



Improvement

Customer led transformation programme

Case study – Shropshire

Physical Activity Improvement Project

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The Customer Led Transformation Programme

Shropshire Council's work has been funded under the Customer Led Transformation programme. The fund aims to embed the use of Customer Insight and Social Media tools and techniques as strategic management capabilities across the public sector family in order to support Place-Based working.

The Customer Led Transformation programme is overseen by the Local Government Delivery Council (supported by the Local Government Association).

The fund was established specifically to support collaborative working between local authorities and their partners focused on using customer insight and social media tools and techniques to improve service outcomes. These approaches offer public services bodies the opportunity to engage customers and gather insight into their preferences and needs, and thereby provide the evidence and intelligence needed to redesign services to be more targeted, effective and efficient.

About Shropshire

Shropshire is a predominantly rural county located in the West Midlands. It is one of the most sparsely populated in England and almost a quarter of it is designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

Of the 300,000 people receiving services from Shropshire Council the majority live in small towns or villages. Shrewsbury is the largest town with a population of less than 70,000.

Shropshire Council (SC) was formed, as a unitary authority, in 2009, following the amalgamation of Shropshire County Council and five district councils - Bridgnorth District Council, South Shropshire District Council, Shrewsbury and Atcham Borough Council, Oswestry Borough Council and North Shropshire District Council (but not Telford and Wrekin, which is a separate unitary authority).



Background

The business case for the creation of a unitary authority in Shropshire included a commitment to review leisure services. Under the earlier governance model (county and districts) the public sector provision varied considerably from one part of Shropshire to another and it was believed that the public would benefit if this was more coordinated and equitable.

Traditionally a review of this type would be carried out as a value for money review focusing on improving the cost, performance and customer satisfaction ratings of the service together with an evaluation of the service's contribution to the council's priorities. It would focus on the efficiency and effectiveness of how Shropshire Council does things. However, Shropshire Council decided to broaden the remit of the review in two aspects.

Firstly, it was recognised that the efficiency and effectiveness of Shropshire Council's operations could not be considered in isolation but had to involve a broad range of partners, and other service providers, to develop solutions that meet different local needs across the county.

In addition, the broader health agenda dictated that there was more to be considered than mere provision of services. Whilst available evidence showed that heart disease is the biggest cause of premature death in England and there is overwhelming evidence of the health benefits of being active. Research indicated that nearly 80 per cent of all adults in Shropshire did not participate regularly enough in physical activity to gain these benefits.

Participation levels varied from area to area across Shropshire. Whilst the picture is quite good in some areas, evidence showed, for example, that 51 per cent of adults in Oswestry were inactive with only 15.5 per cent of females doing the recommended amount of exercise.

Participation of people with a limiting disability in Shropshire is also significantly lower than the average for the population as a whole. Less than 10 per cent of people with a long term limiting disability take part in 3x30 minutes of activity per week compared to over 20 per cent of the population as a whole.

Research work undertaken by Energize (Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin's County Sport Partnership) and the Physical Activity Partnership highlights the following challenges:

- agreeing the strategic fit between sectors;
- engaging low participating groups;
- tackling obesity and
- increasing delivery capacity.

Consequently, the Shropshire Physical Activity Improvement Programme was created to address these challenges.

“We wanted to get a real understanding of what some of the barriers were to physical activity across the county. We recognised that we couldn't do this alone, so one of the first things we did was to bring in a number of key partners including the PCT and the county sports partnership (covering Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin).”

**George Candler, Area Director,
Shropshire Council**

Objective

The project set out to identify “the opportunity to increase Shropshire resident’s participation in physical activity as a contribution towards improving their mental and physical health and well-being”.

Although defined as an output of “increasing participation”, the real focus was on building a healthier and happier community by encouraging and enabling everyone in Shropshire to build physical activity into their everyday lives.

The project used a bottom up approach, utilising customer insight, to inform recommendations about:

- the best use of the resources that come into (and which are spent in) Shropshire
- the potential role of different sectors in catering for different community needs
- how organisations might work together to deliver local improvements.

Approach

In order to achieve the over arching objective, of increasing participation in physical activity across Shropshire, it was necessary, in the first instance, to focus how this might be achieved within a narrower remit. Consequently, the project set out to undertake detailed research that was focussed on a few particular activities, a selected geographical area and certain groups of citizens.

Select types of activity

Because it was impossible to consider every type of physical activity, four specific areas of activity were selected for detailed review.

The project aimed to consider what was on offer in Shropshire for each of these areas, to identify the resources allocated towards enabling and encouraging participation and to consider how this could be done differently.

The selected areas were walking, swimming, cricket and rugby. These were selected for the following reasons:

Analysis of provision

Having narrowed the focus of the work to these four areas of activity, the next step was to understand what was available within Shropshire. To achieve this, the project team followed the Total Place model of mapping what was available and then counting the resources allocated to providing and encouraging participation in these activities. A more detailed audit of provision was undertaken in the Oswestry area.

An example of the high level maps derived from this investigation is shown opposite.

Select location

It was also considered necessary to focus on one geographical location within Shropshire, rather than attempting to analyse the whole county. The Active People Surveys, which measure adult participation in sport (APS) and active recreation, identified Oswestry as a poorly performing area.

The table overleaf shows the results for NI8 – Adult Participation in Sport and Active Recreation – for Shropshire.

