

Sports Strategy 2012-2015

OUR MISSION

“ to enrich the lives of all Halton people through Sport and Physical Activity”

Foreword

Cllr Phil Harris & Terry Parle

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1. Introduction

This strategy is not a whole new approach to sports development in Halton. It builds on the foundations laid by our two previous sports strategies. Our [2002-2007 strategy](#) identified key action points to tackle some of the major weaknesses that needed to be addressed if there was to be a secure foundation on which to develop sport in Halton. The strategy set priorities for the council's delivery of sport and has acted as a foundation from which Sport and Physical Activity has been developed.

Our [2006-2009 strategy](#) developed eight key themes and objectives to develop sport and participation in sport in Halton. This new strategy will continue to direct our work on sports development and participation across Halton.

2. The Definition of Sport

For the purpose of this Strategy it is necessary to define what we mean by the term 'sport'. Therefore the following definition from the council of [Europe's European Sports Charter](#) (which has also been adopted by Sport England) has been embraced:

"Sport means all forms of physical activity which through casual or organised participation, aim at expressing or improving fitness and mental well-being, forming social relationships or obtaining results in competition at all levels."

Whenever the term 'sport' is referred to within this strategy, it means 'sport and physical activity'.

3. The National Context

Sport England

In 2011 Sport England, the government agency responsible for building the foundations of sporting success in England launched its Sport England Strategy 2011-2015. This new strategy proposes 5 themes:

- Maximise Value from current National Governing Body (NGB) investment
- Deliver Places, People, Play
- NGB investment and support
- Market development – creating an environment in which key providers continue to invest in sport
- Strategic Investment and market intelligence

Sport England funds NGBs to deliver their 3 outcomes:

- Growing the numbers of people taking part in sport
- Maintaining this growth;
- Improving talent to help more people excel

They are investing £480 million (2009 – 2013) through 46 Governing bodies. Each sport has developed a whole sport plan that explains how it will use money to achieve its targets. Other recognised sports may also receive funding for specific projects through other funding schemes, such as, small grants scheme.

Sport England and UK Sport merger is due to be completed by April 2013. It is proposed that the merged body will incorporate current responsibilities for community and elite sport.

4. Community Benefits of Sports Development

Social Inclusion

Sport brings people together and can contribute to a sense of community. Participating in sport and physical activity can help tackle isolation and allows people to develop social networks and raise self esteem and confidence. Sport can make a difference in the community by building pride, confidence and a sense of purpose to people's lives.

Community Cohesion

Sport can also play a major role in promoting greater knowledge, respect and contact between various cultures and establish a greater sense of citizenship. Sport can give people a sense of belonging; people from different backgrounds and cultures participating on equal levels.

Regeneration Programmes

The role of sport within regeneration programmes is recognised nationally and should be reflected locally. Sports provision results in employment and inward investment, via spending on both sports equipment and spectating. Capital projects often provide significant employment opportunities both during construction and the subsequent operation of facilities.

Community Safety and Crime Reduction

Whilst it is not possible to claim that sport alone can reduce levels of youth crime, there are an increasing number of examples of projects where sport has been a key tool in reducing levels of crime e.g. through Positive Futures schemes. Using sport as a constructive use of time has been shown to divert young people away from crime and engaging young offenders at risk of re-offending.

Lifelong Learning

There is increasing evidence to show a link between involvement in sport and physical activity and improved educational attainment. Sport also provides people with the opportunity to learn new skills and acquire qualifications that can lead to employment. However, a vast amount of sports provision relies on volunteers and ensuring volunteers receive the right training and support to improve and keep skills up to date is crucial for the ongoing delivery of sport within the community and voluntary sector.

The Environment

Open space, including green belt and formal parks, can accommodate a wide-range of formal and informal sporting activities, and as such is a valuable sporting resource. Using such spaces for sports provision can contribute to land-use management and help create awareness of, and support for, its continual existence. Sport and the provision of sports facilities can make an important contribution to the regeneration of 'run down' areas and can improve the quality of the local environment. The design of sports facilities should be such that they contribute to sustainability issues, through such considerations as energy efficient buildings and ensuring access by public transport or linkages to cycle networks.

5. Sport and Health

The World Health Organisation recognises the benefits of physical activity and identifies physical activity as one of the "best buys in public health", not only reducing the risk of certain diseases such as obesity, type 2 diabetes, osteoporosis, and coronary heart disease, but also the symptoms of health problems such as anxiety, hypertension, stroke and various forms of cancer. There is a direct link between low levels of physical activity and increasing levels of obesity. Nationally in 2008/09 there were 7,988 hospital admissions with a primary diagnosis of obesity. This was over eight times higher than the number in 1998/99 (954) and more than 50% higher than in 2007/08 (5,018). Over the period 1998/99 to 2008/09, in almost every year, more than twice as many females were admitted to hospital with a primary diagnosis of obesity than males. The North West Strategic Health Authority (SHA) has both the

largest number of admissions with either a primary or secondary diagnosis of obesity (19,184) and the highest admission rate (279 per 100,000 population).

Many people's lives are becoming increasingly sedentary. Levels of everyday physical activity are as high as those required for people to remain fit and healthy. The cost of inactivity on our health is clear. Inactivity places a significant burden on the NHS for the treatment of long-term conditions and of acute events such as heart attacks, strokes, obesity, diabetes, hypertension, heart disease, and many forms of cancer.

The Department of Health recognises that an active lifestyle is a key to better health. It estimates the cost of physical inactivity at £8.2 million annually (cost to the NHS and related costs e.g. absence from work etc). This excludes the contribution of inactivity due to obesity, which is estimated to cost £2.5 billion annually with levels of obesity having trebled since the 1980s. It is estimated that 70% of men and 63% of women are overweight or obese and approximately 16% of two to 15 year olds are now obese.

The Department of Health's *Start Active, Stay Active* strategy, published in July 2011, sets out the national approach to increasing participation in sport. This includes setting new targets for adults to achieve 150 minutes of moderate intensity activity (or 75 minutes of vigorous intensity activity). However, across all age groups, the report recommends that people are active in some way every day. By being active daily, individuals will gain some health benefits which result from acute responses that occur for up to 24–48 hours following activity. Being active daily may also help to develop more sustainable, lifelong activity habits.

19-64 year olds

The Department of Health has recently issued new guidelines on the levels of activity people need to achieve to remain fit and healthy. It recommends that adults should aim to be active daily. Over a week, activity should add up to at least 150 minutes (2½ hours) of moderate intensity activity in bouts of 10 minutes or more – one way to approach this is to do 30 minutes on at least 5 days a week.

Alternatively, comparable benefits can be achieved through 75 minutes of vigorous intensity activity spread across the week or combinations of moderate and vigorous intensity activity.

Adults should also undertake physical activity to improve muscle strength on at least two days a week.

All adults should minimise the amount of time spent being sedentary (sitting) for extended periods.

65 years +

Older adults who participate in any amount of physical activity gain some health benefits, including maintenance of good physical and cognitive function. Some physical activity is better than none, and more physical activity provides greater health benefits. Older adults should aim to be active daily. Over a week, activity should add up to at least 150 minutes (2½ hours) of moderate intensity activity in bouts of 10 minutes or more – one way to approach this is to do 30 minutes on at least 5 days a week. For those who are already regularly active at moderate intensity, comparable benefits can be achieved through 75 minutes of vigorous intensity activity spread across the week or a combination of moderate and vigorous activity. Older adults should also undertake physical activity to improve muscle strength on at least two days a week. Older adults at risk of falls should incorporate physical activity to improve balance and co-ordination on at least two days a week. All older adults should minimise the amount of time spent being sedentary (sitting) for extended periods.

