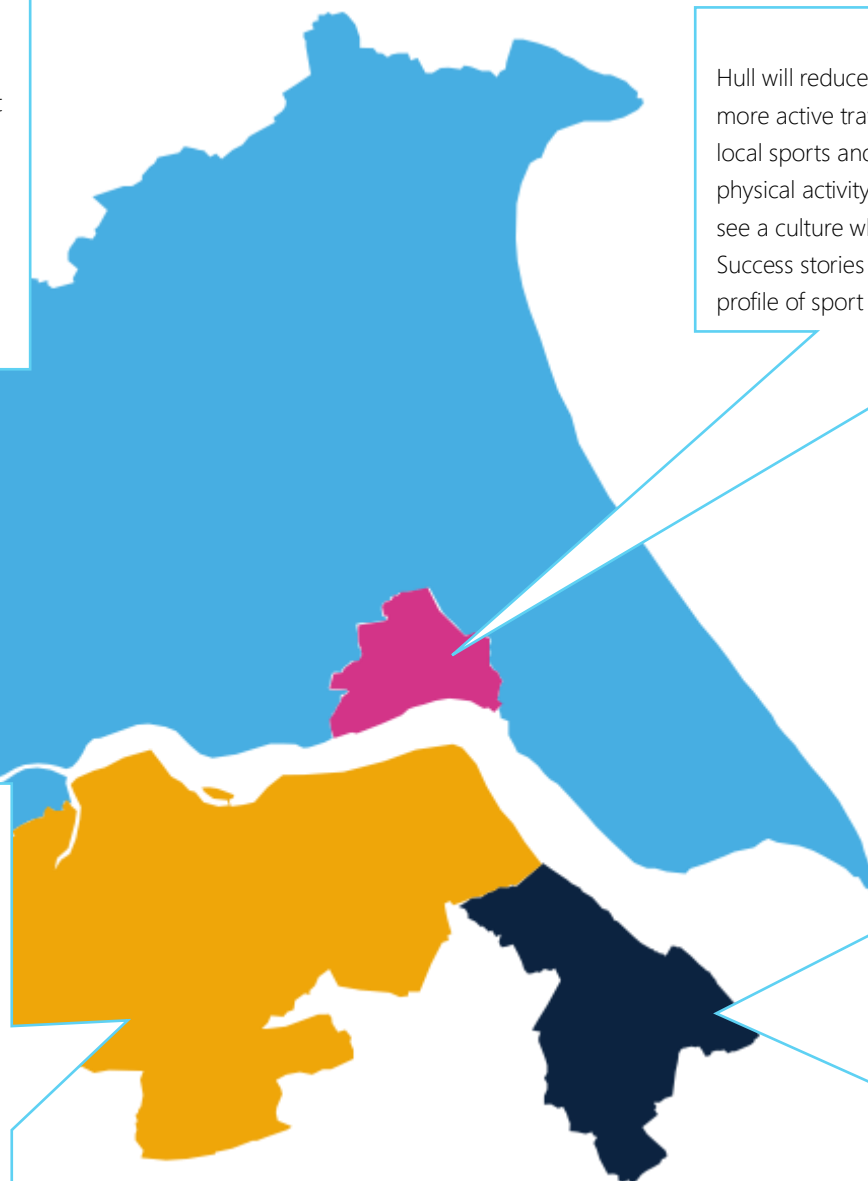
Hull will reduce the levels of inactivity by promoting and facilitating more active travel and community volunteering, and maximising local sports and recreation assets. By embedding sports and physical activity in healthcare, education and family support, Hull will see a culture where everyone chooses to move more each day. Success stories and sporting heroes will be celebrated to raise the profile of sport and physical activity in the city.

North East Lincolnshire Sport and Physical Activity Strategy

By the turn of the decade, North East Lincolnshire will have embedded an active economy, active communities, active health and wellbeing and active climate within daily life. Employers will advocate the benefits of increased physical activity, encouraging employees to move more. There will be fewer barriers to engagement across communities, leading to reduced loneliness, reduced antisocial behaviour and stronger local networks. Everyone will move more in daily life whatever their age, leading to better health and wellbeing. Active environment principles will be embedded in design to support more activity. In parallel the Council Plan, will improve wellbeing and life satisfaction, reduce the prevalence of obesity, develop new frameworks that address suicide, obesity, and healthier living.

