Paper Title: Embedding Physical Activity in Adult Social Care and Health Six Month Report

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Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to give a six-month update on the work undertaken by Active Sussex to support embedding physical activity into adult health and social care systems, processes, and pathways across East Sussex.

East Sussex County Council Public Health has funded Active Sussex £120,000 (January 2024 – December 2025), to work with partners to increase physical activity participation in older people, those at risk of falling, and those with a disability or long-term conditions, utilising East Sussex County Council Adult Social Care and Health (ASCH) as a mechanism to achieve this.

The aim is being delivered through two components:

1. Working with colleagues from across ASCH directorate to investigate and understand current practices in relation to physical activity across relevant departments and services and exploring opportunities of how this could be strengthened/enhanced in the future.

2. Extending the Stronger for Life project into targeted areas of East Sussex, where data shows gaps in strength and balance exercise provision and high incidences of falls among older populations, particularly in areas of deprivation where health inequalities are likely to be more prevalent.

Capacity

To realise the aims of the project, Active Sussex has committed capacity in the form of their Strategic Relationship Manager (SRM) with a focus on long term health conditions and older people, focusing 7.5 hours per week on delivering against the specification within the agreement.

This includes:

- weekly meetings with the Adult Social Care & Health (Policy & Strategic Development Team) and regular updates to the East Sussex Public Health.
- the time to develop new relationships and where opportunities arise explore the prospect to positively affect the way services deliver in relation to the physical activity and movement of their service users.
- the end-to-end delivery of multiple Stronger for Life projects that improve the strength and balance of residents and supports the falls prevention agenda.
- linking the ongoing work into other targeted and related efforts related to increased health and wellbeing outcomes happening across East Sussex where priorities align.
- sharing the learning as widely as possible with stakeholders who could benefit from understanding more about the process and outcomes of this collaborative approach.

Progress and Outcomes

The following gives an indication of the progress made against the two components of the agreement and the early outcomes from the work undertaken in the first six months.

Embedding physical activity into East Sussex County Council Adult Social Care and Health

The aim of this first component is to work with colleagues across ASCH and the wider system to where possible:

- increase strategic commitment to physical activity across ASCH.
- increase understanding of opportunities and development of recommendations to embed physical activity in ASCH policies, processes, and pathways.
- increase knowledge and understanding of importance of physical activity across ASCH staff and departments, alongside increased confidence to raise issue of physical activity as part of range of ASCH roles.
- increase engagement of ASCH staff and departments in relation to physical activity, improving awareness of relevant physical activity opportunities across East Sussex and promoting the benefits and signposting/referring clients into local opportunities.

The SRM has attended weekly meetings with Adult Social Care & Health (Policy & Strategic Development Team) to better understand the priorities and needs of residents across East Sussex as the data suggests there is considerable crossover between people who access adult health and social care and the people who are most likely to be inactive in East Sussex (predominantly older people and those with disability and long-term conditions). From these meetings new introductions have been made to other members of ASCH which has allowed the SRM to develop new relationships with a range of contacts including those working within policy and strategic development, commissioning, dementia and carers services, learning disabilities, and housing and solutions. Undoubtedly being part of the Adult Social Care & Health team has helped to link Active Sussex with partners across East Sussex County Council, giving the organisation more credibility to support local health and wellbeing priorities.

In the early discussions it has become apparent that two cohorts which require some additional focus and understanding are people living with dementia and carers. Following discussions with the Adult Social Care and Health Team Manager for Dementia and Carers, the SRM created two surveys that are now taken on home visits by Adult Social Care workers, when visiting people living with dementia and their carers. When more surveys have been returned Active Sussex will look at the responses to see what it says about current levels of activity, motivation, barriers, and what support is required to help people move more in a way that works for them. At this point Active Sussex will be in a position to make recommendations on an approach that could benefit these two groups.

Active Sussex has also delivered a Carers Active Community of Learning session along with Carers UK and with the contributions of the Adult Social Care and Health Team Manager for Dementia and Carers. This was the first session of its kind that Active Sussex has delivered and was very much seen as a starting point for further consideration on how local services and providers can better support carers to be more active in a way that works for them.