NHS Halton and St. Helens

NHS Halton and St. Helens (also known as Primary Care Trust [PCT]) is the organisation responsible for providing healthcare services to the residents of Halton. As part of the modernization of NHS services PCTs as they currently operate will be disbanded as from April 2013 and the Commissioning of NHS services will transfer to local GP Commissioning Consortia.

As from 1st April 2011 community health services in Halton and St. Helens will be delivered through a new, expanded NHS Trust known as Bridgewater Community Healthcare NHS Trust. The transfer of services is taking place for an initial period of two years as part of the national Transforming Community Services (TCS) programme, which separates the commissioning and provision of community services.

The Health Improvement function is one of the areas that will be delivered by Bridgewater Trust. This includes work programmes such as Fresh Start, Cook and Taste, Health Trainers, Specialist Weight Management, GO Men's Health, Family Exercise, Family Eating, Accident Prevention Exercise (APEX), Recharge and Men's Recharge, Halton Healthy Schools, Recipe for Health (Exercise on prescription), Fit 4 Life and Passport 2 Health.

The Trust works closely with the Council and has developed a diverse range of physical activity sessions in Halton. This provides an ideal opportunity to integrate health care services and health promotion activities with sports and recreation activities within Halton.

6. Equality and Diversity in Sport

The Government has recently published its new [Equality Strategy – Building a Fairer Britain](#). Through this strategy the government has pledged to:

- Inspire a generation of young people to get involved in competitive school sport through the new Olympic and Paralympic-style competition. This will give all schools (mainstream and special) and all

- pupils (including those with disabilities or special educational needs) the opportunity to get involved;
- Ensure a wider sporting, social and economic legacy from London 2012 across the UK and inspire a new era in public attitudes towards inclusion and equality. In particular, we are committed to using the opportunity of the Paralympic Games to help change attitudes and perceptions towards disabled people;
 - Work with governing bodies of different sports to tackle homophobia and transphobia in sport.

7. The Local Context

Halton Borough Council and Halton Strategic Partnership have recognised the importance of developing a sustainable approach to sports development and have stated the importance of sport and physical activity through the Sustainable Communities Strategy and the Council's Corporate Plan.

The Sustainable Communities Strategy

Halton's Sustainable Communities Plan has five priorities for action:

- A Healthy Halton
- Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton
- A Safer Halton
- Children and Young People in Halton
- Environment and Regeneration in Halton.

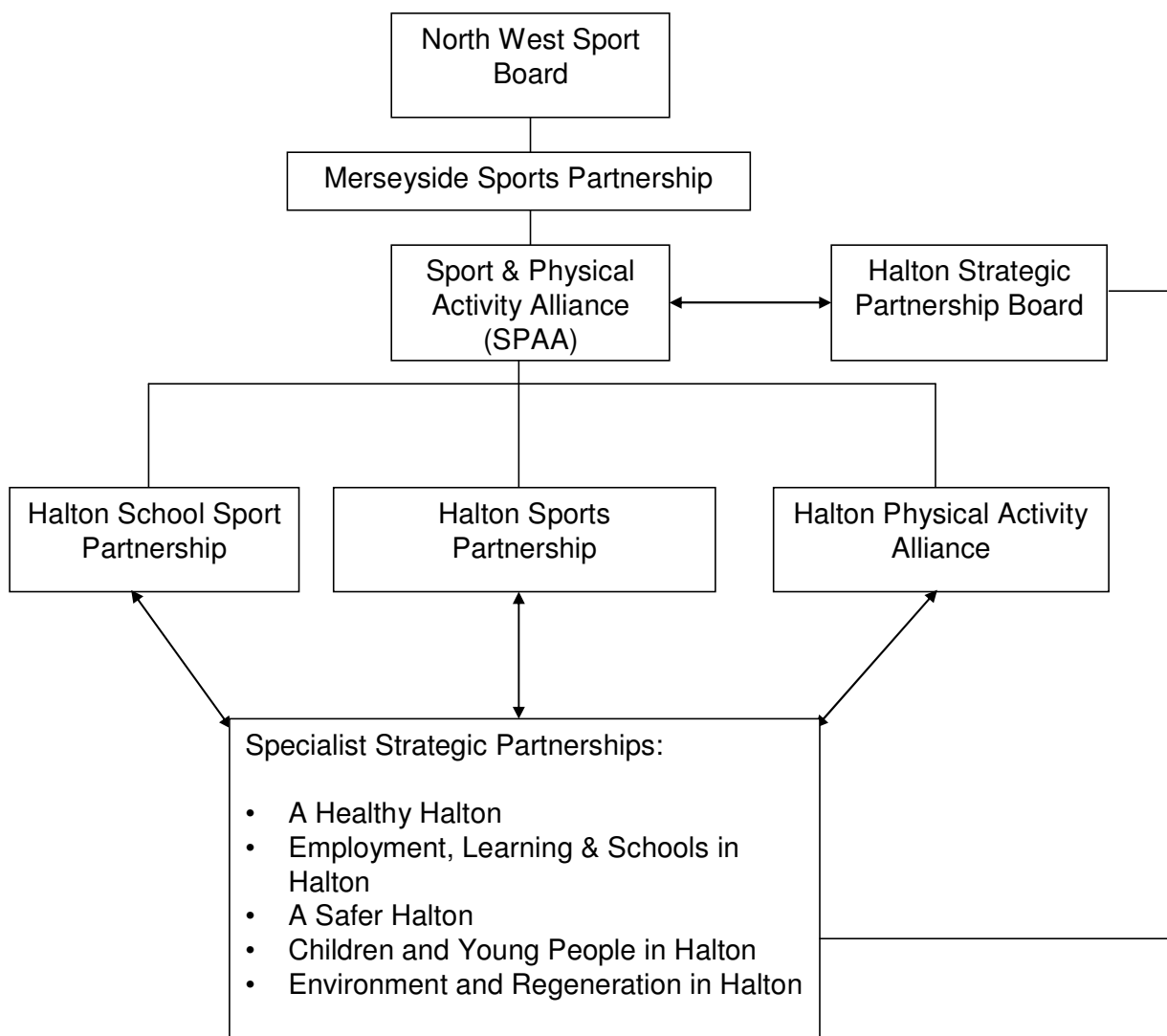
Sport and physical activity clearly has a role to play within all these priorities and especially in relation to supporting children and young people and improving health and well being. The council has also highlighted Sport as a key priority for improvement and the priorities and actions set within this strategy for sport and physical activity will help achieve this drive for a better service. The Healthy Halton Strategic Priority highlights the need to *increase physical activity, improve diet and early detection and treatment of disease*.

The Corporate Plan

Halton Borough Council's corporate plan has highlighted *Healthy and Active Lifestyles* as a specific area of focus. It pledges that the Council will strive to improve the future health and prospects of Halton residents, particularly children, through encouraging and providing opportunities to lead healthier and physically active lifestyles. Future planned activity could include:

- Improving the health of Halton school children by increasing the percentage of children participating in sport for fun and fitness;
- Reviewing and updating the Sports Strategy and Facilities Strategy and begin their implementation during 2011/2.