North Lincolnshire Council Plan 2022 - 2025

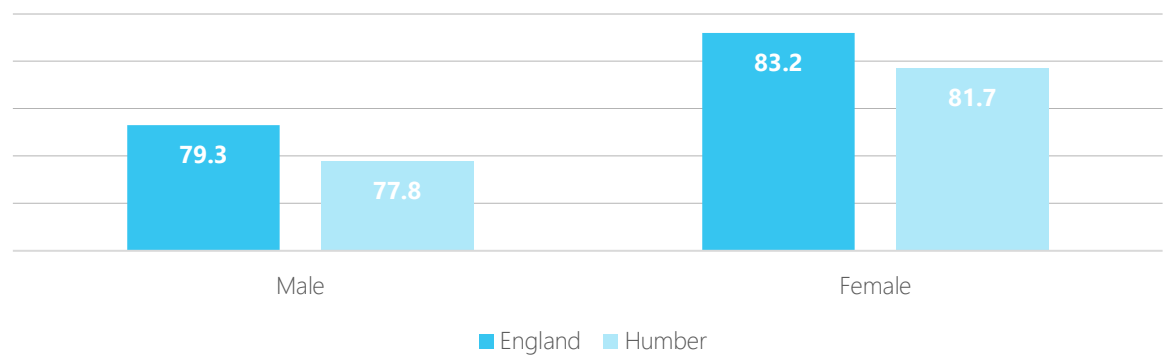
Health, communities, and economic growth are all priorities. Joined up care and promoting healthy living to all will help to reduce health inequalities, with more work being undertaken to ensure all people can access a career that they want. People will be supported to live well and independently across their life. To promote flourishing communities, volunteers will be supported to deliver more leisure activities for residents to get involved in boosting economic growth and the opportunity to develop new skills.



Women in the Humber are more likely to be physically inactive than men (32.6% compared to 28.2%)². Whilst ethnicity data is not available for the Humber, the broader picture shows Black and Asian (excluding Chinese) populations are more likely to be physically inactive than White populations (31.4%, 33.1% and 24.3% respectively)³.

Place-based physical activity and leisure strategies have the potential to reduce the stark inequalities seen between more affluent and less affluent areas. Those that live in deprived areas tend to experience poorer health and live shorter lives than those who live in less deprived areas⁴. Nearly 54% of the households in the Humber experience deprivation in at least one dimension, higher than the 51.6% in England. Life expectancy in the Humber is generally lower than England (with an exception being found in East Riding of Yorkshire) with place-based inequalities arising in healthy life expectancy with over a decade difference between some local authorities⁵. There is a demonstrable link between inequality, physical inactivity, and health outcomes. Being less physically active is associated with greater risk of heart attacks, strokes, type 2 diabetes, and depression⁶.

Figure 1 – Life Expectancy



Source: PHE (2023) Fingertips

Case Study

North Lincolnshire – Movement to Music

Movement to Music is a physical activity sensory session that combines dance with sensory toys and light up instruments aimed primarily at those with limited mobility. Held each week at the Riddings Community Hub, the event runs for one hour and is under £4 to join in. The session currently has 27 registered participants. The informal structure of the sessions allows participants to choose their own toys and request their favourite music. Participants enjoy both the dancing and the ability to meet with friends and be physically active.

Personal assistants and support workers are also encouraged to join in with the dancing. Participants talked about their improved mood the positive impacts of dancing.



Figure 1:
Movement to Music

A happy and healthy Humber

Starting well



80%
of adolescents living with
obesity experience obesity
during adulthood



Physical activity is
associated with stronger
pro-social relationships



Active Humber is working
with **26 schools** to
support opportunities for
physical activity

This infographic uses data from the following sources:⁷⁸⁹

Children that engage with physical activity whilst at school make more informed health decisions as they grow, which can support the prevention of conditions associated with inactivity¹⁰. They are also more likely to form stronger pro-social relationships with their peers, which can be beneficial for their mental well-being. Physical activity has also been shown to correlate with positive behaviour in the classroom and higher educational outcomes¹¹. For example, school children who participate in development activities such as sport perform up to 20% better in their GCSEs¹². Sport also has a beneficial impact on development, as it introduces children to important skills such as conflict-

management, teamwork, and self-control¹³. Young people in education are more likely to be physically active than those out of education (18.0% report physical inactivity in education compared to 26.3%)¹⁴.

Case Study

Healthy Holidays – Hull

Between summer 2023 and Easter 2024, Healthy Holidays Hull ran 43 days of activities, engaging over 19,000 young people and their families. Supported by a number of sport and physical activity organisations, such as Hull Football Club, the Tigers Trust, Sportsability Training Limited, Street Games, First Step Sports Group and Hull Culture and Leisure.

Over 60 Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) organisations also supported the running of activities across communities, ensuring people across the city could get involved. Children and their parents/carers engaged in a variety of sports, including archery, dance, football and climbing. The sessions also gave children the opportunity to learn more about theatre, writing nature and nutrition. One participant stated that the programme

"Kept us very busy and active. Got us up and out the house. Helped keep a positive mindset."



Figure 2:
Healthy Holidays Hull
11-16

Living well



£5bn
is spent on treating
MSK conditions
each year



4.9%
of residents in the
Humber accessed
NHS Talking Therapy
between 2022/23



126,000
Humber residents
live with a heart/
circulatory disease.

This infographic relates to the following sources:¹⁵¹⁶¹⁷¹⁸

At present, up to half of all GP appointments and 70% of the primary care budget is spent on preventable conditions, with as many as 1 in 7 deaths in the UK attributed to preventable conditions¹⁹²⁰. The UK sees a higher prevalence of largely preventable conditions than many comparable European

counterparts²¹. The risk of developing some conditions such as type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease and some cancers can be reduced through physical activity²².