The SRM has also made contacts within the Adult Social Care & Health Learning Disability Services, who have since supported the Sussex Disability Sports Network by leading a workshop session on *'Increasing physical activity pathways for adults with learning disabilities in Adult*

Social Care services'. Both the delegates in the room and the staff who attended from the Learning Disability Service, found the session and subsequent discussions extremely beneficial with both groups in agreement that there needs to be more offered within adult learning disability services regarding activity both in and outside of the service. There was also an acknowledgement that the workforce within services while brilliant at implementing a person-centered approach and respecting the capacity of each person to make their own decision, there is a lack of knowledge and confidence on how best to support service users to be more active.

Active Sussex has also added value in the first six months by supporting:

- the development of the Adult Social Care and Health Prevention Strategy Discussion Paper, which includes a case study of Active Sussex's partnership with ASCH. The SRM has also attended a prevention workshop along with other stakeholders to explore how the system can maximise the opportunities to prevent, reduce or delay people's need for statutory services.

- the East Sussex Ageing Scrutiny Review by delivering a presentation and answering questions asked by local councillors. Active Sussex were also able to link in other partners from NHS Services, local authorities and colleagues from other areas in the south with a focus on ageing well to support the review.

- the development of the East Sussex Full of Life Festival with Adult Social Care & Health. This included contributions in meetings and drafting an article for the Full of Life Festival brochure on the importance of movement to remaining well as we get older.

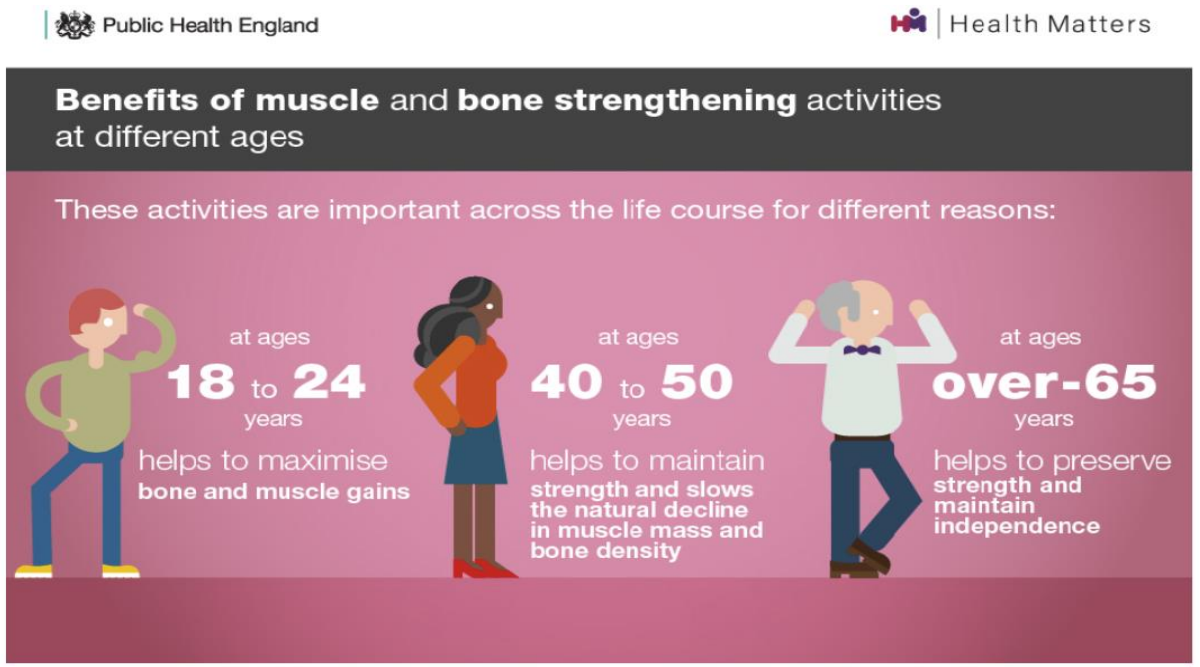
- the East Sussex Senior's Forum by delivering a presentation on the importance of remaining active as we age, which can be further circulated to the membership.