The Partnership Framework



Halton has an independent sports council, [The Halton Sports Partnership](#) (HSP), which aims to promote sport throughout the borough, encouraging participation in sport and offering advice and assistance to clubs, organisations and individuals in their quest for sporting success and participation.

There is a good relationship between the council and HSP meetings take place regularly to discuss key issues. The HSP will continue to act as the voice of voluntary sports clubs in Halton, and co-ordinate and raise issues through its partners to increase participation and become accountable for local investment.

This strategy will direct all partners to produce implementation plans including sports specific action plans and partnership service plans for young people, parents, coaches, officials and volunteers; to help to improve local coaching and competitive opportunities; develop and support high quality clubs and to create Merseyside wide development squads. Halton needs to ensure that it

remains involved with the work of the County Sports Partnership (Merseyside Sports Partnership is the local CSPs) and supports the delivery of all programmes. Sport England invests in CSPs to deliver services for [national governing bodies](#) and [programmes for young people](#).

Halton's Young People and Sport

Since May 2010, the Coalition Government has introduced a number of reforms that have and will have a significant impact on the way services are delivered. Some of these reforms have directly affected the Children's Trust and these changes in policy and legislation will have a bearing on how the Children's Trust will prioritise its services.

Under the previous Government, Children's Trusts became statutory following the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning (ASCL) Act 2009. This statutory footing was revoked however by the Coalition Government reforms. Children's Trusts across the country were directly affected as:

- the duty on schools to co-operate through Children's Trusts was removed
- the requirement on local authorities to set up Children's Trust Boards and the requirement on those Boards to prepare and publish a joint Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) was ended
- the regulations underpinning the CYPP and the statutory guidance on Children's Trusts were withdrawn

The Coalition Government has however reconfirmed its commitment to working in partnership to improve outcomes for children and young people through locally agreed partnerships, such as Children's Trusts.

Through discussions between partner agencies within Halton Children's Trust, it became clear that there was a collective will to continue to work in partnership to improve outcomes for children and young people in Halton, and that should be within the existing partnership for children and young people arrangements – Halton Children's Trust.

With this commitment to continue to work in partnership through the Children's Trust, there was universal agreement that a new Children & Young People's Plan should be produced, taking into consideration the Coalition Government's reforms and the progress made in Halton, while also providing strategic direction for the next three years.

All work between all services and agencies within Halton that sit within the Halton Children's Trust structures falls within the framework outlined within the [Children & Young People's Plan 2011-14](#).

In October 2002 Central Government launched the PE, School Sport and Club Links (PESSCL) Strategy to ensure that "all children, whatever their circumstances or abilities should be able to participate in and enjoy physical

education and sport". The PESSCL strategy was driven through eight programmes:

- Specialist Sports Colleges
- School Sports Co-ordinator Partnerships
- Gifted and Talented Programmes
- QCA PE and School Sport Investigation
- Step Into Sport
- Professional Development
- School /Club links
- Swimming

The aim was to deliver high quality PE and Sport to all young people regardless of ability and Halton benefited from additional investment to support the infrastructure and delivery.

The Government removed funding for this programme during 2010. However, some of the elements of the programme are being retained. The new School Games Competition will encourage young people to get involved in sport. Halton has received support, until August 2013, to appoint a School Games Organiser (SGO) in its Children and Enterprise department. In addition to an annual calendar of competition the following programmes will continue to be offered to young people:

- Change4Life Sports Clubs
- Young Ambassadors
- Playground to Podium
- yoUR Sport
- National School Sport week

In recent years a large amount of external funding has gone into school sport provision as part of National Programmes aimed at increasing the amount and quality of PE in schools and improving school facilities for sport. Approximately £2.3 million of funding was awarded to Halton through the New Opportunities Fund (NOF) now known as BLF PE and Sport programme to improve primary and secondary schools sports facilities.

8. Health in Halton

One of the key priorities for Halton identified in both the Sustainable Communities Strategy and the Corporate Plan is to develop A Healthy Halton.

To create a healthier community and work to promote well being and a positive experience of life with good health, not simply an absence of disease, and offer opportunities for people to take responsibility for their health with the necessary support available.

This strategy forms part of the wider strategic priority to create a Healthy Halton. An increase in participation in sport and physical activity is a key part of creating A Healthy Halton and is proven to contribute to a healthy lifestyle, and tackling issues such as child and adult obesity, heart disease and early death. Halton currently has a number of serious health issues which an increase in sports participation and active lifestyle could play a significant role in improving:

- Halton has higher than average levels of adult obesity in England and higher than the average in the North-West;
- Halton has higher than average levels of child obesity in England and higher than the average in the North-West;
- Halton has higher than average levels of smoking in England and higher than the average in the North-West;
- Halton has lower than average levels of health eating in adults – the joint 26th worst in England;
- Halton has the 34th highest level of smoking in adults in local authority areas in England;
- Halton has the joint 2nd worst life expectancy for females and the 9th worst for males in England.

Halton Borough Council and Halton Strategic Partnership recognise that raising levels of sporting activity is a key part in tackling these health issues.

9. Key Themes and Objectives

The Sports Partnership has identified 6 key themes that guide the direction of this strategy and the development of sport in Halton. They are:

Key themes

- 1. Increase Participation and Widening Access:** To ensure sport and physical activity opportunities exist for all members of the community.
- 2. Club Development:** Supporting clubs to be safe, effective and child friendly and actively increasing club membership.
- 3. Coach Education and Volunteering:** Improving the quality of coaches and support for volunteers.
- 4. Sporting Excellence:** Improving the opportunities for individuals to reach their full potential from grassroots to excellence.
- 5. Finance and Funding for Sport:** We will maximise the funding available for sports projects and individuals within the borough.
- 6. Sports Facilities:** Diversify the range and improve the quality of sports facilities.

Key Theme 1: Increase Participation and Widen Access

To develop and support the provision of opportunities for sport and physical activity that promote integrity, fair play and respect that are accessible regardless of age, gender, race, ability or personal circumstances. We will encourage individuals to develop their ability and remain active through their lives.

We aim to sustain current participation levels and where possible encourage people to start participating in sport and exercise. Within this access, transport, pricing, marketing and programming will need to be addressed.

Actions:

- Focus on increasing 14 – 25 year old participation through Sportivate programme; develop additional opportunities for students studying at Further and Higher Education establishments to participate in sport and physical activity.
- Help NGB's achieve their grow and sustain targets
- Support existing sports clubs and community groups
- Encourage and support new community activity. Increasing adult participation, specifically women and older adults, through Sports Participation Project
- Continue to offer the Halton Leisure Card Scheme. A discount available for target groups to help reduce 'cost' as a barrier to participation.
- Support school activity programmes, such as, Fit 4 Life to contribute towards a halt in childhood obesity amongst children under 11.
- Facilitate Sports Fair Week to showcase sports and physical activities, which are taking place locally throughout voluntary sports clubs and venues in Halton. Promote come and try it sessions, demonstrations and competitions. (Majority free).
- Use sporting events such as the Olympics to inspire people to take part in sport.
- Encourage and support local events such as Run the Bridge (Halton's 5 mile Road Race), Widnes Football Cup and Vikings in the Community.