Physical activity and sport have been shown to alleviate negative feeling like depression, anxiety, and anger, in part due to the release of endorphins (or happy chemicals) stimulated through engagement in exercise. Endorphins are also shown to help manage pain, making it beneficial to those living with chronic health conditions and musculoskeletal disorders²³. Reducing depression, anxiety and anger through physical activity will also have positive effects for the Humber. Between 2022/23, a higher proportion of the population of the Humber accessed NHS Talking Therapies for support with depression or anxiety than in England²⁴. Physically active people in the Humber rated their daily anxiety levels as being lower than those who were inactive (3.24 and 3.29 respectively)²⁵. Aerobic exercise in particular, such as running has been shown to improve esteem and overall life satisfaction²⁶. The economic cost of poor mental health is high, with £118bn being spent on mental health issues each year and a further 5% of GDP is lost in productivity²⁷.

Physical activity has also been shown to reduce loneliness, which is often linked to depression. Exercising as a group has been shown to support social interaction and result in stronger social networks and relationships, with club membership linked to happiness and wellbeing^{28,29}. Physically active people in the Humber are more likely to cite being with friends as a motivation for exercise, showing the importance of making group activities available in the Humber³⁰.

Beyond mental health, sport and physical activity has a notable impact on physical health too. 13.5% of Humber residents are estimated to be living with heart/circulatory disease³¹. This is higher than the estimated number in England of 11%³². In the Humber overall, approximately 269.9 deaths in every 100,000 are attributable to heart/circulatory conditions³³. Further to this, there are almost 40,000 stroke survivors registered in the Humber (2.24%)³⁴. Physical activity has been shown to reduce hypertension, which is a leading risk factor in these conditions, showing how important movement can be in the Humber³⁵. Designing and adapting environments in the Humber will encourage activity in everyday lives, making the active choice the easy choice.

Obesity is also associated with an increased risk of hypertension. Obesity costs the NHS £6.5bn each year and has been identified as the second largest preventable cause of cancer (falling just behind tobacco use)^{36,37}. The Humber saw approximately 1,464 of 100,000 residents finish a hospital admission with a primary or secondary diagnosis of obesity³⁸. Approximately 32.5% of adults in the Humber are obese (higher than the 26.2% seen in England)³⁹. With sedentary behaviour increasing the likelihood of obesity and subsequent problems, such as MSK issues, type 2 diabetes, and some cancers, promoting physical activity in the region is an essential part of any future treatment plan⁴⁰.

Ageing well



By 2037,
over a quarter of the
population of the
Humber will be over
the age of 65



£862m
will be spent on
dementia care in the
Humber by 2030



Nearly **20,000**
Humber residents
will be living with
dementia by 2030.

This infographic relates to the following sources:⁴¹⁴²⁴³

There are 16,702 people currently estimated to be living with dementia in the Humber, a figure that is expected to rise to 19,747 by the end of this decade⁴⁴. The cost of dementia in the Humber currently stands at £587m and is projected to rise steeply (with almost half of that being spent in East Riding)⁴⁵. Whilst there is no cure for dementia at present, sport and physical activity has been found to aid in the prevention of neurodegenerative disease such as dementia – up to 2% of dementia cases could be prevented through physical activity⁴⁶. Using the figures above, this is the equivalent of nearly 400 residents, or £17m. Further to this, for those who do develop dementia, physical activity has been shown to alleviate the isolation associated with the illness⁴⁷.

Physical activity across an individual's life course has been found to maintain strength, stamina, and mobility as a person ages⁴⁸. It has also been shown to reduce the risk of falls and poor bone health with hip fractures seeing a reduction of 68% and some cancers seeing a reduction of up to 40%⁴⁹. Studies have shown that physical activity can improve life satisfaction and reduce the use of medication in later life, sometimes acting as a non-invasive means for chronic-illnesses prevention and management⁵⁰. For instance, engaging in physical activity has been linked to the prevention and treatment of cancer, and ease of recovery⁵¹.

Supporting people to be well into older age will be vital in ensuring continued health, happiness, and prosperity to the region, with sport and physical activity shown to support this⁵².

Case Study

Humber – Get Out Get Active

Beginning in early 2020, Get Out Get Active has supported 845 people living with a health condition. 32 activities were delivered alongside 61 volunteers, Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) organisations, health authorities and local authorities. The co-designed sessions have been highlighted as a key programme strength.

The increased physical activity has supported participants to boost their strength and mobility, regain their independence, and interact with others. Specialised sessions have been developed for those with a neurological condition such as multiple sclerosis Parkinsons disease or a stroke. These sessions have supported people to rebuild some use of affected muscles and gain more confidence.



Figure 3:
Active Humber

Working in the Humber



Estimated sports and physical activity employment based
GVA £414m (2024)



There are **830** sports and physical activity businesses in the region employing **13,355** employees.



27,700 jobs by occupational category in sports and physical activity in the Humber (4,650 core jobs & 23,050 wider jobs)



Getting 10% of people who are economically inactive back into work could boost the economy by **£404m** (including £146m due to long term sickness alone)



Participating in sport at university is linked to enhanced employability and managerial skills, good news for the **11,020** physically active students in the Humber

49,300 people were economically inactive in the Humber due to long-term sickness. This represents over a third of those who are inactive and 8.7% of the overall population⁵⁷. Increasing physical activity can reduce the number of those experiencing ill health and help those who have health conditions to manage their symptoms. This aligns closely with the Get Britain Working White Paper ambitions which is looking to address the root causes behind economic inactivity and invest in supporting those out of work to overcome barriers to employment⁵⁸.

