

# SPORT ENGLAND PLACE EXPANSION UPDATE

TWO-PHASE COLLABORATIVE WORKING AWARD AIMS TO INCREASE LEVELS OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY, REDUCING LEVELS OF PHYSICAL INACTIVITY, ADDRESSING INEQUALITIES AND PROVIDING POSITIVE EXPERIENCES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE.

## Darlington Place Partnership



### Background – What the current insight tells us

**Health Inequalities and Deprivation Gaps:** Darlington shows stark health inequalities, with up to a 15.7-year life expectancy gap between the least and most deprived areas. High poverty and unemployment across Darlington

**Levels of Childhood Obesity and Low Physical Activity:** Childhood obesity is significantly above national averages, where over half of Year 6 pupils are overweight. Limited access to safe, affordable spaces restricts opportunities for active play and exercise.

**Youth Engagement in Physical Activity:** Teen physical activity drops sharply due to affordability, safety concerns, and a lack of youth-friendly spaces. Many young people report poor mental health but see exercise as a key way to improve wellbeing.

**Inclusion and Accessibility for disabled people with a Learning Disability :** Disabled people with a learning disability face major barriers to being active, including inaccessible facilities and social isolation. A lack of inclusive opportunities and consistent engagement limits participation and health outcomes.

**Community and Active Environments:** Darlington has many parks, community centres, and cycle paths, but they are often underused or seen as unsafe. Improving safety, lighting, and local ownership could make activity a natural part of the daily routine.

### Focus Areas

- Community engagement and insight gathering to inform the work taken forward
- Test and learn projects and pilots
- Systems change
- Governance & distributed leadership



### Thematic insight gathering:

- Young people aged 13 –18 years – **Lead by YMCA Tees Valley**
- Disabled people with a learning disability – **Lead by Darlington Association on Disability**
- Active Environments – **Lead by Groundwork NE and Cumbria**

### Cross-Cutting Work Areas

**Local Community Insights** – Focus on four localities – Red Hall, Albert Hill, Skerne Park, and Northgate.

**Development & Learning** – Skills, capacity-building, evaluation & leadership.

**Systems Change** – Organisational and environmental improvements.

**Governance Development & System Mapping** – Decision-making, strategic alignment, and partnerships.



# SPORT ENGLAND – DEVELOPMENT AWARD

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**Darlington  
Place  
Partnership**



## What will the Development Award fund?

### Community Insight Gathering

YMCA Tees Valley, Darlington Association on Disability and Groundwork NE and Cumbria will lead thematic insight gathering across the four localities. System mapping will be integrated throughout.

- **Community Insights** – Four localities outlined on page 1.
- **Young people** – Focussing on ages 13–18 years
- **Disabled people with a learning disability** – Exploring barriers to physical activity.
- **Active environments** – Identifying barriers and motivators for activity.

## Test and Learn – Targeted Development pilots

(Not an open grant process)

- This process supports pilot initiatives across workstreams and localities during development.
- Funds are allocated to each of the workstreams (young people, disabled people with a learning disability and active environments).
- Funds are also allocated to each of the four localities. Red Hall and Albert Hill, Skerne Park and Skerne Park.

This enables early evaluation and learning opportunities, supports the Theory of Change, and helps identify priorities using diverse evaluation methods for new innovative pilots.

### Development, Evaluation & Learning

Local organisations will have the opportunity to increase capacity and capability, fostering a learning culture. Engaging in CPD, workshops, and insight-gathering will enable collaboration and knowledge sharing. Leading to the development of an Evaluation and Learning framework, Theory of Change and a shared common purpose.

### Enhanced Active Lives Surveys

200 additional surveys in each of the four target areas, will establish a baseline to measure change. This will address data gaps at a local level, providing quantitative insights to complement qualitative findings and demonstrate impact, following the successful approach of the You've Got This pilot.

## Do you have recent local insight you would like to share?

If you or your organisation hold recent local insight related to the localities or themes highlighted in this work, we would greatly value your contributions. By working together to gather and share insight, we can develop an action plan and strategy that truly reflects the needs and priorities of our area.

Please share your insight by emailing us at [darlingtonplacepartnership@gmail.com](mailto:darlingtonplacepartnership@gmail.com).