- Sharing the wider learning by attending partnership meetings across East Sussex, to ensure partners from the NHS, local authorities and the voluntary sector are aware of the ongoing work and thinking about how they could add value and support the ageing well agenda.

Stronger for Life

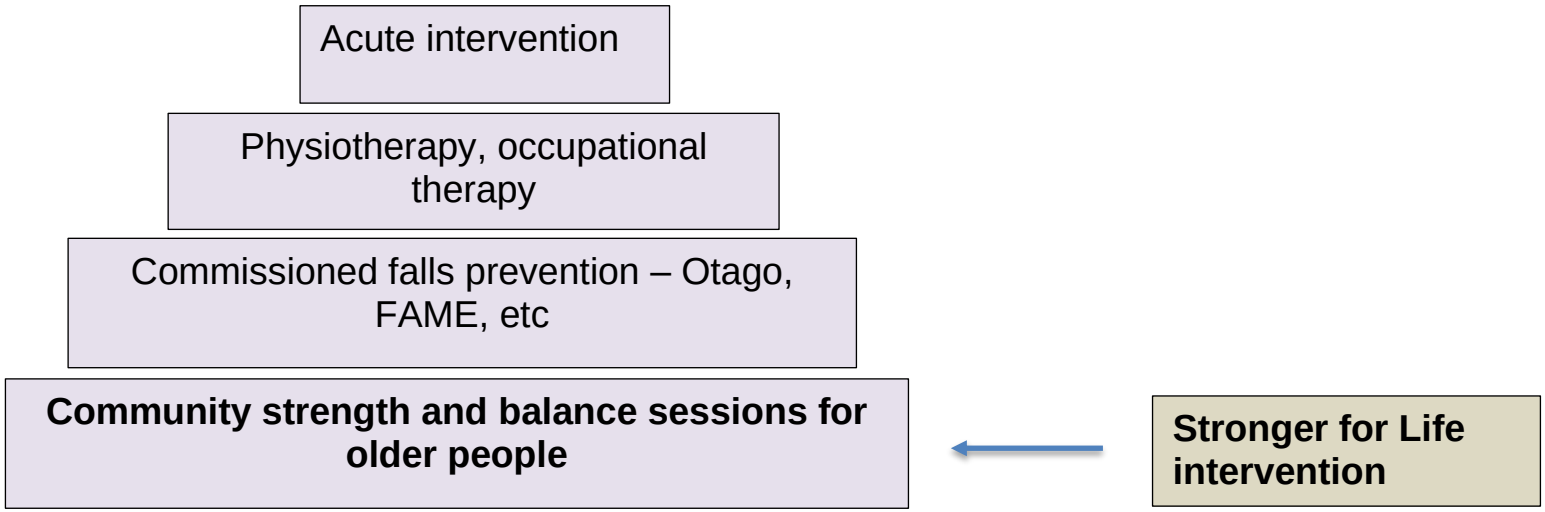
The focus of the Stronger for Life work is to increase sustainable strength and balance opportunities across East Sussex in targeted wards after initial mapping/scoping exercise.

While people are more mindful of the Chief Medical Officer (CMO) guidelines on activity levels, fewer people are aware of the importance of strength and balance as people grow older.