53.7% of those who are unemployed in the Humber are physically inactive, which drops to 23.9% for those who are employed⁵⁹. This highlights a link between physical activity and employment. Furthermore, employers in the Humber could benefit from encouraging employees to participate in physical activity, with studies showing that physical activity is associated with better next-day energy levels, motivation, and focus⁶⁰. Across the UK annually, 49.7 productive days per employee per year are lost⁶¹. This can be attributed in part to conditions like obesity, MSK conditions and fatigue⁶². With 86% of lost productivity days associated with presenteeism, the case for physical activity in the Humber is strong⁶³. Companies that offer a wellness programme that includes physical activity see a 25% lower absenteeism rate and 13% lower presenteeism rates⁶⁴.

Regarding skills, there is a recognised need to upskill the leisure, sport, and physical activity workforce, especially in areas like digital skills and content production⁶⁵. The importance of digital skills in Yorkshire and the Humber is quickly increasing, with the region seeing a 19% increase in the number of technology start-ups in the region in 2023^{66,67}. Advancements in technology and physical activity can be closely linked. An increase in wearable trackers and home-based health monitoring tools which have been associated with greater awareness of physical health and increased physical activity^{68,69}. Further to this, across the UK, 167,770 new leisure and travel and tourism qualifications were achieved in Q3 of 2024, with 11 new leisure qualifications set to be rolled out in 2025^{70,71}.

Case Study

North East Lincolnshire – Sevenhills Academy

Based in the Nunsthorpe estate in Grimsby, the Sevenhills Academy supports young people to engage in physical activity by offering sessions that are free and based at the school. Through the Opening Schools Facilities Fund, the Sevenhills Academy was able to work with a qualified sports coach and purchase new sports equipment to engage young people who had previously not engaged in physical activity. Between January and March, 26 people participated in a range of activities, including dodgeball, football and basketball.

One participant stated that **“the club gives me the chance to do something I like in the evening”**. As well as this, school staff have been able to access activator courses in boxing, football and multiskills. To ensure that the programme remains sustainable in the future, staff have been equipped with the necessary skills to support the club, and the sports coach has been employed on a permanent basis.



Figure 7:
Active Humber; Multiskills
after school club at Sevenhills
Academy

The Humber sees slightly higher sport event attendance than England (22.6% compared to 22.0%). In the Humber, 37.3% of the population are members of a sports club who participate twice each month compared to 42.8% in England⁷². Participating in sport and physical activity has an estimated social value for the Humber of £1.6bn per year⁷³. Volunteering also has strong economic benefits. There are 144,000 volunteers in sport and physical activity across the Humber, with 6% volunteering at least once a week. The wellbeing benefits resulting from local volunteering are estimated to be £163m at 2024 prices⁷⁴.

1.2 Climate and sustainability in the Humber



The Humber aims to be net zero by **2038**



Frequent cardio can help the body to acclimise to temperature changes



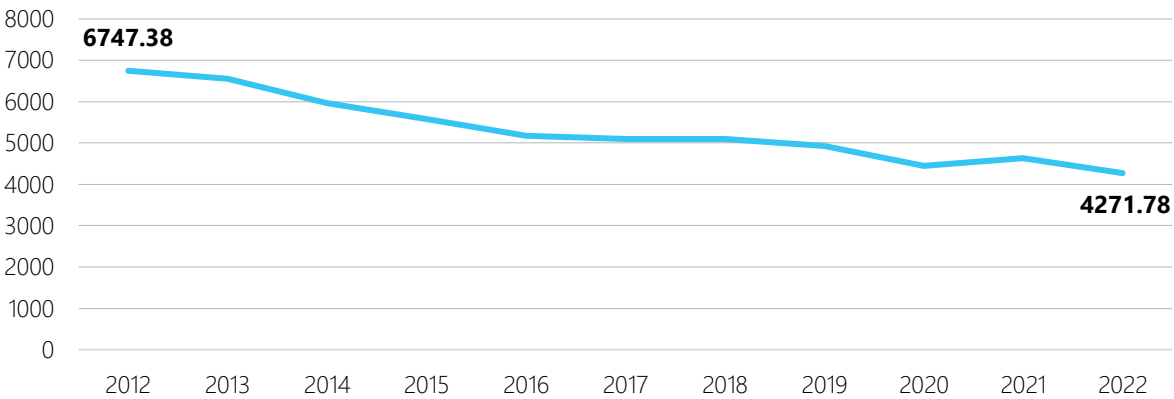
40% of children have stopped their physical activity due to heavy rainfall

This infographic refers to the following sources:⁷⁵⁷⁶⁷⁷

Regional climate priorities

The Yorkshire and Humber Climate Commission created the region’s plan to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2038. It highlights the significant climate impacts already being felt in the region, such as extreme weather events and their effects on agriculture. There is an urgent need for collaborative action across political, social, and economic boundaries to meet the net zero target. The plan highlights the impact of emissions, which add 38% to the regional carbon footprint, and advocates for local procurement policies and circular economy initiatives to reduce these emissions⁷⁸. This is in line with Sport England’s aim to become net zero by 2040 by ensuring that sports facilities are energy efficient, more people can connect with nature, organisations can develop a climate action plan and that sports grounds most affected by climate change receive the funding they need to become sustainable⁷⁹.