Halton currently has the 15th highest rate of adult participation in sport and active recreation of local authority areas in England. Figures for NI8 indicate that 27.4% of adults in Halton *participated in sport and active recreation, at moderate intensity, for at least 30 minutes on at least 12 days out of the last 4 weeks*. We have seen a 7.3% increase in adult participation in the past 5 years – the second highest improvement in England and the highest in the Liverpool City Region. This is a significant achievement and above the rate expected for a borough such as Halton. This can be attributed to the multi agency approach to tackling inactivity and coordinated investment in local programme delivery.

GRAPH insert?

Sports Development Officers

Halton Council employs three Sports Development Officers. Their role is to support, manage and organise a wide range of sports activities designed to increase participation in sport, both through direct provision and partnership working. Officers currently focus on creating opportunities that enables individuals to start, stay and succeed in sport, working to increase activity levels to help improve the health of Halton's less active residents and working to support and develop local sports clubs. Halton's Priority Fund and Sport England fund supports full and part-time officers to increase participation in sport in areas of social deprivation and amongst identified target groups. Examples of these include the Sports Participation Project, Community Sports Coach Scheme and Halton Sport Partnership Project.

The council needs to take a role in ensuring all sports development officers are aware of the different services they are providing to avoid duplication and share good practice and local knowledge.

The Sports Development Continuum is now a well-known model helping to outline the sporting stages of an individual. These stages are:

- Foundation – early development of basic skills; catching, throwing, movement of the body
- Participation – playing sport mainly for 'fun'; enjoyment, health and fitness
- Performance – playing sport at a competitive club or county level;
- Excellence – playing and competing at the highest level.

The sports development continuum is a dynamic process, with people moving in both directions at all ages of life. Consequently, it is important that sporting structures are in place to meet people's needs wherever they are within the continuum.

Sport England

[Sport England](#) is the government agency responsible for building the foundations of sporting success, by creating a world leading community sport environment of clubs, coaches, facilities and volunteers. Sport England's framework for community sport in England sets out how it will play the lead for the strategic development of sport.

Merseyside Sports Partnership (MSP)

Merseyside Sport Partnership, is our local County Sports Partnership, and is a network of agencies committed to establishing a fully inclusive structure that will enable people of all ages within Merseyside to benefit from Sport & Physical Activity. Its vision is to improve the quality of life for the people of Merseyside through Sport and Physical Activity. There are 49 County Sports Partnership in England and their aim is to create a multi agency partnership to deliver activities and services relating to Sport England's single system for sport. Sport England invests in CSPs to deliver services for national governing bodies, to support work with local government and with children and young people, and deliver Sport England's key legacy programmes Sportivate and Sport Makers.

National Governing Bodies

Some national governing bodies of sport such as the Lawn Tennis Association, the Rugby Football League and the English Cricket Board fund regional or county sports development officers with geographical responsibility to oversee the development of their sport. These officers are involved with all aspects of the promotion and development of their sport including the writing of county sports specific development plans. These plans show how the governing body wants their sport to develop. If sports specific development plans are produced in Halton they will need to accord with these governing body plans.

National Research / Trends

The General Household Survey (GHS) and research undertaken for Sport England has produced reports and research information into national levels of participation and general trends in sports participation. Over the last ten years, participation in sport in general has been rising steadily, although overall levels of participation are now starting to stabilise. As well as participating in sport, millions of people also watch or follow sport at a local or national level. As well as taking part in and watching sport, 2% of the national workforce is employed in sports related activity.

Local Research

A considerable amount of research and consultation into sports participation in Halton has been undertaken.

The Sports Participation Project works towards creating a more vibrant community in Halton by increasing opportunities for adults to be more physically active and participate in sport. Community based activities are developed following consultation with the local community and working partners. New activities are promoted and supported to become self sustainable in the long term. The project engages with hard to reach populations that need assistance to overcome barriers that have prevented regular participation.

The Active People Survey measures how many people participate, who they are, what sports they do and how this varies across England.

Active People Survey data is used to publish local sports profiles, which provide a detailed profile of each local authority, including data on sports participation, health, market segmentations and facilities.

Research has also been conducted to find out what barriers to participation there are in Halton. Pricing and poor transportation were the two most common reasons given as affecting people's ability to participate, especially amongst young people, disabled people and older people. Addressing equalities issues was considered as a significant barrier that needs to be addressed if participation levels are to be increased. The Active People Survey data, market segmentation profiles, local consultation through HSP and local studies all need to be considered when compiling local action plans.

SPORTS PARTICIPATION CASE STUDIES

Working with Cancer Support

Nicola Bashford Outreach Worker for Widnes & Runcorn Cancer Support Group remarked; "As part of our ongoing Cancer Prevention Strategy, I am always on the look out for activities that are suitable and fun for our members. "It can be a challenge to get the right instructors, venues and activities so the support and guidance from the Sports Participation Project has been invaluable.

Working in partnership with the Sports Participation Project ensures we have benefitted from existing knowledge and practical advice which has strengthened the quality of the work I do.

Being part of the 'Get Active' forum keeps me informed and up to date and further promotes the activities we operate. Our organisation has also had fantastic support and funding for taster activities for our Men's group (Grumpy Old Gents!) who have had hours of fun attending activities such as archery, golf and badminton, helping their group to bond and get active."

Table Tennis

Through targeted work membership has increased significantly during 2008 – 2011 with over 500 new members attracted to local clubs. Local sports clubs

have embraced a new way of working, for example, Family Table Tennis sessions allowed families to access activity for only £1 per person and those with a Halton Leisure Card free of charge. With other grants session such as Bounce into Action were planned and delivered for older adults.

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Key Theme 2: Club Development

We will offer a network of support to clubs to be safe, effective and child friendly to enable them to deliver their aims and encourage improved standards within the borough. We will work in partnership with sports clubs to facilitate and develop high quality sports opportunities for the local community

Actions:

- Support clubs with NGB club mark and Club Halton submissions to increase the number of club mark accredited clubs in Halton.
- Provide appropriate support and assistance, such as funding clinics, to enable sports clubs to maximise the use of their activities and facilities in order to increase opportunities available for residents.
- Continue to offer Sports Resource Centres to local sports clubs.
- Encouraging the formation of new sports clubs where demand exists.
- Each Leisure Centre to have a club call notice board to promote local opportunities
- Improve the links between sports clubs and schools, colleges, universities and other organisations.
- Promote local clubs on the Councils website.

It is estimated that there are over 150 voluntary sports clubs in the borough, catering for all ages and levels within the sports development continuum, covering a variety of sports ranging from athletics and swimming to boccia, curling and wheelchair Rugby. In addition to providing opportunities for participation, many sports clubs offer coaching and competition at all standards for their members. Runcorn Rowing Club has national and international representatives as club members. Rugby League and football are also strong in the borough. However there are some sports that currently have no clubs based in Halton such as archery and volleyball.