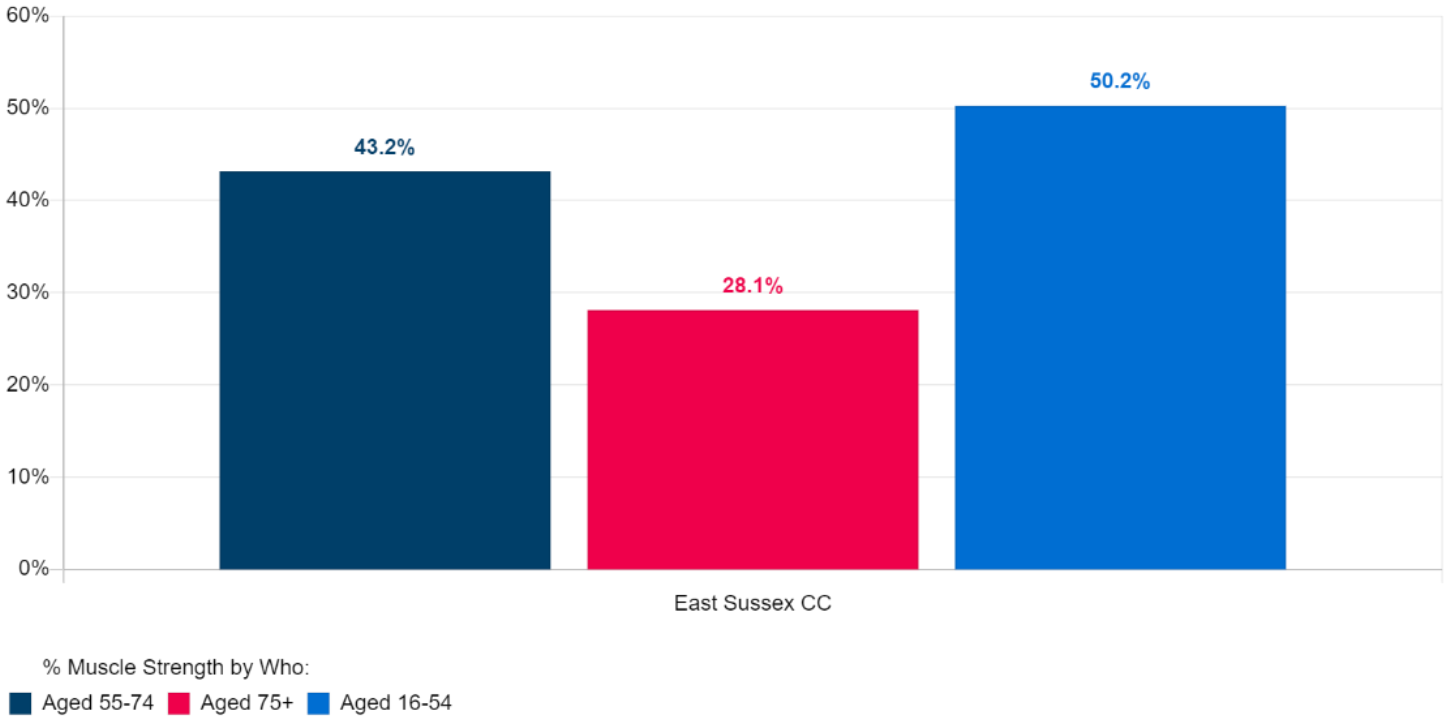


Rationale

Of the £120,000 allocated to Active Sussex, £60,000 was set aside to deliver activities that are evidenced in improving strength and balance. The approach built on the findings and recommendations from the Stronger for Life Report, delivered in West Sussex in 2022, including aspects that were a success and a challenge. Having engaged with system partners across Sussex pre covid and further discussions with the Consultant in Public Health at West Sussex County Council and the former Chair of the National Falls Prevention Coordination Group, there was recognition of the need to support the local falls agenda by supporting those who hadn't yet fallen but would be at risk of falling due to inactivity and deconditioning. While there was a conscious decision to not duplicate the falls prevention or Otago based support already in place for those who had suffered falls previously, it was understood that there needed to be an increase in community-based movement and activity that improved strength and balance. These sessions could also support those who had successfully been through commissioned falls services and were ready to re-join activities within the community.



Furthermore, the most recent Active Lives data (November 2022-2023) for East Sussex, shows the significant drop off in strength and balance activity for people aged 75+ further exacerbating the need to address the way the system and residents think about strength and balance in relation to their wider health and wellbeing and the increasing barriers that come in to play as we get older.



Before committing funding to areas in East Sussex, Active Sussex has used local insight to ensure that priority areas are identified and reached through Stronger for Life. Public Health data on the following cohorts has informed the approach and shown where efforts need to be prioritised -

- Emergency hospital admissions due to falls in people aged 65 and over
- Emergency hospital admissions due to falls in people aged 65 to 79
- Emergency hospital admissions due to falls in people aged 80 plus
- Hip fractures in people aged 65 and over
- Hip fractures in people aged 65 to 79
- Hip fractures in people aged 80 plus
- Osteoporosis: 50 years plus
- Percentage of people living with sight loss
- Areas of deprivation and low income

