Full report: Active Sussex Conference - Moving to Inclusion self-reflection session

Purpose of the Conference

The Active Sussex Conference 2024 focused on fostering inclusion to create an equitable environment for physical activity across Sussex. The event offered partners a series of sessions to explore the latest Active Lives Survey data, bringing to life some of the positive insights from recent years, listening to lived experience and community insights in regard to culture and the systems we are working in, and providing a space to debate and discuss some of the more stubborn challenges in the county.

The conference also aimed to support the Active Sussex Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan ambitions, which are:

- Foster an inclusive culture and support a diverse workforce.
- Drive participation and equitable access for marginalised communities.
- Strengthen partner collaboration and community relationships to deepen impact.

Moving to Inclusion Session

The final session was intended as a catalyst for conversation and action setting, with elements of the new Moving to Inclusion framework utilised to guide reflections and foster discussion following the sharing of lived experience and community engagement examples. It allowed attendees to reflect, discuss and share how their organisation and collectively as a network, we can work in an inclusive way across systems to better reach the inactive and marginalised groups within the county. Engaging and listening to our partners is fundamental to delivering against our own ambitions.

Three of the five framework pillars were covered due to their connectivity to the other conference sessions - **Culture; Experience; Relationships**. Statements provided for each pillar to support discussions, were pulled out of the full list of Moving to Inclusion 'Diagnostic toolkit – list of questions'.

Reflecting on the statements, we asked delegates to complete a short self-reflection form, using questions that sit as part of the Moving to Inclusion continuous improvement plan template. The questions were as follows:

- **Where are you/your organisation now based on the indicators?**
- **What would success look like for your organisation regarding the pillar indicators?**
- **What short-term actions (within the next six months) could you take to work towards this success?**
- **Any good practice examples or barriers that you've encountered during your discussions that you'd be happy to share.** (Optional)

Responses have been compiled to provide a comprehensive overview of the network's status regarding inclusion efforts. Where organisational responses were received, they have been collated for that organisation and shared with delegates from that organisation, to be used in a way most beneficial to that partner.

Summary, recommendations, barriers and good practice

This document summarises all responses received to help provide a picture of across the network. It also provides some recommendations that may help partners achieve these collated 'successes' and supplement any actions shared in organisational reports. This document also highlights the common barriers submitted and some strategies that could be considered to address these (with linked examples). Some good practice taking place across the county that could be adopted by others was also gathered. We know this is only a snippet of the amazing work taking place, so if you have any good practice you would like to share and shout about then please get in touch.

Regardless of whether you attended the conference or submitted a self-reflection or not, please feel free to use this document in a way that is beneficial to you and your organisations.

Quick links to these sections of the report (this allows you to easily navigate to elements of the document that are most relevant)

Pillar response summaries and recommendations

- Pillar 1 - Culture (pages 3-4)
- Pillar 2 - Experience (pages 4-5)
- Pillar 3 - Relationships (pages 6-7)

Barriers (pages 7-8)

Good Practice (page 9)

Conclusion and Call to Action

Addressing the known barriers requires a sustained commitment across our network. Building trust, improving accessibility, and fostering inclusivity will help strengthen relationships with community partners and ensure organisations meet the needs of diverse groups both from an internal and external perspective.

By adopting the recommended strategies and continuing to share proven good practice across the network, together we can build a more inclusive, relevant, and genuinely responsive environment that will help empower more people in the county to be physically active.

Call to Action: Commit to building strong, lasting partnerships, invest in the resources needed for inclusivity, and empower communities by involving them in program design and decision-making.

Ongoing support

If you would like to discuss the full report, executive summary or your organisational self-reflection reports in more detail, or require further support please get in touch with the Active Sussex's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion lead Gemma Finlay-Gray gfinlay-gray@activesussex.org or another member of the team.

If you require this document in an alternative format please get in touch.