Humber region emissions 2012-2022 (kt CO2e)



Source: Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, 2024⁸⁰

The report details the required investment of £7.3 billion annually over the next 15 years to achieve the 2038 regional target. This investment is expected to create significant economic, environmental, and social benefits, including job creation, energy savings, and improved public health. The document underscores the necessity of integrating carbon reduction metrics into all decision-making processes and highlights the co-benefits of climate action, including reduced health inequalities.

The key environmental and sustainability initiatives in the region include⁸¹:

- Improving air quality and combating pollution.
- Providing access to green spaces and promoting walkable and cyclable routes.
- Developing community transport schemes to reduce isolation and improve accessibility.
- Encouraging the use of technology enabled care to support independent living.
- Supporting the development of healthy homes and working environments.
- Addressing the impact of climate change through relevant strategies and actions.

The impact of climate change on the Humber

As global temperatures rise, ice caps are melting more, which is creating sea level rise. This will impact the Humber region due to its proximity to the coast; with over 1,000 properties along the East Yorkshire coastline at risk of being lost to erosion by 2055⁸². This will also impact the region's leisure spaces – such as football pitches, one quarter of which are likely to see flooding every season⁸³.

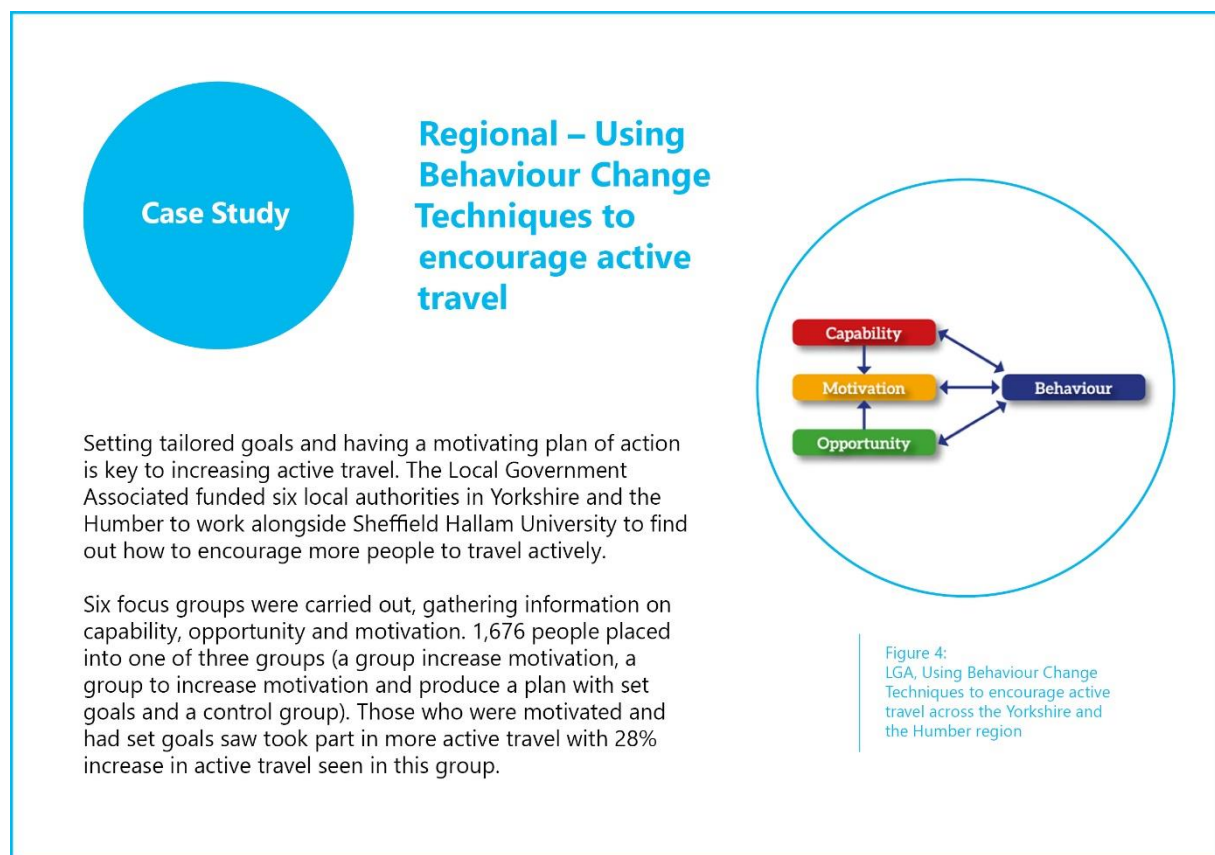
Climate change has a significant impact on physical activity. Children report stopping physical activity in heavy rain, which will become more common as the climate worsens. Adults are also increasingly likely to report heatwaves limit their ability to engage with physical activity⁸⁴. Further to this, the increasing temperatures seen as a result of climate change have been shown to place additional pressure on the heart and lungs, increasing the mortality rate of associated conditions, especially for those with a pre-existing health condition⁸⁵. Poor air quality can also have a negative impact on health, with children, older adults, those with asthma and those who are immunocompromised being the most vulnerable⁸⁶.

