



# "WE WANT TO SHAPE THE FUTURE WE WANT, NOT BE SHAPED BY IT"

## SPORT ENGLAND & LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION (LGA) LEADERSHIP PROGRAMME COVID 19 REFLECTIONS

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As we bumped elbows and liberally used hand sanitiser at the tenth Sport England /LGA leadership programme, for councils, trusts and Active Partnerships, we are not sure any of us could have foreseen what was about to unfold two weeks before lockdown – the pandemic bringing about unbelievable change to everyone's lives, as well as major systemic change.

For the programme's participants the last few months has brought physical and emotional change and challenge including: redeployment to food banks, giving support to crisis hubs, providing connections to wider networks, supporting those being shielded and having to furlough staff. To provide further support to the leadership programme's participants, who we have been working with over the last two years, we've held a series of online discussions talking about the 'here and now' and exploring what we all want for the future.

Based on their experiences we heard a real sense of optimism and desire not just to do things differently but to do them fundamentally differently. They talked about:

The value of physical activity and sport being recognised and promoted both nationally and locally for its relationship to mental health and overall wellbeing. How playing pivotal roles in their communities, linking up with food banks, PPE distributors, and a host of voluntary and community organisations, has brought new relationships. That they have experienced a real 'can-do' and positive attitude across public services, charities and communities interconnecting and coming together so that, in the words of one participant, there was "collective effort for collective impact".

However, they also expressed strong fears for inequalities and wellbeing. Fears of entrenching social inequalities – one participant asked if we'd been seeing "Lockdown through the eyes of privilege?" There are also concerns about a digital divide and in light of the local government funding situation there are questions about how difficult it will be to find sustainable financial solutions which do not widen equality gaps.

The programme's participants believe now is the time to reconfigure how we all connect, to position the idea, and role, of physical activity in society before the old patterns of thinking and working become re-established.

They are clear that leadership skills are a vital ingredient in helping them not only make decisions day to day but also to build a sustainable future, helping all partners re-imagine their part in the future.

The visual attached gives an overview of the discussions that took place.

#### **LOCAL LEADERSHIP**

Our leadership programme participants spoke about how they have found themselves in the middle of major systems change - continually challenging their behaviours and leadership skills as well as those of the organisations around them. At the same time, they have seen the true value of emerging leadership capabilities in local communities which they want to nurture.

### LOOKING TO THE

"We need to build our personal and collective resilience; we need to work to build the space to envisage the future and close the gap between aspiration and reality."

The LGA and Sport England are focusing on how new participants can access the leadership programme by taking it online in the autumn.

### **Sport England LGA Leadership Essentials**

May 2020

Over the past month, during the Covid 19 pandemic, previous participants from the leadership essentials programme have engaged in discussions navigating the 'here and now' and sharing learning to explore what we want for the future. This document frames a collective conversation that will continue to grow and change as we work together into the future, and we work toward systems change through systems leadership.

At every level of our work, from our system leadership behaviours to our common purpose, how can we ensure we are investing in the necessary mutual relationships (both new and existing) to do this work?



**Staff Teams** 



Individuals and Communities



Partners and **Stakeholders** 



Political and **Corporate Decision Makers** 

### What might we need to help us do this work?

- Safe space
- Thinking time
- Sharing Learning
- New Techniques
- Challenges
- Advice
- Action Learning Sets
- Mentorina
- Partners



The [1] System Leadership Behaviours that we want to sustain and amplify will begin to shape the [2] Future Nature of the System we are working in, which therefore allows us to explore multiple shared [3] System Challenges, and this exploration hopefully brings us closer to, and expands our understanding of, our [4] Common Purpose.

[4] Common Purpose

\*Continually exploring and expanding

insights into our common purpose

Inequality and Wellbeing

Partners working together on a

shared cross-system priority that

influences the rest of our work, and

collectively exploring multi-faceted.

complex and urgent inequalities

and aiming to increase social

impact of wellbeing with

collective work.

**Urgent** 

Present vs

**Important Future** 

help us now, and build a

sustainable future? For example.

framing our relationships with health

partners, balancing income and public

health, and exploring activity in relation to

health inequality.

\*Exploring wellbeing and health inequality across ages, from older people to young families and children.

[2] Future Nature of

We need to sustain an

of working with other

accessible and open way

organisations, with both new

our purpose. At every

with the energy and

for collaboration. We need to work

power of communities

to unify our efforts and

create lasting

change.

and existing relationships,

the System

[1] System

Leadership

**Behaviours** 

Resilience.

weathering change

and adapting

ourselves

Collaboration

\*Exploring sustainable investment in sport and activity services and active environments, including the value they create for people right now.

## [3] System

How might we ensure old behaviours stav in the past? Can we reduce competitive working and silos. expand our understanding of people's resistance to change to understand collectively learn and move toward our leadership role further?

### Challenges (egs) **Old Behaviours**

level, we can create the space

### **Shared Outcomes**

Physical activity positively influences other sectors' outcomes, such as health and social care. Investing in place based working to deeply collaborate with other organisations can enhance change around outcomes for communities, yet requires a deep connection and understanding of people's experiences.

We trust others and delegate responsibility

We work flexibly and adaptively to meet needs and opportunities

intelligence and human connection, aiming to increase our sense of community

We value emotional

Remote and agile working to connect better to how we work best

ensure activity remains a priority into the

future: from communities

to political agendas.

\*Exploring social inequalities: from race to wealth to poverty, and those living with multiple deprivation.

\*Exploring how the digital divide and limited access to digital offers for people with a disability will impact wellbeing and health inequalities.

### **Financial** Sustainability

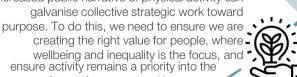
Collectively, how can we be strategic with our financial planning over different time periods (immediate strategies to long term strategies) with an uncertain future? And, how can How might we make decisions that connecting to purpose help us do this?

### **Enriched** Value of **Physical Activity**

The energy and mobilisation of an

### Reframing

Working adaptively within a rapidly changing context requires creativity and imagination to reframe work in order to create new possibilities. We need to ensure reframed work suits new agendas, whilst learning from perspectives across the system to ensure we are following the data, insights, and experiences. This can help us evolve what we offer, how we work, and who creates the change in the future.



We aim to cut through red tape. be nimble and fleet of foot

Icons by monkik from the Noun Project