Some clubs in the borough have reported difficulties in maintaining membership levels in the light of competing leisure activities and the difficulty of retaining competent members and volunteers who are willing and able to support the club. All clubs need to consider their long-term future and how the club can be sustained. Clubs need to review the skills of their members, be it in terms of coaching, officiating or administration. In addition to a skilled volunteer base, clubs need to ensure that they have appropriate structures, policies and procedures in place e.g. a club constitution and child protection policies. As well as being 'good practice' such information is becoming essential if clubs intend to apply for funding or consider developing partnerships with schools. Many National Governing Bodies (NGBs) of sport now operate their own accreditation scheme that recognises good practice and clubs can gain 'clubmark' status. Halton has its own accreditation scheme, Club Halton, to support those clubs working toward their NGB accreditation and for those without a governing body scheme e.g. Sports 4 All Club (a multi sports club for young people with a disability).

There are two sport resource centres accessible to the voluntary sporting community of Halton. The sporting community is able to use the centres as a resource to assist with the development and running of their sports clubs, organisations or forums. Resources available include:

- Loan of sports specific and generic equipment, books, journals, magazines, DVDs and CDs
- Use of computer, printer and scanner equipment
- Internet access
- Photocopier
- Fully equipped meeting rooms

Key Theme 3: Coach Education and Volunteering

We aim to support coaches and volunteers in sport and increase the number and quality of sports coaches, officials and administrators working and volunteering in the Borough.

Actions:

- Coordinate an annual coach education programme, organize workshops to support high delivery, providing a subsidy for those supporting a Halton club accredited club.
- Increase the number of people gaining sports related qualifications. Focus on supporting individuals through NGB level 1 and 2 qualifications.
- Continue to support new and existing volunteers through the Halton Volunteer Incentive Scheme.
- Provide a young leader award programme, and mentor to sustain regular volunteering.
- Offer a recognition and reward programme for sport volunteers in Halton.
- Promote and facilitate the Sport Makers programme to Halton residents.
- Support Games Makers and sign post to local volunteering opportunities.

Halton's Sports Development Team, the NGBs, Merseyside Sports Partnership and voluntary sports clubs organise courses to develop individuals' skills in coaching, administration and officiating. Each NGB of sport has its own qualifications for coaching, and courses are organised to enable potential and existing coaches to gain qualifications and improve their coaching knowledge.

Courses in umpiring, refereeing and judging are also held to ensure the quality of officiating is maintained and improved. Many secondary schools now offer pupils the chance to study physical education as a GCSE or A Level subject as well as the opportunity to study for and obtain Sports Leader UK Awards.

Sports Coach UK Courses, Running Sport Workshops and Volunteer Investment Programme both aim to support the volunteers that sustain sports clubs. The Running Sport programme offers short workshops and literature in general administrative subjects such as 'funding and promoting your club', 'the role of the volunteer' and 'running a club'. Sportscoach UK provides generic coach education courses in topics such as safeguarding and protecting children, equity in your coaching and coaching children. Running Sport offers support to sports volunteers and the people who manage them, offering free information packs, a volunteer network and awards for recognition of good practice.

There is a need to develop a co-ordinated approach to sports education opportunities. All these programmes should be used as tools to help support the voluntary sports sector of Halton. The Sports Development Team currently produces an annual calendar of workshops.

Encouraging young people to join a club, particularly within a specific section for juniors will help to improve membership levels and hopefully provide the adult members of the future. Sports Development delivers a diverse activity programme in partnership with local clubs and schools, including Sports Leaders UK leadership courses that focus upon increasing junior membership of sports clubs and generally increasing physical activity amongst young people. This is only possible with clubs that can ensure safe, quality-sporting opportunities for all.

The Halton Volunteer Scheme has been devised in partnership with Halton Sports Partnership and Halton Borough Council, the scheme aims to recruit, reward and recognise and support volunteers aged 9+ years and mentors those who are dedicating their time voluntary to the sporting sector of Halton. The Incentive Scheme is divided into four sections 50, 100, 150 and 200 hours. On completion of each milestone a certificate and gift are awarded, all who complete the milestone are invited to the Annual Volunteer Recognition evening.

Many providers require the services of National Governing Body of sport qualified and experienced coaches who have been Criminal Record Bureau cleared. Consequently, there is an increasing opportunity for sports coaches who are engaged with sports clubs to obtain further employment opportunities as coaches, often at times which do not clash with club sessions e.g. during the day or during school holidays.

Key Theme 4: Sporting Excellence

We will provide support from grass routes to excellence for athletes, coaches and officials to help them reach their full potential.

Actions:

- Through sports specific development forums provide support to talented athletes, coaches and officials to help them reach their full potential.
- Work in partnerships with schools and sports clubs to discover, develop and support talented athletes to perform to the best of their ability at the highest standard.
- Support School Games Organiser and promote and facilitate schools participation in annual sporting calendar.
- Hold an Annual Sports Awards to celebrate success of local sporting individuals and clubs and highlight local achievements.
- Support and facilitate investment in local performers through access to grants, such as, Sports Development Grant Scheme; Merseyside Bursary Scheme; Town Twinning Grant and other sponsorship and scholarship schemes.
- Continue to offer a Platinum card to support National and international performer with free or subsidised access to Leisure Facilities.
- Holiday programmes to be delivered throughout the borough with a wide range of sports.
- Attract and support the hosting of Regional, National and International sporting events in Halton.

UK Sport is the nations high performance sports agency responsible for investing £100 million per year in Britain's best Olympic and Paralympic athletes. It has no direct involvement in community or school sport.

Sport England funds 46 National Governing Bodies of Sport. Each sport has developed a whole sport plan that provides a framework at all levels to increase participation and raise levels of achievement.

These sports are:

Angling, archery, athletics, badminton, basketball, boccia, bowls, boxing, cricket, canoeing and kayaking, cycling, equestrian, football, fencing, goalball, golf, gymnastics and trampolining, handball, hockey, judo, lacrosse, modern pentathlon, mountaineering, movement and dance, netball, orienteering, rounders, rowing, rugby union, rugby league, sailing, shooting, skiing/snowboarding, softball / baseball, squash and racketball, swimming, table tennis, taekwondo, tennis, triathlon, volleyball, waterskiing, weightlifting, wheelchair basketball, wheelchair rugby and wrestling.

Governing Body Services

National Governing Bodies of sport provide a major role in getting people to start, stay and succeed in sport. Sport England remains committed to providing support and guidance to governing bodies to ensure the development of individual sports. It is important on a local level that developments accord with the plans and strategies of the different governing bodies of sport.

Some of these strategies focus simply on facility development, whilst some include plans for the development of the sport at all levels of the sports development continuum, including plans for coach development, officials and administrators. Plans with excel outcomes have targets, such as, increase number of academy athletes and improve world ranking.

A number of National Governing Bodies have produced facility development strategies. These strategies vary greatly in the level of detail and the stages of production. Whilst it is not possible to discuss each of these strategies in detail, it is clear that any proposed new facilities within Halton will need to accord with the priorities laid out in these documents.

Where organisations are intending to develop facilities via external funding they will need to produce sports development plans to show how the new facilities will contribute to the development of that particular sport. Such plans will need to accord with the priorities of governing body strategies, and clubs will need to link into specific sports development initiatives.