From this data a 'Ward Need Comparison' was completed with areas ranked and given priority. Active Sussex has also liaised with delivery partners across Sussex to gain an understanding of the strength and balance provision already happening across the locality to ensure that funding is targeted in the right areas and any activity isn't duplicating sessions that are already happening. Following discussions within ASCH, Active Sussex also recognised the gap in provision within commissioned care homes across East Sussex and approached all services to explore the opportunity of increasing movement and activity within the home. Following discussions with care home managers it was explained that the services had not had a consistent form of activity happening within the setting for the last four years (in most cases since pre-covid). This identified another cohort that were not reaching the strength and balance requirement and thorough further deconditioning would be at risk of falls in the future.

Process

Potential partners including local authority teams, leisure trusts, charities, community interest companies and independent providers were then approached to support the delivery of any activity evidenced in improving bone health, muscle function and balance as outlined in the Raising the bar on strength and balance: The importance of community-based provision | Centre for Ageing Better, 2019 Report. A strict application process was then introduced to ensure those applying for funding were meeting the eligibility and criteria and presenting a proposal that was going to target, recruit and retain the right people, and deliver appropriate activity with a realistic budget. As well as meeting with and supporting partners through the application process, Active Sussex has also carried out due diligence to ensure that all of those delivering activity meet the minimum standards and requirements for safeguarding and have strongly considered their approach to equality, diversity and inclusion and environmental sustainability. Service Level Agreements are drawn up for each partner and detail the requirements as well as the need to complete all measurement and evaluation conditions on time.

In the first six months Active Sussex has allocated £25,314 of funding across 17 projects of which 7 are already happening and the other 10 due to start over the next two months. Across these 17 projects activities include, seated to standing exercise, aerobic and circuit sessions, table tennis, walking football, Zumba, aqua sessions and qui gong. The care homes that will be receiving support within their service include Cranbrook (Eastbourne), Downlands Court (Peacehaven), Margaret House (Uckfield), Bentley Grange (Hailsham) and Sherwood House (Hastings). Providers delivering the activity are 20/20 Health, Active Hastings, Active Rother and Happiness in Motion. Active Hastings have also committed some of the funding to designing Stronger for Life marketing material including 2000 double sided A5 campaign flyers and 200 A4 campaign posters that will be distributed and on their external community distribution list, Hastings Borough Council community boards and at surgeries and hospitals. There will also be a pull up banner to be displayed at events and in GP surgeries and information shared at digital bus stop screens.

Active Sussex is currently engaging with other partners around funding future Stronger for Life sessions within the community and care homes and will take some of the early learning to emerge from sessions that have already started to ensure the projects are being delivered in a way that is the most supportive to partners, impactful to participants and sustainable.

Stroke Reconditioning

A Stronger for Life project has also been funded in the Irvine Unit in Bexhill Hospital for patients recovering from Stroke. As part of the wider work happening across East Sussex, Active Sussex has launched a pilot in partnership with East Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust (ESHT) and Rother District Council (Active Rother) to address deconditioning amongst patients recovering from stroke at the Bexhill Irvine Unit.

Separate funding from Active Sussex will see health instructors deliver 26 weeks of activity within the hospital setting to groups of patients recovering from stroke and at risk of deconditioning. Patients will then be supported into community-based provision where they can continue their rehabilitation and take steps towards living a more active and healthier life with long-term habits formed around moving more.

The aim of the project is to:

- change the way the system addresses deconditioning in older people with long-term health conditions in hospital settings across Sussex.
- demonstrate the impact of NHS Services working collaboratively with the voluntary sector to achieve better health outcomes for residents.

The plan had initially been to deliver two sessions per week targeting one group within the hospital. However, ESHT have identified another cohort of patients in the hospital and recognised that there is the opportunity to deliver two additional sessions per week targeting a different

group of patients (slightly more able) recovering from stroke who (due to their condition, age and lack of movement and activity levels) will be at risk of falls without the support of additional strength and balance activity. Therefore, a decision was made to utilise Stronger for Life funding to run an additional session within the hospital setting while using the same methods of data collection and testing.

The Stronger for Life work is using a broad range of settings for strength and balance work across East Sussex and bringing together work happening between Public Health, Adult Social Care, NHS Sussex and the voluntary and community sector and the principles of co-design and collaboration.