Reducing the number of cars on the road by cycling and walking can reduce air pollution and play a crucial role in mitigating climate change and increasing individual resilience to the impacts of climate change⁸⁷. Increased physical activity can also improve cardiovascular health, reducing the impact of heat stress on the body. Obesity, taking certain medications such as antidepressants and experiencing low mobility and frailty are all associated with a poorer physiological response to heat stress, making those who live with these conditions more at risk of ill health exacerbated by a warming climate⁸⁸. Moving more has been shown to reduce the prevalence of these conditions (see [Chapter Two](#)), supporting residents in the Humber to become more resilient to climate change.

The new combined authorities have both shown a commitment to manage the incidence of flooding. For instance, Greater Lincolnshire aims to manage water as an asset; to mitigate the threat of coastal erosion and flooding and Hull and East Riding have invested extensively in flood defence schemes. For example, the £22m Anlaby and East Ella Flood Alleviation Scheme (AEEFAS) is one of the largest in the UK and is designed to reduce the risk of flooding to more than 4,000 homes and businesses in the Anlaby, East Ella and Hessle areas. It includes 11 specially designed sunken football pitches which at times of heavy rainfall, will fill up with water and help prevent large-scale flooding of nearby houses and businesses.

Active Travel

In the Humber, 47.4% of working residents travel no further than ten kilometres to work⁸⁹. Despite this, only 15.0% travel on foot and 7.5% travel by bicycle^{90,91}. Active travel has been found to have many benefits for both the individual's mental and physical health, as well as their performance during the workday⁹². Promoting active travel can be seen as a matter of understanding motivation. Increasing the capability for an opportunity to engage in active travel by building more infrastructure or offering incentives could increase motivation and influence behaviour⁹³. Therefore, principles of active design should be embedded into regeneration and development. Active design supports the development of formal and informal active environments, such as sports facilities, parks and housing estates. By ensuring that these spaces have opportunities for engagement in physical activity built in, communities in the Humber will be supported to be happier and healthier⁹⁴.



Getting around in the Humber



18% of the Yorkshire and Humber population are classified as rural. People in rural areas are more likely to be physically active than those in urban areas.



There are **859** sports facilities per 100,000 people in the Humber with stark differences between local authorities.



In the Humber, **87.6%** live within ten minutes of green space, less than is recommended by the Green Space Index.

This infographic refers to the following sources:⁹⁵⁹⁶⁹⁷⁹⁸.

Accessibility and rurality

The Humber faces some unique challenges and opportunities regarding physical activity due to its location. The Humber has vast rural areas, with up to 93% of East Riding being classified as rural⁹⁹. Rural areas are increasingly older, with those who are over 85 overrepresented in rural areas. As such, rural areas face different social care and health needs in comparison to their urban counterparts¹⁰⁰. Around 80% of rural residents live within 2.5 miles of a GP, in comparison to 98% of the urban population, with just over being with five miles of a hospital¹⁰¹. This indicates that keeping people in good health for longer is a pertinent aim, especially in rural communities in the Humber. Further to this, while rural residents typically experience less worry and report more life satisfaction (averaging 7.2 out of 10) - loneliness, especially in amongst older people, is a risk in rural environments¹⁰². Sport has been found to increase community cohesion and facilitate social connections¹⁰³.

Initiatives like social prescribing are gaining popularity, especially under the Labour Government, who are seeking to prioritise prevention over treatment¹⁰⁴. Sport and physical activity are key elements in social prescribing for the reasons discussed, but rural areas may face complex challenges in harnessing the potential of the initiative. For example, there is large variation across the Humber regarding access to leisure facilities (with Hull seeing over 400 more facilities per 100,000 than neighbouring East Riding of Yorkshire). Access to leisure facilities is linked to slower decline into inactivity in older populations, increased social wellbeing and a reduction in stress¹⁰⁵¹⁰⁶.

Moreover, being within a ten-minute walk of green space is important for maintaining health and wellbeing, with the Green Space Index recommending that all people should have easy access to a green space. NICE states that green space can support people to move more, improve their health and wellbeing, and reduce the need of more costly and direct interventions¹⁰⁷. However, the Humber does not meet the minimum standard of green space provision, seeing on average 22.6 h.a of green space per person, lower than the recommended 24 h.a¹⁰⁸.