Merseyside School Games

The Sports Development Team works closely with the Local Education Authorities School Games Organiser to ensure Halton enters as many teams as possible in the Merseyside School Games. The Merseyside School Games is held in July for primary aged children. The role of School Games Organiser is intended to help schools increase participation, competition and progression for young people in sport through the successful delivery of the new School Games. The council's School Games Organiser works closely with the sports development team, local schools, voluntary sports clubs, Halton Sports Partnership and coaches to organise borough squads to represent Halton at the Merseyside School Games and other inter borough events. Compared to most other Merseyside boroughs, Halton has a relatively small club base and therefore finds it difficult to enter all events, particularly in some of the more minority sports. However, Halton does do well in the sports with which it has a strong club base.

Representing your borough at a regional event can be a rewarding and inspiring occasion for young people, but overall position within the School Games should not be seen as the marker for the overall standard of sports participation and provision within the borough. As well as the main Merseyside School Games, there are stand-alone events, such as, cricket and rugby competitions.

The School Games Organiser, for Halton, coordinates and produces an annual competition calendar. The new School Games is a year round, inclusive sports competition that's designed to get young people of all ages and abilities enjoying the benefits of competitive sport. The UK School Games is an annual event for the most talented school-age athletes.

Sports Development Grant Scheme

There is a wealth of talent in the borough with many athletes achieving County and regional representation with some going on to gain international honours. The council's Sports Development Grant Schemes directly targets sports clubs and talented individuals, since the schemes introduction in 2000 over £350,000 has been given to organisations and individuals to fund sports activities.

Junior clubs have benefited from free pitch fees and 100% rate relief has been given to local clubs.

The Councils Platinum Card/Liverpool City Region Elite Card are designed to support the borough's top sportsmen and women who are participating in a sport recognised by Sport England and are in the top 10 in their national rankings or recognised squad. In addition referees and officials who are required to undergo a fitness test are also eligible. Card holders must be Halton residents and not receive salaried or professional earnings from sport. Card holders and bursary grant recipients have supported local and county activity such as coaching and personal appearances.

The council also supports professional and semi professional clubs, such as, Widnes Vikings and Runcorn Linnets. These clubs have the ability to involve and inspire local people in all areas of sport and are able to attract investment.

Key Theme 5: Finance and Funding for Sport

Actions:

- To train and develop an effective staff with the necessary skills, knowledge and values required to deliver this Strategy.
- Secure adequate and sustainable financial resources for sport and physical activity in Halton.
- Provide a Sports Development Grant Fund for distribution to individuals and sports groups.
- Provide good quality advice and support to all those seeking to access funding to improve the sports and physical activity facilities and programmes within Halton.
- Provide support to clubs wishing to gain Community Amateur Sports Club (CASC) status

Halton Council has committed increased revenue funding for sport in the borough over the past years in recognition of its commitment to improve Sports delivery. The council committed capital funding for a new athletics facility for which £1.5 million was invested. In addition, the council invested £1 million to improve sports pitch drainage to address issues.

To assist sports clubs and community groups to access funding that will enable them to implement some of the recommendations arising out of the Strategy for Sport, the Sports Development Team need to work closer

together to maximise use of limited resources. Funding clinics take place regularly to assist clubs.

Sport will need to establish an increasingly creative approach to financing sports provision. Measures will need to include maximizing the opportunities which exist for grant aid, lottery funding and revenue support, considering alternative methods of provision, improved partnership working and ensuring internal arrangements are efficiently and effectively organised, so that the objectives of this strategy can be achieved.

A number of previous funding routes are no longer available for sports development. Funding that has previously been available through the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund and its successor, Working Neighbourhood Fund. These funding streams are no longer available.

Kingsway Leisure Centre, Brookvale Leisure Centre and Runcorn Pool are managed on behalf of Halton Council by DC Leisure, a private leisure management company. The existing 10 year (2015) contract required DC Leisure to inject approximately £1.53 million of capital investment into the facilities. DC have continued to make capital investments into the ageing facilities and during 2010 they invested over £325,000 across the 3 sites including a Gym expansion and new sauna at Kingsway Leisure Centre, replacement IT and Access control system across the sites and new pool filters and flooring at Runcorn Swimming pool. In addition they continue to invest in an annual maintenance programme in order to keep the facilities up to the standards expected of modern sports facilities.

Sport England Funding Routes

Sport England is currently running a number of opportunities to apply for funding for sports development.

Small Grants

The Sport England Small Grants Programme uses lottery funding to make awards of between £300 and £10,000 to not-for-profit organisations to deliver new community projects to either grow or sustain participation in sport or to support talent development.

Sportsmatch

Sportsmatch makes awards to not-for-profit organisations that have secured sponsorship to deliver new community projects to grow or sustain participation in sport.

Sportsmatch uses money from the government to encourage new sponsorship of grassroots community sport. Priority is given to applications seeking to match sponsorship from the commercial sector but donations from private individuals or charitable trusts are also acceptable provided they meet the sponsorship eligibility criteria.

Awards of between £1,000 and £100,000 can be made to match funding from no more than five sponsors, with each sponsor contributing a minimum of £1,000. Sport England funding for the project must be spent by 31 March 2012.

Iconic Facilities Fund

Sport England's Iconic Facilities fund draws on the inspirational pull of London 2012 to create local beacons for grassroots sport. They are investing £30m over the next three years in innovative, large-scale, multi-sport facilities' projects that are regionally significant for at least two sports and can demonstrate long-term financial viability.

The Iconic Facilities fund is part of the £135m Places People Play initiative which will deliver an Olympic and Paralympic legacy of increased sports participation by bringing the magic of a home Games into the heart of local communities. It is being delivered by Sport England in partnership with the British Olympic Association, the British Paralympic Association, with the backing of The London Organising Committee of the Olympic Games and Paralympic Games.

Iconic Facilities is one of the three Places programmes which will transform the places where people play sport, in cities, towns and villages across the country.

The facilities supported through these programmes will be the only ones to carry the London 2012 Inspire mark, a permanent celebration of their role in the legacy of the Games.

In this way, Iconic Facilities will use the inspirational pull of London 2012 to enhance a successful existing funding programme, previously known as the Sustainable Facilities fund.

Inspired Facilities

The Inspired Facilities fund aims to help organizations refurbish, upgrade or convert sports facilities into a venue suitable for sport and accessible to the whole community. This programme forms part of Places People Play, Sport England's programme to deliver a London 2012 legacy of increased mass participation in sport. The programme is investing £50million of National Lottery funding in up to 1000 community sports projects between 2011 and 2014.

Key Theme 6: Sports Facilities

We will continue to modernise and develop a network of accessible, high quality, value for money facilities, to improve the quality and range of

provision for customers. We will protect, improve and promote parks and open spaces for sport and recreation.

Actions:

- Ensure existing facilities are well managed, well maintained, fully utilised, accessible and sustainable in the long term.
- Complete a full review of Haltons Playing Pitch Strategy.
- Complete an indoor and outdoor sport facility asset review.
- Work with partners to improve access for local people to existing community facilities and develop new facilities where deficiencies are identified.
- To protect playing fields, parks and open spaces from developments that would not enhance and improve the sports provision available.
- Continue to encourage the use of parks, playing fields and open spaces managed by the Council and other agencies, for organised and informal sport and physical activity.

Planning Influences

Halton's Unitary Development Plan (UDP) provides the statutory planning framework to transform the quality of Halton's environment and improve economic prosperity and social progress through sustainable development.