Measurement & Evaluation

For those projects underway participants are already being tested (4-stage balance and sit to stand) and surveyed to gather qualitative and quantitative data that will help measure the impact of the sessions over a 26-week period. Measures will show physiological changes, behavior, falls risk, and knowledge and attitudes towards activity and falls. The questionnaire will include a functional goal chosen by the individual that is important and achievable to them. Attendance figures will also be gathered, and partner interviews and case studies will be requested to capture the wider learning of the sessions so there is a clearer understanding of what aspects of the intervention are more successful than others. The data should also show the impact of the intervention across different cohorts of patients including those in the community, care homes and hospitals. Impact will also be shared via video case studies which has been factored into the funding. Already other services across the whole system including those within the health and physical activity sector have expressed a keen interest in taking the learning form the Stronger for Life work to better inform interventions moving forward.

Learning and Reflections

While it is still early in the process of embedding physical activity into adult health and social care systems, processes, and pathways across East Sussex there is some learning that is beginning to emerge and reflections that are worth considering.

- **Movement and physical activity are increasingly being considered an important aspect of health and wellbeing by those beyond the physical activity sector** – From early conversations across ASCH, Public Health, NHS Sussex and other system partners there is a desire to support residents to be more active with everyone recognising the value of increased activity and the benefits it can have to the individual's quality of life and the impact on support services.

- **There is clearly a need for increased movement and physical activity and partners are willing to explore opportunities** – Partners are enthusiastic about the prospect for how they can support people to be more active within their services. However, capacity is still a barrier. For those working in commissioned services having the time, space and funds to work with partners to increase activity levels is not easily available, especially when they are working towards other key priorities.

- **Services have a lack of movement and activity happening within their setting and need support to implement more** – Discussions have shown that providers in services such as care homes and learning disabilities feel there is a lack of activity happening within their venues with some having little to no activity for the past 4-5 years. It is positive to hear service managers talking honesty about this and acknowledging the need to not only do more within their own setting but to also explore ways of supporting service users into other appropriate activity outside of their own service.

- **Workforce needs support to implement more movement and activity within their workforce** – Partners have spoken about the potential for upskilling their workforce to be able to talk more confidently about movement and physical activity. This would help to shift not just the mindset of those supporting residents within the services but the service users and their friends and families. Active Sussex can deliver the 'Helping People Become More Active' training which is a 1.5-hour workshop online or in person. The content

touches on the importance and benefits of physical activity, types of activity and national guidelines, practical tips and common barriers to staying active, positive conversation skills and, signposting and resources. There are also some licenses from the Live Longer Better training program which are available. This is for anyone working with older people and is broken down into 12, six-minute pre-recorded videos with optional assignments in the notes.

- **The need for the voluntary sector as an extension of the workforce is critical** – Statutory health and wellbeing services within the NHS and Public Health cannot achieve widescale change without the support of the voluntary sector. It is vital that they work closely to ensure they are engaging and reaching disadvantaged groups and communities in the right way and implementing sustainable interventions that make a meaningful difference to older people's health and wellbeing.

- **Voice, co-design and collaboration is required to make a change** – When designing interventions, it is crucial to involve everyone from the start who has a role to play in the end-to-end process of increasing a person's activity levels. This includes understanding what is important to the individual, how they want to increase their own movement and what needs to be put in place to make this happen.

- **Movement and physical activity are not obviously stated as a health requirement and written into commissioned agreements strictly enough** – It appears from early conversations that encouraging movement and activity is not always as clearly outlined in provider contracts as it could be to supporting people's health and wellbeing. Making it a greater priority and an essential aspect of agreements could give providers the opportunity to do more to support the most inactive people within their services.

- **Advocacy for increased movement and physical activity is required across the system** – There needs to be continuous advocacy and promotion of more movement and activity for disadvantaged groups across the entire system but particularly from those in senior positions. Conversations and encouragement happening at a higher level will help the message to flow down into services supporting people on the ground giving them greater capacity and responsibility to tackle inactivity and deconditioning amongst older people.