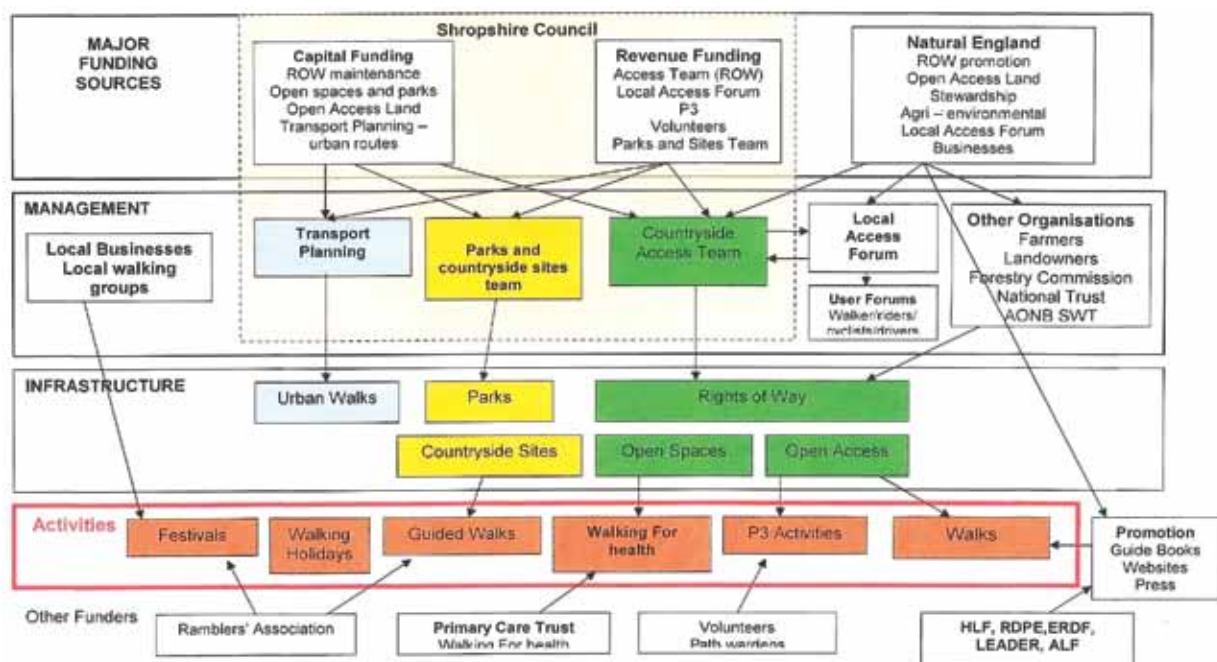
Walking

- is the most popular physical activity for adults
- is easy to access particularly given Shropshire's natural beauty
- is a priority for key partners with external funding available and resources being made available to increase participation eg Walking for Health
- the council has statutory responsibility for maintaining public rights of way
- is facilitated by a significant number of volunteers particularly through the Parish Paths Partnerships
- is promoted in and by schools eg encouraging walking to school
- is suitable for all ages and is particularly successful in encouraging physical activity amongst older people.

Cricket

- is a community based team sport which is particularly popular and successful in Shropshire
- there are over 70 clubs in the county, therefore most communities will have a local ground/club which will be managed by a community/voluntary committee
- is an increasingly popular sport with significant external investment from the national governing body – England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB)
- is popular amongst boys/men and increasingly girls/women and Shropshire also boasts a number of disability teams
- there are County teams for all the groups listed above, there are a number of England representatives (boys and disability) and Shropshire has a minor counties team.

Physical activity in Shropshire: walking



Swimming

- is a 'cradle to the grave' activity – participation is not restricted by age, gender, disability or income
- learning to swim is a key life skill, it is a key stage in a child's development and a recognised part of the National Curriculum
- swimming can be a leisure activity or a sporting pursuit through organised clubs
- a significant proportion of spend on 'leisure' by Shropshire Council will be on swimming
- there is a mix of provision with some private commercial sector provision in Shropshire
- has received investment by the Government for example through the free swimming scheme for under 16's and over 60s
- is a popular sport for people with disabilities, females, those on low incomes and older people (aged 65+).

Rugby

- is a thriving team sport, particularly at school, university and club level,
- facilities will, in the main, be owned and run by local voluntary committees; clubs will rely on volunteers to function
- regardless of size, shape, age and gender there is a type of rugby and a level of competition that is right for almost everyone
- there are a number of variations of the game including disability, seven, tag and beach
- is a high profile national sport and is now an Olympic sport.



National Indicator (NI)

NI8 – Adult Participation in Sport and Active Recreation – for Shropshire

Area	APS1 (Oct 2005–Oct 2006)	APS2/3 (Oct 2007–Oct 2009)
Bridgnorth	22.9 per cent	23.7 per cent
North Shropshire	21.2 per cent	23.9 per cent
Oswestry	20.1 per cent	20.9 per cent
Shrewsbury & Atcham	24.5 per cent	24.8 per cent
South Shropshire	20.3 per cent	19.5 per cent

This indicator, together with a number of local issues led to the identification of Oswestry as a suitable location for the detailed customer insight work to be undertaken as part of this project.

The local issues influencing the choice of Oswestry were:

- the opportunities presented by the new leisure facility, Oswald Park, and the development of a programme of activities
- the development of the Shropshire Way around Oswestry
- the issues faced by one of Shropshire's most deprived communities (Castle Ward).
- the mix of swimming providers (facilities and lessons)



Select Customer Segments

The project utilised Sport England Customer segmentation data aligned with Mosaic information to highlight both current areas of activity and more importantly where the gaps were in terms of non activity. Sport England has developed nineteen sporting segments to help them understand the nations' attitudes to sport and motivations for doing it (or not).

For more information on these segments and the associated Interactive Web Toll please see the Sport England website: http://www.sportengland.org/research/market_segmentation.aspx

The following tables provide an indication of the analysis carried out to identify the most appropriate market segments for review. (Note: The names are fictional and are used merely to make the Mosaic categories seem more personal.)