Pillar response summaries and recommendations

Pillar 1 - Culture

Indicator statements

- A safe environment is created to enable everyone's voices to be heard, addressed, and inform decision making.
- Your organisation respects diversity and values each person as an individual with unique traits and backgrounds.
- You have a culture of being insight led, continuous improvement, challenging positively and learning.

Summary: What would success look like?

1. **Organisational Understanding:** A comprehensive understanding among all staff, both core and those who may be contracted or volunteers, about the importance of inclusivity and the efforts required to achieve it.
2. **Increased Participation:** Improved participation figures for people with particular characteristics and backgrounds, ensuring that all everyone has access to activities.
3. **Shared Culture:** A unified culture that embraces diversity, inclusion, and equity, creating a welcoming environment for all.
4. **Community Insights:** Continued focus on gathering and integrating community insights into programming and decision-making processes.
5. **Safe Spaces:** Creating environments where everyone feels safe to express their opinions, learn, socialise, and grow.
6. **Education and Communication:** Enhancing communication and understanding of inclusivity within clubs, partners, and the wider community.
7. **Empowerment and Support:** Encouraging individuals to voice concerns and providing mechanisms for support, such as a speak-up guardian.

Recommendations to achieve success

1. **Conduct Inclusivity Training:** Implement regular training sessions for all staff to deepen their understanding of inclusivity, diversity, and equity, ensuring these concepts are embedded in the organisational culture.

2. **Track Participation Metrics:** Establish clear metrics to monitor diversity and engagement/participation rates for underrepresented audiences and develop targeted outreach strategies to improve these figures.
3. **Foster a Unified Culture:** Create initiatives that promote a shared organisational culture around diversity and inclusion, such as team-building activities or workshops that celebrate diverse perspectives.
4. **Integrate Community Feedback:** Regularly solicit feedback from community members and participants to inform programming and ensure that their voices are central to decision-making processes.
5. **Create Safe Spaces for Dialogue:** Establish regular forums or meetings where staff and participants can share their experiences, concerns, and suggestions in a safe and supportive environment.
6. **Enhance Communication Strategies:** Develop communication plans that educate clubs and partners about the organisation's mission and the importance of inclusivity, ensuring alignment across all stakeholders.
7. **Develop People Plans:** Create facilitated action plans with clear, smaller steps that can be integrated into daily operations, ensuring that all staff members are informed and engaged in the process creating a sense of empowerment.

Pillar 2 - Experience

Indicator statements

- You understand the interlink between protected characteristics and lived experience when considering the design of programmes, projects, activity e.g., deprivation and disability.
- You ensure and support your "delivery" environments to be open, accessible, and inclusive.
- You create opportunities to listen and learn and use what is learnt to make changes that lead to improved inclusive practice.

Summary: What would success look like?

1. **Diverse Participation:** Increased attendance from various ethnic groups and individuals with neurodiversity and disabilities at sessions.
2. **Enhanced Engagement:** Greater student engagement and uptake in programs, ensuring that the voices of those with lived experiences are consistently integrated into planning and feedback.

3. **Community Insight:** Actively seeking and incorporating feedback from participants about their needs and preferences to enhance their experience.
4. **Accessibility:** Ensuring that all venues are accessible and equipped to accommodate participants, particularly addressing specific needs such as restroom facilities and overall venue conditions.
5. **Inclusion of Underrepresented Voices:** Committing to incorporating feedback from underrepresented communities in community engagement efforts.
6. **Collaborative Learning:** Working closely with delivery organisations to understand participant experiences and improve service specifications.
7. **Continuous Improvement:** Ongoing training for staff to deliver inclusive physical education (PE) and making improvements based on feedback.