Case Study

Hull – HEY Smile Foundation

The Humber and North Yorkshire Green Social Prescribing (GSP) Program, led by the HEY Smile Foundation, integrates outdoor activities such as walking groups and community gardening into mental health care. Delivered in collaboration with partners like HEY Mind and Age UK, the program supports individuals with mild to moderate mental health challenges, leading to significant improvements in happiness, life satisfaction, and reduced anxiety. With a cost-effectiveness ratio of £2.42 for every £1 spent, this programme demonstrates good value. A member of the Humber Teaching NHS Trust highlighted the impact this programme has had on individuals on waiting lists for care, with another participant stating.

“Previous to attending I was very isolated due to my poor mental health. These groups have helped me to use outdoor space and fresh air to reduce stress and anxieties. I feel I am now a very different person to the one I was when I began the groups.”



Figure 5:
HEY Smile Foundation, Hull-
Based HEY Smile Foundation
Leads National Charge in
Transforming Mental Health
with Nature-Based Solutions

Coastal communities

Being situated on the east coast also brings with it unique opportunities and challenges. Those living on the coast typically report being in better health than those living inland, however this association is weakened when factoring in low household income¹⁰⁹. Living on the coast gives residents the opportunity to undertake ‘blue exercise’ which involves natural, aquatic environments. Blue exercise is linked to improved physical health and mindfulness¹¹⁰. However, 28% of children leaving primary school are unable to swim 25m, providing a stark reminder of the inaccessibility of blue exercise to some¹¹¹. Through the Coastal Community Alliance, which includes the Humber, funding is being rolled out to tackle isolation, access to jobs, tourism, and physical inactivity¹¹². People living in coastal communities report a lack of confidence and skills surrounding physical activity, with some reporting that open green spaces feel unsafe. Enablers for physical activity within coastal communities include self-determination (often instilled whilst in school) and more family-based interventions in which larger groups can become active together¹¹³.

Making the Humber a safer place



There are **higher** levels of social trust in the Humber than in England.



Sports programmes can lead to a **14%** reduction in crime



42% of those who are inactive in the Humber feel that they don't see people similar to themselves in exercise spaces.

This infographic refers to the following sources:¹¹⁴¹¹⁵¹¹⁶

Sport and physical activity can develop resilient, inclusive, and connected neighbourhoods¹¹⁷. Levels of social trust were higher in the Humber than across England, with little difference between those who are active and inactive. However, urban environments see lower levels of social trust than rural environments and the most deprived places see lower levels of social trust than the least deprived places at all levels of activity¹¹⁸. In the Humber, 51% of those who are physically active feel that the areas that they want to use for exercise are safe during the times they want to use them¹¹⁹.

Further to this, the benefits of outdoor / public exercise are not equal for all. For example, 68% of women have been harassed whilst running and over half of female gym-goers have experienced harassment whilst working out. The majority of these cases go unreported, with a quarter of women stating that they no longer use a gym due to harassment and 82% of women report feeling concerned for their safety whilst going on a run¹²⁰¹²¹.

Young people who are LGBTQ+ also report experiencing discrimination and exclusion in sport participation, with young LGBTQ+ individuals less likely to participate than their straight, cisgender peers. Some LGBTQ+ individuals experience harassment, especially during school athletics, which can result in decreased mental health and decreased participation¹²². As a result of harassment and a lack of meaningful intervention, many LGBTQ+ people feel less safe in sports environments¹²³. Issues like this are pertinent in Humber, with the University of Hull developing 'Safer', a combination of research, theatre and community engagement which highlights the experiences and ideas of the LGBTQ+ in sport¹²⁴.

However, sport and physical activity has been shown to have a positive impact on the lives of those experiencing homelessness and the lives of those who have been granted asylum in the UK. Though participation is low amongst these demographics due in part to factors like lack of opportunity and lack of confidence, the mental and physical health benefits of participation and the opportunities to integrate and form connections are evident across numerous studies¹²⁵¹²⁶.

Case Study

North Lincolnshire – Scunthorpe Park Walk

Undertaken in collaboration with the St Lawrence Academy, this six-week programme of activities run through the local leisure centre aimed to engage girls in years 9, 10 and 11 who struggle to enjoy physical education. The programme offered tailored activities such as junior gym sessions, stretching, mindfulness exercises, and park walks to foster a positive relationship with fitness and break down barriers to engagement.

This inclusive programme sought to make physical activity enjoyable, social, and safe. The initiative aligns with broader efforts, such as the “This Girl Can” campaign and calls for evidence from the Local Government Association, to support women and girls in leading active lives and overcoming challenges to participation.




Figure 6:
Active Humber, Breaking Down
Barriers: Empowering Girls
Through Physical Activity

Making spaces intended for sports and physical activity more welcoming and safer could result in more use and increased levels of physical activity for those who are currently excluded from these spaces. The Humberside Police and Crime Plan aims to build exclusive and safer communities by giving people the opportunity to contribute to the safety of their local area and targeting the interventions to fit local issues. The Plan acknowledges a lack of intervention regarding antisocial behaviour such as speeding, drug misuse and burglary¹²⁷. Interventions elsewhere in Yorkshire have shown that engaging in sport resulted in a potential £205,000 saving on substance misuse spending¹²⁸. Further to this, the Plan looks to build community spirit and ensure that everyone is able to contribute, regardless of their background and need. When designing open spaces, ensuring that those who are minoritised and/or deprived are able to contribute their voices to build an environment they want to see could increase the number of people accessing community spaces for exercise¹²⁹.