Tables showing the most appropriate market segments for review

North		3x30		1-2x30		0x30	
Total Population 18+	77655						
Total Segments	77500	TOTALS	17768	TOTALS	23526	TOTALS	36215
6 - Tim	7929	6 - Tim	2521	6 - Tim	3306	19 - Elsie & Arnold	5361
11 - Philip	7410	1 - Ben	2145	11 - Philip	2638	17 - Ralph & Phyllis	3595
13 - Roger & Joy	6462	11 - Philip	1904	3 - Chloe	2262	13 - Roger & Joy	3483
19 - Elsie & Arnold	6300	3 - Chloe	1633	1 - Ben	2225	11 - Philip	2868
3 - Chloe	5876	5 - Helena	1419	13 - Roger & Joy	1777	12 - Elaine	2305
1 - Ben	5361	12 - Elaine	1333	7 - Alison	1644	6 - Tim	2109
12 - Elaine	5250	13 - Roger & Joy	1202	12 - Elaine	1612	18 - Frank	2063
17 - Ralph & Phyllis	5158	7 - Alison	979	5 - Helena	1506	3 - Chloe	1980
5 - Helena	4352	2 - Jamie	838	2 - Jamie	1016	5 - Helena	1432
7 - Alison	3933	17 - Ralph & Phyllis	701	8 - Jackie	926	8 - Jackie	1409
8 - Jackie	2967	8 - Jackie	632	17 - Ralph & Phyllis	861	14 - Brenda	1375
2 - Jamie	2653	4 - Leanne	597	4 - Leanne	861	7 - Alison	1306
18 - Frank	2639	9 - Kev	454	9 - Kev	688	15 - Terry	1303
4 - Leanne	2608	19 - Elsie & Arnold	346	19 - Elsie & Arnold	592	9 - Kev	1199
9 - Kev	2341	14 - Brenda	308	14 - Brenda	472	4 - Leanne	1150
14 - Brenda	2155	15 - Terry	237	15 - Terry	370	1 - Ben	992
15 - Terry	1907	18 - Frank	227	18 - Frank	348	10 - Paula	825
10 - Paula	1348	10 - Paula	212	10 - Paula	311	2 - Jamie	799
16 - Norma	853	16 - Norma	78	16 - Norma	111	16 - Norma	663

Number of people doing 0x30 in each segment, in each area							
Segment	per cent	0x30 total	Osw	Nshrop	Sshrop	Bnorth	Shrews
1 - Ben	18.5	3043	358	634	440	603	1008
2 - Jamie	30.1	2202	361	438	212	360	831
3 - Chloe	33.7	6338	684	1296	1028	1293	2038
4 - Leanne	44.1	3206	488	662	355	582	1119
5 - Helena	32.9	4545	506	926	706	787	1621
6 - Tim	26.6	6470	711	1398	1016	1240	2105
7 - Alison	33.2	3747	449	857	501	726	1214
8 - Jackie	47.5	3750	540	869	430	705	1205
9 - Kev	51.2	3275	598	601	292	486	1299
10 - Paula	61.2	2546	451	373	205	328	1188
11 - Philip	38.7	8197	1106	1761	1284	1533	2513
12 - Elaine	43.9	6773	904	1401	1118	1286	2064
13 - Roger & Joy	53.9	10495	1359	2124	1770	2023	3219
14 - Brenda	63.8	3656	686	688	363	632	1286
15 - Terry	68.3	3428	630	673	366	535	1224
16 - Norma	77.8	1910	335	329	235	257	755
17 - Ralph & Phyllis	69.7	10733	1371	2224	2593	1840	2705
18 - Frank	78.2	5601	889	1174	734	935	1868
19 - Elsie & Arnold	85.1	14887	2407	2954	1825	2492	5209
TOTALS		104801	14834	21381	15471	18644	34471

This customer insight allowed the partners to select a few specific groups for more detailed analysis. It was agreed that these needed to cover the predominant market sectors and to include both the elderly and family groups. Consequently the groups selected were as follows:



Our focus was on the following three groups.

Roger and Joy

We will engage with older people and older couples who are at the point of retirement, between the ages of 55-70. We will engage with this group in the areas they live, in local clubs they may attend, shopping centres, parks, health centres.

Alison

We will engage full-time mothers women who are currently caring for young children.

We will engage with this group through the Sure Start Centres, the areas in which these families live, shopping areas, parks and play areas.

Tim

We will engage with men who are ready to settle down, either living with a long term partner and planning a family, or with a young family.

We will engage with this group out of working hours, outside supermarkets, in the areas in which they live, through Sure Start contacts, in cafes, local pubs, and local industry.

We will be specifically targeting lower income groups and family units

Research

Having selected the activities, the geographical area and the customer segments to be investigated, in June 2010, Thinkpublic was commissioned by Shropshire Council to undertake qualitative research in the town of Oswestry as part of the Council's wider programme to increase the public's participation in physical activity. The aim of this research was to help the Council, key partners, and other service providers achieve a better understand of:

- the experiences of people who have or who are engaging in physical activity in the town of Oswestry.

'Every day we do something, swimming ball room dancing, walking.

'We love to dance, we have been doing it for 3 years, and the hard work is paying off'

'The swimming leisure centre gives us free swimming, we go together, on a wed. I (Val) do 30 lengths, and he does 25.'

'We are more active physically, it's so much better'

Val and John Malcolm, retired couple

- the barriers that stop people engaging in physical activity in the town of Oswestry.

The research aimed to:

- explore the experiences of Oswestry residents, by drawing out their perceptions of being active, their motivations, personal values, as well as perceived barriers to activity

- capture people's experiences and insights using a variety of innovative approaches
- introduce the council to some new models of community engagement and participation, and engage the council in the process
- engage with three main target groups identified by the Council's research, focussing specifically on lower income groups
- provide an evidence base from which to support local people to be more physically active, and to improve the public's experience of using local services and facilities.

Methods of engagement

During the research phase of the project several methods of engagement were utilised:

A day in the life of you

Using a handheld video camera Thinkpublic asked people to describe a typical day for them, highlighting the different points of physical activity during their day. This allowed an insight into not only what forms of physical activity people were engaging in, but also when and why.