Recommendations to achieve success

1. **Targeted Outreach to Diverse Groups:** Implement strategies to reach out to ethnic groups and individuals with disabilities or neurodiversity, ensuring that promotional materials are accessible and inclusive.
2. **Establish Feedback Mechanisms:** Create regular avenues for feedback from participants, such as surveys or focus groups, to gather insights on their experiences and preferences.
3. **Enhance Venue Accessibility:** Prioritise improvements at indoor and outdoor venues (i.e. Preston Park Velodrome, open green spaces/parks), ensuring that facilities meet the needs of all participants, including addressing toilet accessibility and safety concerns.
4. **Foster Community Engagement:** Develop initiatives that actively involve community members in decision-making processes, ensuring their voices are heard and valued.
5. **Collaborate with Other Organisations:** Partner with delivery organisations to share best practices and insights regarding participant experiences, especially in program development and service procurement/commissioning.
6. **Implement Inclusive Training Programs:** Provide staff with training focused on inclusive practices in PE and community engagement, ensuring that they are equipped to meet diverse needs effectively.
7. **Monitor and Evaluate Initiatives:** Track participation metrics and the effectiveness of initiatives aimed at increasing engagement among diverse groups, adjusting strategies as needed based on data and feedback.

Pillar 3 - Relationships

Indicator statements

- You have an established stakeholder list of key partners enabling a better understanding and reach into relevant specific diverse groups and underrepresented communities.
- You work with key stakeholders to co-create solutions with them to reach and support our target audience of underrepresented groups.
- You promote the success of partners and seek to learn from them as part of our continual improvement journey.

What would success look like?

1. **Network Development:** Building a comprehensive database of contacts and key partners to facilitate collaboration and outreach.
2. **Community Engagement:** Expanding outreach to underrepresented groups and ensuring equitable representation of stakeholders, particularly those from ethnically diverse communities.
3. **Effective Communication:** Enhancing communication channels with partners, in particular those who engage and have access to children and young people (i.e. Mid Sussex Active), to increase access to support and resources.
4. **Empowerment and Trust:** Fostering trusting relationships with communities, ensuring that all participants feel empowered, safe, and a sense of belonging.
5. **Increased Participation:** Finding ways to engage local community members who are currently not participating in activities or programs.
6. **Continuous Learning:** Allocating dedicated time for staff to learn about and engage with multicultural initiatives, despite existing constraints.

Recommendations to achieve success

1. **Develop a Comprehensive Contact Database:** Create and maintain a database of community contacts and partner organisations to streamline communication and collaboration efforts.
2. **Target Outreach Initiatives:** Identify and reach out to organisations that serve underrepresented groups to build partnerships and expand your network.

3. **Enhance Communication Strategies:** Increase visibility and accessibility of resources from support organisations by improving communication strategies, such as newsletters or community forums.
4. **Build Trusting Relationships:** Implement programs or initiatives aimed at building trust within communities, ensuring that participants feel valued and heard.
5. **Engage Non-participants:** Conduct surveys or focus groups to understand barriers to participation among local community members and develop targeted strategies to address these challenges.
6. **Encourage Staff Participation in Learning Opportunities:** Advocate for flexible scheduling or virtual attendance options for staff to participate in multicultural presentations and training, ensuring continuous learning and engagement with diverse communities.

Barriers

Collation of barriers highlighted and suggested strategies to address them, which may also help deliver some of the pillar recommendations:

1. **Relationship Breakdown:** Key relationships can deteriorate when key individuals leave, leading to a loss of continuity and trust.
   Strategy: Develop a succession plan (Buddle succession planning resources) for key roles and ensure knowledge transfer through documentation and mentorship. Regularly engage team members in collaborative projects to build strong relationships.

2. **Insufficient Coaches with the Right Engagement/Soft skills:** A lack of trained coaches within a 'community', limits the opportunities to engage residents in physical activities through a people like me approach.

   Strategy: Partner with organisations to identify the right people within a community to gain relevant leadership or coaching qualifications or consider alternative pathways like Apprenticeships (See Coach Core). Provide incentives for community members to become coaches, such as grants for their time in kind or highlight the wider employment opportunities a qualification could provide. (Take a look at a previous Sussex Disability Sports Network Community of Learning session on Diversifying the Workforce).