- **Where possible additional funding is needed** – Whilst there is an appreciation that the current funding gap in services makes it very

difficult to fund new activity, where possible there should always be a consideration when commissioning services to the money that is going into supporting health and wellbeing in the form of increased activity. Evidence shows that there is great value for money when it comes to funding activity for the most inactive people. This is also the case when it comes to putting money into addressing health inequalities and ensuring it is built into long term strategy. "*Spending on inequalities work is too often considered additional or novel, directed at specific groups or one-off projects. In many cases, notably when focused on preventive measures, this funding is expected to meet a higher value-for-money threshold than other spend. For work on inequalities to endure, there must be a shift in the way baseline funding is spent. This means treating inequalities spending as part of the mainstream and not as short-term funding."* Kings Fund report on tackling health inequalities, 2022.

- **To tackle health inequalities, it requires more time and capacity** – There is a need to understand that it often takes longer to engage, build trust, and design and implement a change for disadvantaged and underserved communities. Activity Sussex has set aside funding for a partner working with a range of ethnically diverse communities across East Sussex, while they work with their communities to understand how the Stronger for Life work can best support them to increase their strength and balance.

- **There is a need for local insight to be targeted and prioritise, but evidence around physical activity and movement should be assumed** – When designing projects and making the case for an intervention it should not be an extensive commitment to capacity and resource to make the case for the benefits of movement and physical activity – the national evidence is now overwhelming. However, it should always be the basis that we look at local data and insight to focus efforts on the most disadvantaged and underserved communities.

- **Shared learning is crucial to upscaling work and adapting the approach to supporting older people to age well through increased movement and activity** – It is important that all stakeholders involved in this work continue to share and circulate information about this project no matter how small or insignificant it may seem, as it is vital that all services across East Sussex understand the commitment currently being made to helping people to age well in East Sussex.

- **Greater knowledge and understanding of ASCH is being directed into the physical activity sector** – By working with the ASCH team the SRM is learning more about how the ASCH system works. As well as helping to continue the professional development of the individual, this upskilling of knowledge means that a greater understanding can be drawn upon when making key decisions about how Active Sussex work with partners and residents across East Sussex. This is also being disseminated amongst wider partners working with Active Sussex who will in turn have an increased insight when delivering in their localities.

It should be remembered at this stage that this is just a six-month review and that these are not recommendations at this early stage although for some aspects, clear steps could be taken to further advance this work. It should also be reflected that some of the learning and considerations outlined above could change and be adapted very quickly based on the next 18 months. Equally, this should be an evolving mindset beyond the two-year contract, and it is imperative that learning and recommendations that come from this work shouldn't finish in December 2025.

Next Steps

This work will continue to grow over the next 18 months delivering on early opportunities and engaging with new partners to understand the needs of older residents across East Sussex and the interventions that require everyone to live a healthier life through increased movement and physical activity, while reducing the unnecessary need for statutory services. It is important that there is a continual approach to investigating new opportunities where there can be changes to policy, strategy and the way services support residents through activity.

There will be more projects funded through Stronger for Life and each project will provide valuable findings through the measurement and evaluation process which is already underway. Where possible Active Sussex will continue to align this with other work in East Sussex as it already has done with the Stroke Reconditioning project.

Active Sussex will continue to share and communicate the learning through face-to-face and online partnership meetings, networks and forums, news stories, case studies and social media, while also encouraging all stakeholders to circulate the impact of the work and any call to action. Over the coming weeks Active Sussex will continue to share the work happening at partnership meetings such as the East Sussex

Healthy Weight Partnership and the East Sussex CVD Prevention Group. All work will also be regularly uploaded to the NHS Sussex Population Health Academy (community of practice and learning).

The ongoing challenge will continue to be the capacity of all stakeholders involved. While the SRM is currently committed to one day per week of focused time, and colleagues and partners across Active Sussex, ASCH, Public Health are stretched with the pressures of their day-to-day

role, the SRM will try to encourage as much collaborative working as possible to ensure that stakeholders are supporting the process in the most efficient way possible and driving this work forward. It is testament to the partnership working up to this point and the support of all partners involved, in particular the Adult Social Care and Health (Policy & Strategic Development Team), that there has been a positive start to the work aimed at embedding physical activity in Adult Social Care and Health.