Saturday Finale

On the final day of the research Thinkpublic created an event in the town centre that hosted Hula-hooping, skipping competitions and also Yoga.

This form of engagement proved useful to getting children involved in activities whilst researchers talked to their parents, and vice versa. It also provided a platform for giving feedback to residents about some of the initial findings during the week, and for them to share their dreams and aspirations with each other on the Wishing Line.



Thinkpublic took this opportunity to film further 'A Day in the Life of You' videos. By working on a weekend in the town centre, Thinkpublic were able to engage with a diverse and large sample of people living in the area.

In depth interviews

All the above methods, while providing some valuable insights and visual information, were often used as a way to initiate a more in-depth interview with participants.

Much of the information analysed was gathered through semi-structured interviews carried out by the research team. This design limited the risk of experimenter bias, but was sufficiently rigorous to confer reliability to the results.

These interviews were undertaken in people's homes, at community centres, other groups, or on the street and ran from between 15 minutes to an hour. The aim of this form of engagement was to allow the individuals to direct the conversation, telling the researchers about their lives from their own perspectives.

In total Thinkpublic interviewed 27 people in the three target groups and engaged with 85 people in Oswestry, in at least one form.

Locations

In order to reach the target audience people were engaged in the following organisations and locations:

- Home-Start Centre
- Sure Start Centre
- Kingswell Centre
- Oswestry Senior Citizens Club
- Slimming World

- University of the Third Age (U3A)
- Morrisons
- Wetherspoons
- Retail Shops
- Town Centre
- People's Homes.

"In a typical day I get up at 6 or 7 am do housework before they [the children] get up, do ironing and get them to school. Then I do a food shop and pick Katline [4 year old daughter] up. Then I make dinner, play with the kids, afterwards I might go visit someone (usually my Mum & Dad), and then it's tea-time. After which it's bath, bed and story time. Then I do the washing".

Sue, 34, Glentworth

Findings

The research set out to identify the problems and barriers to activity identified by interviewees and the issues they described are outlined.

Activities for all:

The research highlighted the challenge, for the selected groups, of fitting physical activity into their daily lives.

Parents with children especially referred to activity as being a priority for their children but not always for themselves. Parents would need to get babysitters, for example, to enable them to engage in an activity on their own. Also revealed was how local people saw local services and local facilities as being targeted towards certain age groups or demographics, creating an image of exclusivity.

"I don't want to be going to a normal gym full of muscle builders or skinny girls."

Shelley, 40+, Whittington

Innovating physical education:

People talked about their time in school as the time in their lives when they were most active. However, many people who were not currently engaged in physical activity felt that sport at school was 'not for them'. Often the competitive element in school sports alienated people at a young age and inhibited them from staying active throughout their lives.

Activity for life:

People of various ages talked about their lives fluctuating between being quite active and not active at all. One of the challenges that people faced was to keep being active as a consistent priority. This was especially apparent when people talked about the transitional stages in their life.

Mapping what is available:

The research highlighted that there was a gap in peoples understanding in terms of what was available in the local area and how to keep active. Often people were unclear on where to go to find out what was available. There was also uncertainty about the cost of activities and whether certain things were meant for them.

"As a low-income family, we just can't afford it [leisure activities]."

Jo, 23, Morda

"Things are so expensive. We're only on a pension."

Heather, 60+, Oswestry

Helping people access services:

A barrier that frequently arose in this research was that of accessibility and transport. Families felt unable to go to the leisure centre because getting on the bus with prams or pushchairs was often difficult. Older people talked about local bus services finishing too early which prevented them going to groups in the evening.

“The Tannat Valley buses are abysmal, disgusting, filthy and not suitable for push chairs!”

Teresa, 25, East Oswestry

Raising awareness:

Many people knew about and recited the ‘5 a day’ message relating to their diet, but the messages around activity were not as prominent or were confused. Often people felt that activity was an added extra to their lives which they could not “bolt on” when other elements of their lives were chaotic.

Community:

The barriers that people felt stopped them being physically active were often self-imposed, such as a lack of confidence, aspiration and motivation. These issues not only restricted people being physically active but also stopped them engaging with the community more widely.

Active Friends:

Many of the more extensive research methods revealed that the issues forming barriers for a lot of people related to confidence. This was especially true of those who seemed to be very inactive, or who had gone through periods where they had been confined to their homes, with a lack of inspiration or motivation to engage in sports or sociable activities.

Experience based designed new facilities:

This research revealed the need not only to communicate the sessions available at the leisure centre but how the centre is designed and run to best reflect the needs of the public, their motivations, and anxieties.

Space for young people:

Many people talked about the lack of provision for teenagers. This age group was then seen as a nuisance and a barrier for people wanting to access play facilities in the area.

General Issues:

Below is a snapshot of the key issues raised by participants:

- the need to improve participation in physical activity – of all kinds
- the need for community based role models – people supporting each other
- inspiring people and inspired people
- children and parents taking ownership of their fitness and health and wellbeing
- better signposting / more awareness of opportunities
- more sports clubs with links to schools / communities linked to sports clubs and vice versa
- family activities
- health professionals encouraging and supporting inactive people to become active.

Recommendations

In direct response to the issues and barriers identified above, Thinkpublic recommended a series of possible initiatives. These recommendations will form a part of future developments within both Active Oswestry and other future initiatives within Shropshire.

Some of these recommendations have, however, already been utilised. For example, in order to encourage walking (see below) a “walkers welcome” initiative has been launched (whereby local businesses seek to serve walkers needs by providing accessible services) and local people have been directly involved in the development of a new branch of the Shropshire Way footpath.