The UDP 's strategy to enable the provision of new and the protection of existing sports facilities in Halton is detailed in the 'The Green Environment Chapter' under the Sport, Recreation and Children's Play policies and proposals and 'Leisure, Tourism and Community Facilities Chapter' (this chapter deals with indoor facilities only). This strategy generally aims to: focus on the protection, enhancement and creation of outdoor playing spaces for sport and recreation and outdoor playing spaces for children, both equipped playgrounds and casual informal playing spaces in order to promote equity and participation. Several proposed schemes are shown on the UDP

The implementation of these strategic objectives will be enabled through the following specific policies:

GE12 – Protection of outdoor playing spaces for formal sport and recreation.

GE13 – Intensify use of existing outdoor sports and recreation provision.

GE14 – Noise generating sports

GE15 – Protection of outdoor playing spaces for children

LTC1, LTC2 & LTC3 – Development of Major Leisure and Community Facilities

LTC4 – Development of local leisure and community facilities

LTC5 – Protection of community facilities

LTC10 – Water based recreation

Several other policies are also relevant to the provision of indoor sports facilities. In addition to its UDP policies, the council must consider other organisations' strategies when determining planning applications involving the provision or loss of sports facilities, these include:

Government Planning Guidance – the most relevant for sports purposes are; Planning Policy Guidance Note 17, which requires the council to demonstrate that it has sufficient open space, including sports facilities, by undertaking an Open Space Audit. The council's needs to refresh its Playing Pitch Strategy to provide the guidance to inform future developments.

Sport England – in addition to providing the council with advice on all sporting issues, Sport England must be statutorily consulted on any development proposals that involve the loss of any council or other educational owner playing fields and the Government must be informed of their objections.

Surrounding Local Authorities Plans

There are five local authority areas, which are adjoined to Halton in the Merseyside/Liverpool City Region grouping. It is important that facility provision is developed in a coordinated manner to avoid duplication and poor use of resources.

Quest

The QUEST quality award scheme provides agreed quality standards for the management and operation of sports facilities and to sports development services. It allows service providers to assess their own service and make judgments on the quality of service delivered. This has a particular relevance with the need to ensure continual improvement within the council's Leisure services. Kingsway Leisure Centre, Brookvale Leisure Centre and Runcorn Pool where all awarded highly commended or excellent status in 2011 Quest assessments.

Active Places

Sport England has an active places website which provides a database of what sports facilities currently exist. The project provides a new media for increasing awareness and promotion of facilities with existing and potential new participants.

This section provides an overview of the current provision of indoor and outdoor sports facilities throughout the borough, further details can be found at www.activeplaces.co.uk.

Indoor Sports Provision - Council Owned Facilities

Indoor sports facilities in the borough are provided by the public, voluntary and commercial sector. Halton currently provides wet and dry indoor sports facilities at Kingsway Leisure Centre and Brookvale Recreation Centre.

Kingsway Leisure Centre in Widnes comprises a 25 metre pool and teaching pool, an eight badminton court sports hall, squash courts, aerobic/dance studio x 3, fully equipped gym, health suite sauna and steam room, and a crèche/activity room. Brookvale Recreation Centre in Runcorn comprises a 25 metre pool, six badminton court sports hall, 1 court hall, fully equipped gym, aerobics/dance studio, and Floodlit All weather Pitch. Runcorn Pool comprises a 25 yard pool and fully equipped gym.

The facilities are owned by Halton Council and operated under a 10 year contract by DC Leisure. These centres not only provide facilities for sport and physical activity, but they also organise activities to enable people of all abilities to take part in sport and physical activity. These classes can be as varied as tai chi to circuit training. The centres run specialist sessions and are partners in the Councils Leisure Card Scheme a discount scheme for target groups to help reduce 'cost' as a barrier to participation.

The three facilities represent a variety of different building types and ages. The age and internal layout within the buildings obviously affects the type and quality of services that can be provided. DC Leisure have implemented a programme of maintenance and facility improvements to their centres as part of their contract to ensure the buildings remain at an acceptable standard and have undertaken internal alterations to accommodate changes in 'leisure trends', including new and upgraded disabled changing facilities.

Halton Stadium

The Halton Stadium is a unique facility and Halton Borough Council's flagship leisure, conference and sports facility, it has 13,500 seating capacity on match days. The stadium is owned and run by Halton Borough Council. Designed and built to provide far more than a world class arena for sporting events, the Stadium also provides function and banqueting facilities for the residential area and outstanding hi-tech conference facilities for business communities of Halton and beyond. The stadium pitch has been converted to a state of the art 3 Generation pitch opening up the stadium as a world class training and competition venue. The Widnes Vikings will make their return to Super League in 2012 and introduce this playing surface to the countries top flight professional rugby league clubs.

The West Stand of the stadium contains the Halton Stadium Health & Fitness Suite consisting of the Halton Regional Table Tennis Centre, Café Bar, Health & Fitness suite, crèche, sports injury clinic and much needed leisure and lifestyle services for the local residential sports and business communities.

Other Indoor Facilities

In addition to Council owned sports centers, there are a number of small pools at commercial facilities plus pools at Chesnut Lodge and West Bank Primary Schools. These pools allow some limited community use.

Schools in Halton offer a range of indoor sports facilities. Four badminton court sports halls exist at some Secondary schools, whilst several schools have smaller sports halls or gymnasiums. Most Secondary schools now offer extensive use of the school sports facilities for community use in the evening and at weekends, this provision will be increased further on completion of Building Schools for the Future projects on current Grange and Wade Deacon School sites. Generally access is good at St Chads, The Heath, Bankfield and Sts Peter and Paul.

Around the borough there are also numerous small halls, which whilst not necessarily designed specifically for sport, are used for activities such as recreational badminton, keep fit, martial arts and yoga.

Commercial Indoor Facilities

There are several commercial facilities that are provided by different private leisure operators, located within Halton or just outside in neighbouring boroughs. The newest and largest commercial leisure facility in Halton is the Hive; this will consist of Widnes Superbowl an indoor bowling alley, ice rink operated by Planet Ice, Reel cinema, hotel and food outlets.

DW Fitness Club, which is located in Widnes. Facilities include a 20m indoor pool, large gymnasium, two exercise studios, spa and steam facilities.

Fitness First has one commercial site in Runcorn. Facilities include gymnasiums, fitness studios, sauna and steam rooms. There is a small commercial site operating from the Heath Technology Park. Both have been partners in Halton GP referral scheme.

The De Vere Daresbury Park has an indoor pool and fitness gym, spa, sauna and squash courts.

For further details on sports facilities please visit the Active Places website www.activeplaces.co.uk

Outdoor Sports

Outdoor Grass Pitches and Wickets

The local authority is the major provider of outdoor pitches for both summer and winter sports. Halton's Open Spaces Service provides 74 outdoor pitches for football, rugby, bowls, baseball, tennis and basketball. These facilities are located at 11 different sites across the borough; the distribution of pitches varies greatly. A Halton Playing Pitch Strategy, was produced in 2004, the key recommendations of this playing pitch strategy helped to allocate resources to improve pitch drainage. There is a need to refresh this strategy in order to inform future provision and attract investment.

Football is one of the most popular outdoor sports in the Borough and there are 36 full size football pitches and 25 junior/mini soccer pitches managed by The Open Spaces Service.

Over £200,000 has recently been invested in Halton Sports to provide a new home for Runcorn Linnets FC.