3. **Access to Interpreters:** Difficulty in accessing interpreters for British Sign Language and other languages can exclude non-native speakers or those with hearing impairments from participating fully.

Strategy: Establish partnerships with organisations that provide interpretation services (i.e. Vandu Languages). Offer training for staff on how to effectively communicate with individuals who require language support (i.e. UK Deaf Sport's Deaf People's Inclusion in Sport eLearning course which you can currently access for free as part of the free Accelerate Sport membership).

4. **Engagement Challenges:** Engaging underserved communities who may lack confidence or aren't able to prioritise moving more due to other significant factors in their lives.

   Strategy: Implement outreach programs that promote the benefits of physical activity in culturally relevant and accessible or inclusive ways, by co-creating with trusted community leaders to understand what non-physical activity motivators might help to engage, build credibility and encourage participation. (The Active Sussex Community of Learning page brings together relevant research, insight, case studies and webinars to help you develop your understanding and offering).

5. **Misunderstanding of Needs:** Not fully understanding the unique needs and motivators of individuals within the same protected characteristic can lead to ineffective programming.

   Strategy: Evaluate your current activity (Use the Inactivity Design Principles Checklist template) and conduct focus groups and surveys to gather detailed insights into the diverse needs and motivations of community members (contact the Active Sussex Insight Officer if you would like some support on how to do this). Tailor programs based on this feedback to ensure they are inclusive and relevant.

6. **Decision-Making Exclusion:** Individuals may feel (or be) excluded from decision-making processes due to perceived communication barriers, lack of confidence or dynamics between activity leaders and end users.

   Strategy: Create inclusive decision-making processes that allow for diverse voices to be heard. Facilitate workshops that build communication skills and confidence for individuals who may feel excluded or have previously not been given a voice in co-creation of opportunities or strategic decisions. (i.e. Ann Craft Trusts Participant Voices Project or using the Play Their Way approach with children and young people).

Good Practice

Below are some examples of good practice across the county submitted as part of the Active Sussex Conference 2024 session. Many align with the recommendations and strategies above, but highlight what is actually working locally that you may wish to consider to support your own work:

1. **Targeted Outreach:** Engaging community members as outreach workers on behalf of the organisation has helped to understand and address barriers to participation that weren't fully understood.
2. **Removing Barriers:** Showing you are listening and responding to identified barriers such as providing equipment or clothing (i.e. trainers) for targeted groups (i.e. refugees) to enable them participate, helps build trust, provides opportunities for them to become leaders and shows investment in an individual's worth. This trust and understanding encourages word of mouth promotion within communities.
3. **Access Improvements:** Initiatives (and fundraising) to install access ramps to improve facilities for disabled individuals to access specific provision demonstrates commitment to inclusivity. These efforts spearheaded by community sport and physical activity organisations often support others that may be using the facility outside sport provision and have helped show the added value the sector brings to communities.
4. **Pupil Voice:** Involving children in discussions about what they want from physical activity (using Voice, Choice and Journey) has enhanced engagement and relevance.
5. **Listening to the Community:** Actively seeking feedback from individuals (using a range of methods - from incentivised surveys, 121 chats, picture boards) about their experiences and preferences can help tailor offerings to meet their needs. Conducting surveys that encourage user participation has provided valuable insights into community needs and preferences; helping harness a range of funding and grants.
6. **Cultural Sharing:** Encouraging open discussions and sharing cultural experiences (doesn't need to be sport specific) has helped foster inclusivity and understanding. However, whendrawing on lived experience and insight gathering from community organisations to influence social change thinking, it is important to consider the time cost/capacity cost involved for these organisations.
7. **Culture Champions:** Having internal leaders who advocate for cultural awareness and inclusivity has helped drive positive change within organisations through lived experience.