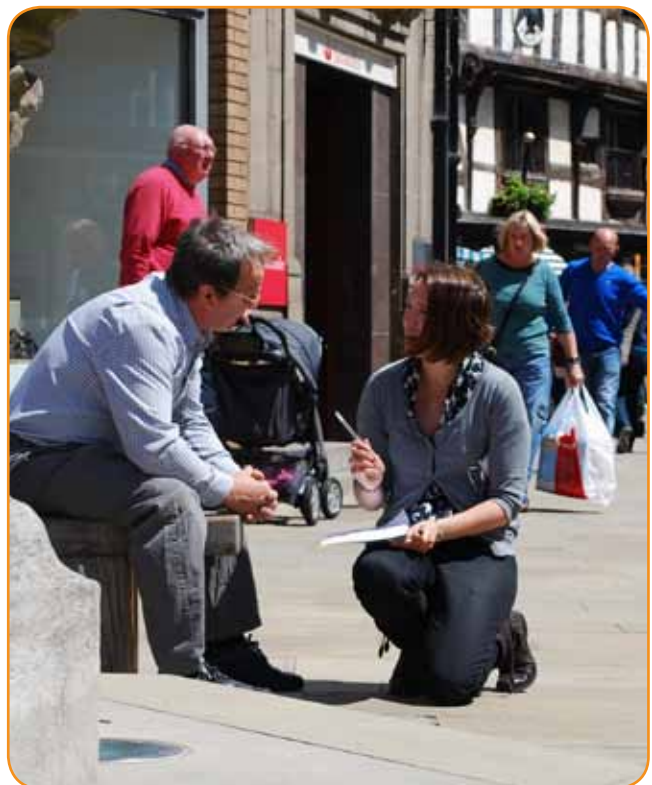
Activities for all:

- **Intergenerational happenings:** By running activities that focus on common interest/sports rather than age group, generations can come together through the shared experience of being active. For example: A break-dancing grannies vs. tea dancing teenagers event, or an intergenerational sports day which sees all generations come together around a shared goal and showcase their own talents and interests.
- **Engaging the whole family:** Within existing services for children or for parents, ensure that all members of a family are able to engage in being active at the same time. For example: While parents are watching their children train at the football or rugby club, include a parents training session which informally engages parents in learning new skills and keeping physically active.

- **Synchronised events:** Another approach would be to ensure that crèche timetables and adult swimming timetables, for example, were in sync to allow parents to take time for themselves without the additional cost of childcare.

Innovating physical education:

Invent a sport: After learning about the value of being active, invite young people to invent their own sport. This could reflect their personality, their own personal skills and interests, and start to challenge the preconceptions around sports (namely that they should be preoccupied with being better than others). There should be a shift in focus towards being the best that you alone can be, by working with others.



Activity for life:

- **Gym Plan for Life:** Volunteer consultants could be available to give members of the community a free hour session where they develop a 'plan for life'. This plan would help people to explain what their life is like, uncover what it is they are interested in, what they would like to do as a physical activity, and how they might adapt this going forward. This could be introduced in secondary schools to lay the foundations for the types of lives teenagers would aspire to lead, set achievable goals and limit the tendency to fall into a spiral of bad habits. Much like a school career service, the emphasis should be on longevity and building activity into one's future life plans.
- **The Flash workout:** Inspired by the recent 'flash dancing' phenomenon, flash exercise could be organised across the area to show that exercise need not be limited by place or time, and can be fun.
- **The Home work-out plan:** classes that teach exercises to do in your own time at home eg whilst watching TV. This will encourage the concept of exercise as part of your lifestyle and not necessarily needing to be restricted to a certain time or place
- **Health and education professional training:** To ensure this service is used by the people who would most benefit, health and education professionals would be engaged in its development and receive information and training where necessary. They would then be encouraged to recognise who would benefit, and would perform a signposting role.

Mapping what is available:

- **A local area activity map:** placed around town showing 'active hotspots', and routes for walking, cycling and rambling. This could be co-designed and illustrated by members of the community to ensure they felt a sense of pride about owning and using the facilities.
- **Active Oswestry for under a fiver booklet:** This is a booklet and website which highlights the activities and deals that allow people to keep active for under a fiver. There would be an opportunity for clubs and societies to advertise their services and for locals to know what's going on.
- **Resident information office:** An alternative to typical tourist information office that is geared towards informing locals of what is going on in their area. Could be organised through the Footfall project as a temporary pop-up office in a derelict shop.

(Note: the Footfall project is a local initiative utilising empty shops and other underused spaces for a variety of community and arts projects, thus encouraging more footfall throughout the town.)

Helping people access services:

- **Rethink bus-routes:** Conduct an analysis of current transport routes, times, stops, and accessibility to map against current user-research.
- **Leisure-link bus:** Work with the transport services to create a subsidised transport link to and from the new leisure centre.
- **Travel-buddy system:** A local social-networking system that invites members of the community to share lifts to certain clubs and activities. This could harness the potential of social networking as a method to share information and bring people together. Working with the council, older people could be trained and supported to create and run this service.
- **Encourage walking:** Creating an illustrated activity book designed for families to walk together, enjoy the process, and learn about the local area. This book would be illustrated to encourage families to spot new things together on their journey, playfully changing perceptions of their area. The aim of this would be to encourage families and children to enjoy the journey without solely concentrating on the destination.

Raising awareness:

- **Me time vs. us time:** Within this campaign reflect the importance of activity as a time to relax and escape and find some peace. Many mothers spoke of a desire for 'me time', but associated this with sedentary activities such as watching TV or having a bath – redefining perceptions of this desired time as an opportunity to enjoy exercise would hopefully encourage participation from not just mothers, but other busy people we spoke to such as those in full-time employment.

- **What is physical health?** Find ways to challenge people's perception of what physical health is and what effect getting old has on it. Encourage people to rise above the traditional idea of getting old as synonymous with inactivity and frailty, and to not let the mental barrier take over what they can still do. This may involve helping people to realise they may not be able to do everything they used to do but they can still do many other useful and enjoyable activities. Presenting options to focus on the positives rather than the negatives.