Within Halton there are currently no public cricket wickets. There are privately owned cricket facilities; at Runcorn CC, Widnes Cricket Club, Moorfield CC and Hale CC.

The majority of secondary schools have football and cricket pitches and a few of the primary schools have grass areas large enough to accommodate junior or mini soccer. A number of these pitches are available for community use.

The changing facilities at many of the Council sites was of poor quality and needed upgrading and refurbishing. The Heath now has new changing accommodation with £500,000 invested during 2006/07 season.

Many of the council's pavilions although having more than one changing room only offer communal showering facilities. This makes it impossible to accommodate males and females at the same time. One of the fastest growing sports in the country is women's' and girls' football. Whilst at present there are only two junior girls' football team, two rugby league clubs and one girls' cricket team in Halton, most schools now play girls football and an increasing number are beginning to play cricket and rugby. Adequate changing facilities adjacent to quality pitches are of significant importance in providing for and developing the women's game. As these sports develop in Halton there is likely to be an increasing demand for good quality pitches with suitable changing and showering facilities that can accommodate women's' and girls' teams.

The 2004 Playing Pitch Strategy identified that Halton had 1 pitch for every 1,236 adults above the national average of 1,840, the level of satisfaction with provision is relatively high. Statistically there are just enough pitches in the borough to accommodate existing and predicted demand although the strategy recommends that some of the adult pitches should be converted to junior pitches to accommodate the increasing demand for junior and mini soccer pitches. In addition, the growth in junior football and women's' and girls' football could mean that without improvements to the ancillary facilities a site with several pitches could only be used by one team as they are unable to share the changing accommodation with teams of different genders or age groups.

As well as the need for improvements to changing accommodation, the leveling and drainage at many of the sites was poor and needed improving to improve the quality of the pitch and also help to achieve optimum usage of the facilities. The Council's Open Space Service invested over £1 million in the drainage and playing service to address necessary improvements to the quality of grass pitches and Halton schools have identified poor drainage as being a main concern with regards to their outdoor facilities. An increase in unauthorised use and vandalism of all pitches, and ancillary accommodation is also affecting the quality of provision.

Within Halton there are a few sports clubs which either have their own facilities or lease pitches and ancillary accommodation from the council. Leasing facilities enables the clubs to manage and maintain the facilities themselves and can enable them to apply for funding to improve these facilities. However, leased facilities are often only used by one club during the weekends and evenings and more flexible use of the facilities and / or agreed sports development programmes should be considered when agreeing new leases.

Baseball and softball facilities are provided at Halton Sport. However, the vision of Halton Sports as a centre for baseball and softball is subject to the governing body securing external funding.

Synthetic Sports Pitches

There are currently three sites with outdoor synthetic sand based sports pitches in Halton. These facilities are located at Brookvale Recreation Centre, The Heath School and The Bankfield High School. These facilities provide opportunities for football and hockey all facilities provide good quality pitches and changing accommodation. At present community use at all these sites has the potential to increase. A new 3rd Generation pitch has been installed at Halton Stadium. This provides not only a training and competition venue for Widnes Vikings but a new all year round competition and training venue for local community sports clubs, in particular a much needed floodlit rugby training facility.

Outdoor Courts

There are a total of 9 tennis courts located at three different sites. Some of these sites have large numbers of courts and others just a few. The condition of the courts varies.

Lane Tennis Club relocated to Widnes Tennis Academy on the Sts Peter and Paul Catholic College and now provides 3 indoor and 2 mini indoor tennis courts and 6 outdoor courts. The club are seeking funding for the outdoor courts to be floodlit.

There is one site providing outdoor netball courts in the borough with indoor courts being provided to the community at St Chads and Sts Peter and Paul Schools. There are 24 outdoor basketball courts funded through the English Basketball Association's Outdoor Basketball Initiative (OBI). These OBI sites are located across the Borough. Various organised basketball activity sessions have been held on these facilities although no comprehensive programme of use exists. The Councils Open Space Service has developed new 'Multi Use Games Areas' within identified residential/community areas and these facilities include provision for outdoor basketball/football. These areas assist in the provision of activities for young people during school holidays and can be used as a tool in combating youth nuisance.

Athletics Facilities

Halton now has a state of the art athletics track consisting of a six lane floodlit synthetic track with field event facilities, new changing facilities, a club house/meeting room and fenced show pitch for football and rugby. The facility provides Halton with excellent training and competition facilities for athletics. The resident athletics club won promotion in 2011 for the first time in 20 years and has seen its membership grow with associate members coming from a recreational jog club.

Golf Courses

Phase 1 of the remediation of the northern section of St Michael's Golf Course was recently completed. The remediation refers solely to the clean-up of the

contaminated land and not the restoration of the site. We hope that some form of golf provision can be reinstated, once all the site works are complete, but we still appear to be some way off.

Bowls

There are 11 public bowling greens in the borough at 6 sites. Most have clubs based at the greens, which welcome both male and female members. However, there are clubs, which have no female changing or toilet facilities and would need alterations to their ancillary facilities if it were to develop a women's section.

Parks and Informal Recreation

Walking – There are a number of mapped routes and trails of differing lengths around Halton. The Urban walks programme highlights 6 circular walks around council key buildings. A programme of volunteer led walks has been developed across the borough, often in partnership with other local community groups as a means to encourage 'inactive' people to take part in physical activity. Moving on from walking people are now encouraged to start jogging at the 3 new Run in Halton sites. Phoenix Park, Runcorn Town Hall Ground and Pickering Pastures have measured course for residents to access all year round. Markers guide participants round the course and participants can challenge themselves to run/walk 100m to 1 mile or 3km courses.

Cycling – There are a number of cycle routes and networks around the borough and more routes have been proposed as part of Halton's Transport Development Plan.

10. Key actions for the Council

Having established the key themes the Sport and Recreation Service has identified key areas to ensure progress is made in delivering a Strategy.

Key areas identified include:

1. Partnership working with local and national key partners at strategic and operational level.

We will offer a network of support to the sporting sector to enable them to deliver their aims and encourage improved standards within the borough. We will assist in the structured development of sports by working with key partners including voluntary sports clubs, schools and national governing bodies and health bodies to offer programmes of activities that help improve health in the borough.

2. Raise the profile of Sport

We will effectively market and publicise the Sport Development Service to ensure we effectively promote and raise awareness of Sport Development Initiatives.

We will ensure that all members of the local community have access to information regarding sporting opportunities and physical activity and the

benefits of participation. We will promote sporting events and celebrate successes in order to raise awareness of sport and physical activity.

To encourage more people to join sports clubs, clubs need to ensure that as many people as possible are aware of their existence. Many clubs already have their own websites with detailed information about their clubs training, events, match reports etc and often the younger members can be encouraged to take a role in developing these sites for their club. In addition to the council's Sports Development website, the Halton Sports Partnership has developed a website which provides useful information and support for the voluntary sports sector. Further avenues for promoting clubs need to be considered and encouraged to ensure the public know about all the opportunities that are available for participation in sport.

11. Implementation and Monitoring

The responsibility for the implementation and monitoring of this strategy lies with the Halton Sports Partnership which comprises of key stakeholders from the voluntary sports sector. The council's Community and Environmental Department has given direction to the production of this strategy and have helped direct the key themes.