1.3 Why moving matters in the Humber.

Moving more each day has been shown to have significant positive impacts on physical and emotional health which align to the region’s [ICB priorities](#) and individual area plans and strategies. Engaging in more physical activity is also shown to have a marked effect on climate change, both reducing the factors contributing to climate change and building resilience for those who will be most vulnerable. As

the region moves towards its devolved future, moving more has the potential to boost the economy by millions, in addition to the millions that can already be attributed to sport and physical activity. This document highlights the interconnectedness between the individual, the community, the workplace, the economy, and the environment, all of which are supported by an increased uptake in sport and physical activity. It is intended to highlight how sport and physical movement can help achieve and reinforce the emerging ambitions and priorities of the new mayoral combined authorities and their partners.

Recommendation one: Promote the power of moving more as a means of prevention and protection against mental and physical ill health. As detailed in the ICB's Joint Forward Plan, the region has a vision to see all people start, live, age and die well. Further echoed by the Labour government, an NHS fit for the future will take a 'prevention first' approach. Supporting people in their community, raising awareness of the benefits of moving more, and investing in the infrastructure and organisations that will allow them to do so will enable more people to [live well for longer](#). Active Humber will seek to align prevention policy priorities with their work in the region.

Recommendation two: Recognise the importance of joined-up working by facilitating opportunities for partners in a variety of sectors to meet. As shown, moving more can have a wide variety of benefits in areas such as health, education, crime, and employment. Active Humber should continue to use its convening role; encouraging bodies in each of these sectors to meet, share data and share good practice. Areas for collaboration could include healthy schooling, healthy workplaces, park safety and adult social care. This will support the development of a stronger support ecosystem in the region, with moving more at the centre.

Recommendation three: Encourage employers to adopt active workplace principles by raising awareness and incentivising participation in physical activity. Engaging in an active commute and/or participating in active meetings can help to embed the principles of moving more into daily life. The [productivity benefits](#) of a healthy workforce should be communicated to employers in the region with support given (via partners, combined and local authorities and VCSE organisations) to help them to integrate physical activity into and around the workplace.

Recommendation four: Offer further support to VCSE organisations with outreach and funding. Community engagement is vital to ensuring that sports and physical activity is successfully embedded across the region. Further to this, the Get Britain Working White Paper opens up the potential for trailblazing sports and physical activity pilots. Providing workshops that can support VCSE organisations to build capacity and awareness to bid for funding could increase the sport and physical activity offer for residents and help to reduce the health inequalities seen across the Humber. Supporting a wider range of community organisations to provide a multi-sport offer will also increase the variety of opportunities available, encouraging a [more diverse range](#) of people to engage.

Recommendation five: Consider the language, images, content and resources used to build a more inclusive perception of sport and physical activity. Engaging in sport and physical activity can seem daunting to some, especially with an emphasis placed on engaging solely in sport. [Working across communities](#) to communicate the variety of ways to get active could reduce the anxiety some people feel towards physical activity. Where participants from all genders are welcome, unisex language should be explicitly used to prevent gendered assumptions being made as to who can participate. Further to this, discouraging exclusionary behaviour in sport when it first occurs could reduce the number of people choosing not to participate.

Recommendation six: Harness proximity to the coast and promote blue exercise at all ages. Provide inclusive opportunities for young people to learn how to swim and raise awareness of the benefits of swimming. Ensure that all communities are able to access swimming facilities and can safely participate in outdoor activities. Active Humber could initiate a high impact '[blue exercise](#)' pilot to demonstrate the power of coastal proximity to stimulate increased sport and physical activity.

Recommendation seven: Apply active design principles to future rural, urban and coastal regeneration projects to ensure that all communities can access safe walking and cycle routes and sports facilities. With access to opportunity highlighted as a key barrier to participation, ensuring that opportunities for moving more are built into communities could support more people to get involved in sport and physical activity. Parks, open spaces, and new transport routes should be developed with accessibility and safety in mind. This could include the provision of cycle lanes and cycle hubs, the implementation of streetlamps in rural parks and the conversion of disused buildings into community facilities. Combined and local authorities should routinely embrace [active design principles](#) in new housing, commercial, public realm, transport and flood infrastructure development and redevelopment.

Recommendation eight: Co-design sports and physical activity opportunities with young people to ensure that the offer is tailored to them. Sport and physical activity have been used as a high impact intervention to prevent vulnerable young people from engaging in [antisocial behaviour and crime](#). Understanding more about the barriers and enablers of physical activity for young people could strengthen the support offer in the region and encourage more young people to engage with these organisations. Active Humber could seek to explore the potential for new pilot programmes with the Humberside Police.

Recommendation nine: Work with Sport England to help organisations in the sector to develop climate action plans. To support the region's plans to become net zero by 2038, sports and leisure facilities should be supported to become more energy efficient and [carbon neutral](#). By working with local decarbonisation support programmes, each facility could develop a set of tailored targets to support their transition. Active Humber should seek to find and promote a series of climate change examples and interventions in sport and leisure.

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