Community:

- **Community Olympics events:** residents and service providers will co-create new 'Olympic' activities which showcase their talents, from the sublime to the ridiculous! Communities/streets could come together and create their activity and set up ways to compete with other communities in the area. Various media channels could be used to spread the word and recruit participants. For one day every year streets are closed and the Olympics takes over the town!



Active Friends:

- **Identification and training of Active Friends:** to identify appropriate candidates to become Active Friends, then design carefully tailored training sessions to train them in mentoring and listening skills. The Active Friend would be someone who would really get to know the individual and also their surrounding situation to find facilities they are interested in and possibly even attend an activity session with the mentee. The service would be co-designed and developed with selected residents and service providers. Working with third sector and health partners to identify and recruit those people who would benefit most from being mentees; this could initially be run as a pilot. Mentees, after helping change their attitudes towards being active, could then potentially become Active Friends themselves, and follow on the cycle of peer to peer mentors, with the knowledge and understanding of how hard it can be to be un-engaged and get people involved in things.

Experience-based designed new facilities:

- **Individual changing rooms:** to give people more privacy when getting changed.
- **Partially obscured windows:** to give people more privacy when swimming and avoid the feeling of being too overlooked.
- **Use of materials:** to avoid dull institutional feel.
- **Changeable elements:** using lighting, music and props to quickly change the atmosphere in the pool and avoid it always being the same, Create a feeling of surprise when people visit the pool to challenge their perception of it just being a boring rectangle.

- **Clear communication about leisure centre:** keep people informed about what is going on in order to avoid confusion and inaccurate rumours spreading. Re-think the different ways information could be conveyed to ensure a consistent message is presented: talking to people, ads, posters, stickers, banners etc.
- **Co-design brand:** A brand and identity could be created for the leisure centre that has been co-designed with members of the community. People were very keen to be engaged with and get involved.
- **Introduction and integration:** In-line with all communications about activity in the area run free introductory sessions to bring new audiences into the leisure centre. The space could also be used to host other community events, maybe with schools, community groups, the council, music festivals and events. Use the facilities to bring new people in to show them the value and enjoyment of being active.

Space for young people:

- **Co-design spaces:** involve teenagers in the process of creating the activities they would like to be involved in to guarantee they are in line with their needs and interests. Could include new skate park, youth club or graffiti wall etc, the idea would be that if they after involved in the process they are more like to take ownership of them, have pride in them and as a result look after them better.
- **Young person management committee:** challenge conventional hierarchical setups and create a 'young mayor' role that would ensure the teenager's voice is heard.

- **Community caretaker:** someone responsible for keeping an eye on the condition of public space and facilities to ensure that things are repaired / replaced when required to reassure the locals that someone is looking after their area.

Outcomes and benefits

Poor health is a major cost to the nation as a whole. The Government's Physical Activity Strategy – 'Be Active, Be Healthy' includes a breakdown of the estimated healthcare related costs of physical inactivity to illustrate the potential gains to be made by investing in the promotion of healthy, active lifestyles.

For Shropshire County PCT this cost equates to £4.9 million annually. The strategy also estimates the annual cost to the NHS of obesity in Shropshire as growing from £37.5m in 2007 to £46.7m in 2015. There is a massive potential to reduce these costs through improvements in activity levels, which will be monitored through the ongoing Active People Surveys.

This project was initiated with the intent of contributing to the broader health agenda and, consequently, the major beneficiaries will be those citizens of Shropshire who increase their participation in healthy activities.

For example, heart disease is the biggest cause of premature death in England and there is overwhelming evidence of the health benefits of being active. Within Shropshire heart disease accounts for over £3m per annum, ie over 60 per cent, of the estimated costs of physical inactivity. However, nearly 80 per cent of all adults in Shropshire did not participate regularly enough in physical activity to gain these benefits.

It must be recognised that this project did not exist in a vacuum and that there were a number of other initiatives underway which had an influence on levels of physical activity within the area. However, post the Physical Activity review in which leaflets and flyers were produced, and open days hosted to encourage take-up, the number of participants at swimming classes and rugby noticeably increased.

Facilities

As stated earlier, one reason why Oswestry was selected as the focus for this project was because of existing plans to open a new £8m leisure centre, in September 2011, which provides the town with new sports and leisure facilities, a 25-metre swimming pool and a fitness suite. Although the design of this centre pre-dated this research it is envisaged that the learning from this project will influence the future operation of the facility.

“Since the launch, swimming lesson provision has been revolutionised with all six leisure sites across Shropshire now providing a standardised Internationally recognised learn to swim programme for students 3 months upwards “

**Zoe Cooper, Swimming Co-Ordinator,
Swimming Teachers' Association**

Partnerships

The council recognised the important role that national governing bodies have in developing and supporting the aspirations of local sport clubs and were keen to engage with them early on in the process. They were also keen to involve local sport clubs, recognising the very important role that they have in the community.

During the review, the team contacted the local representatives of the National Governing Bodies of the sports under consideration to inform them about the review and to encourage them to actively take part. Activity specific meetings were held attended by clubs, private sector providers, community groups, Shropshire Council staff and National Governing Bodies.

Swimming

In Oswestry there were a number of providers each doing things slightly differently and therefore a potential existed to explore a more integrated and customer focussed approach to the provision of swimming lessons which is driven by the local need and demand.

Alongside this Shropshire Council needed to consider the economy and effectiveness of their operations and the potential options for the development of a county wide Learn to Swim Programme was being considered.

As part of this project, the council had positive discussions with swimming partners and providers and established a shared or common approach in the following areas:

- the place of recreational swimming in the swimming pathway;
- differentiated provision and programming (to meet the needs of target markets)
- developing the aquatic workforce.

In January 2011, the Swimming Teachers' Association (STA) launched the Shropshire Swim Academy.

Since the launch of the Academy Shropshire Council have seen a 45 per cent increase in members, with 3013 enrolled on lessons! The two best performing centres this year have been the Quarry, increasing membership by 525 per cent followed by Much Wenlock by 270 per cent.



Oswestry has seen an increase of new members and all the pre-school classes they offer are virtually full. With the opening of the new centre it is anticipated the Oswestry Academy will have over 500 swimmers enrolled at the centre by March 2012.

This increase in Academy members has resulted in the council recruiting over 40 new swimming teachers (8 at Oswestry) in order to deliver the expanding and evolving programme, which includes new activities; snorkelling, synchronised swimming, personal survival, surf lifesaving, first aid and private 1:21/2/3 lessons. A huge success considering that we are currently in a recession.

In addition, teachers across the county have undergone internationally recognised training to be able to provide lessons for babies, preschool children, people with disabilities, snorkelling and will be trained to be able to deliver synchronised swimming in the new year.

Rugby

The Rugby Football Union participation project, delivered by Oswestry Rugby Club, engaged with about a dozen 14 to 25 yr olds in the Autumn of last year.

Oswestry RFC has gained new junior members this season. The club has done lots of work with schools in the area, including funding coaches in 10 Primary Schools to deliver a 6 week course in School hours. They have also set up a Tag Rugby League consisting of 5 Primary Schools who play on a home and away basis, again this has raised participation levels.

Active Market Town

In response to the research undertaken by this project, Shropshire Council and its partners have agreed to continue with the Active Oswestry agenda developed from this research.

The brand image has been retained and a steering group has been set up and has started to implement an agreed action plan.



Using the Oswestry pilot as an exemplar, the council and its partners are now seeking to implement an 'Active Market Town' approach to leisure services across the county. Sport Drayton has already been launched in Market Drayton and a third initiative is just being launched in Whitchurch.

Organisational benefits

For the organisations involved, the Customer Insight provided by this project has enabled them to focus the investment of their limited resources with the aim of achieving improved participation levels.

Importantly, the project has helped the council to recognise that it needs to focus more on its customers and to put users at the heart of service design. It has established a Customer Insight team to support this change of focus combining intelligence about users and research capacity. The ethnographic research and engagement practices introduced by Thinkpublic are now in common use across the council. For example, the techniques are currently being used in the Place Based Intervention Project in North Shrewsbury.

In addition the Council has established the Business Design Team; which is a new, small team established to place Shropshire Council at the forefront of innovation by putting design at the heart of the Council's Transformation Programme. This team works with senior managers and teams from across the council to shape innovative thinking. This team is using ethnographic research techniques to understand how people live their lives and to shape new services around them.

For example, Shropshire Council has been awarded £100,000 to develop innovative ideas to increase older people's independence, confidence and links to others who can offer support. The council is to receive the funding from the Keeping Connected Business Challenge, which was launched to stimulate the development of new business ideas that can help older adults maintain and develop social connections.

Governance

The project was managed by Shropshire Council as set out over the page.

A virtual steering group known as the Physical Activity Board provided critical friend input at key stages of the review and challenged the findings and recommendations arising from the review.

The board included executive officer representation from:

- Shropshire Council
- County Sports Partnership
- Natural England
- Voluntary Sector
- Shropshire PCT.

In addition a working group was set up to focus on delivering the reviews tasks and included senior officer representation from:

- Shropshire Council
- County Sports Partnership
- Shropshire PCT
- Private Sector.

Voluntary and community groups contribute at key stages of the work undertaken.

Various national governing bodies eg England and Wales Cricket Board and the Amateur Swimming Association and their respective Shropshire Associations, were also involved.

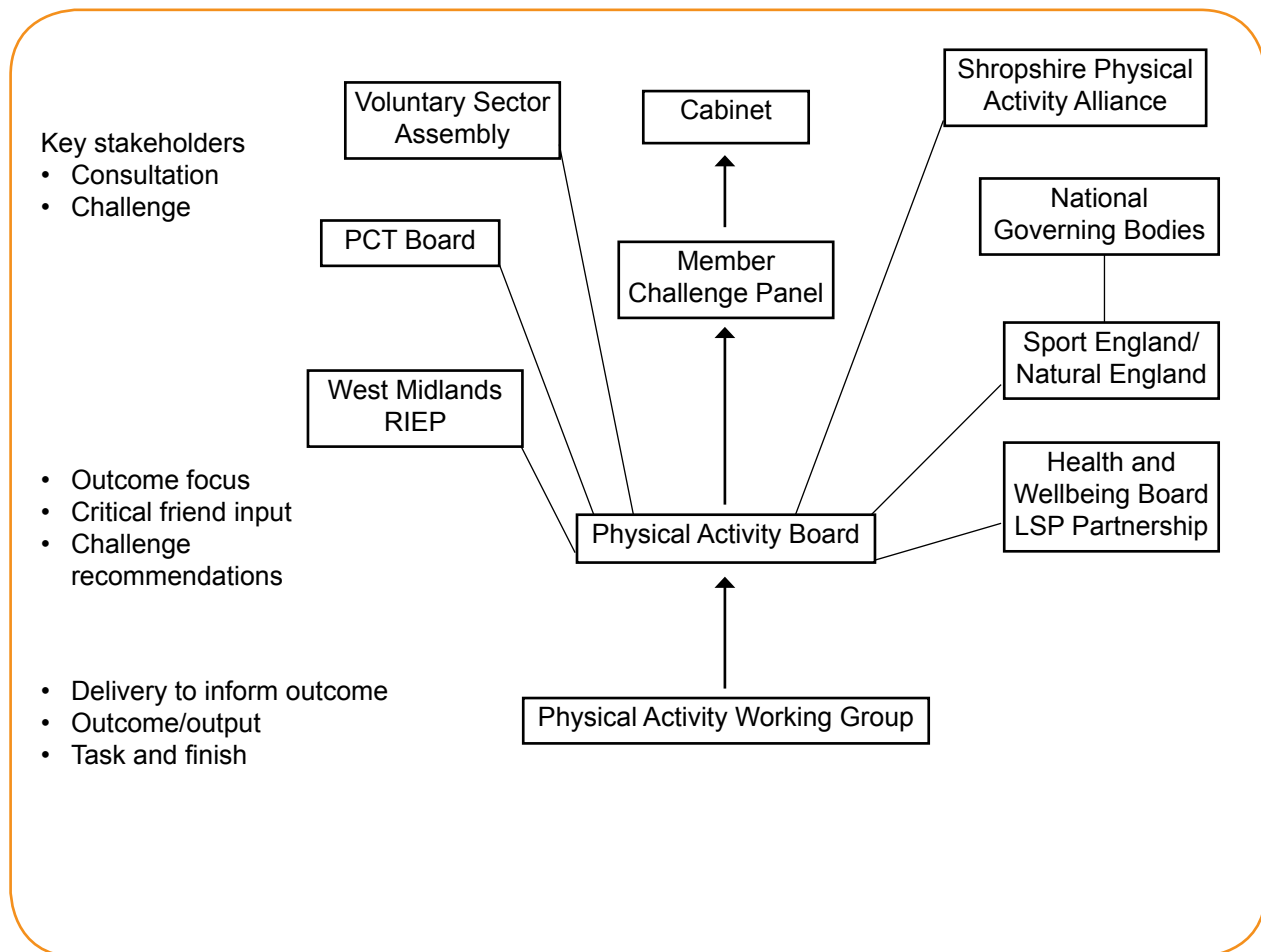
The update reports from this project were presented to Cabinet.

The Council's approach included a member challenge panel which was held prior to Interim and Final reports being considered by Cabinet. This was politically balanced and consisted of 7 members, including:

- Portfolio Holder for Performance
- Portfolio Holder for Culture and Leisure
- Portfolio for Children and Young People
- Chairman of Children and Young People's Service Scrutiny Committee
- Chairman of Community Services Committee.

Scope and terms of reference – increasing physical activity in Shropshire

Project structure – review of physical activity in Shropshire



Resourcing

Shropshire Council received a grant of £60,000 and the budget was arranged as follows:

Consultation and Engagement	£35,000
Household level customer segmentation licence	£15,000
Learning events	£10,000

The research and engagement phase came in on budget at £35,000.

The segmentation licence for the Household and Postcode level dataset was purchased at a cost of £12,257 and the successful implementation and use meant that the council secured budget to renew this.

A number of learning events were held, including

- The co-design workshop that was held in June 2010 where the research work was showcased.
- Several Customer Insight events held in Birmingham, giving presentations on the work and sharing learning on the project with colleagues from other authorities & organisations.
- A session was held for the Cabinet, to improve their understanding of the approach taken – this included viewing the two ethnographic films. This has also helped get buy in and support from Cabinet Members for this type of work.

In addition, the partners contributed officer time at no charge to the project.



Challenges and lessons learnt

Learning was a key element of this review. Very good progress was made against the aspiration to leave a legacy by creating a partnership culture and methodology and encourage commitment from partners to continue this work across other areas of physical activity. This was achieved through active engagement and positive dialogue with a range of key partners, stakeholders and community groups. Specifically the Shropshire Physical Active Alliance is championing the approach to demand led provision.

Whilst good progress has been made there are a number of learning points which are relevant to future similar pieces of work:

- undertaking the baseline assessment work prior to having the scope and terms of reference for the review agreed would help the review to gain momentum and to focus on key tasks
- undertaking customer engagement work early in the review is essential to ensure activity is focussed on the right things
- do not underestimate partner and stakeholders desire to change the way things are currently done
- the approach does not come with a manual – however, more work is needed on developing a conceptual understanding of what is being attempted
- there is a need to be creative but also to balance this with an analytical and evidenced based approach.



Next steps

As a direct result of this project Shropshire Council is considering a proposal to amend its approach to the provision of leisure services.

These draft proposals are based on an “Active Market Town” approach. Following on from the experience in Oswestry, a similar approach is being used in Market Dreyton and third initiative is just beginning in Whitchurch.

The Council’s future approach to leisure provision will have at its heart the “localism agenda” - placing local communities at the centre of decision making; giving them greater say over their local services; saving the services that they value most; creating a new generation of community organisers and volunteers; developing leisure centres as “community hubs” and “gateway” access points; and exploring partnerships that deliver Shropshire outcomes with other service providers including youth, social care and arts development services.

This approach recognises two important considerations:

- it will take time to develop and nurture
 - time will be needed to develop collaborative community working, to train the local workforce and to widen the market of leisure providers
- each community / market town is different and whilst there are some common issues, a one size fits all approach will not work.
- The key elements of this approach include:
- the identification of local issues, needs and priorities

- increasing the capacity of community organisations and helping them to ‘help themselves by supporting them to deliver a broader range of activities
- prioritising investment to encourage mass participation in sport and leisure, particularly from areas and sectors where traditionally participation has been low - the approach works on the premise that what is important is the suitability and availability of local provision, in its many forms, and not who provides it
- enabling the transfer of facility operations, notably those on joint use school sites, to new and appropriate governance arrangements - important in this respect will be a review of school sports structures and support and the development of schools as centres of activity for young people and the community.

Increasingly the Council will work within a commissioning approach, an approach which supports the development of new local social enterprises and governance arrangements. Direct service delivery is likely to be replaced by a professional facilitating and quality assurance role in which a range of providers are supported to provide ‘Shropshire outcomes’.



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