

Comhairle Ceantair an Iúir, Mhúrn agus an Dúin
Newry, Mourne & Down District Council

Bí Gníomhach Be Active

Straitéis Spórt agus Gníomhaíocht Choirp
A Sport and Physical Activity Strategy

2025-2030



Ag freastal ar an Dún
agus Ard Mhacha Theas
Serving Down
and South Armagh



Comhairle Ceantair
an Iúir, Mhúrn agus an Dúin
Newry, Mourne and Down
District Council



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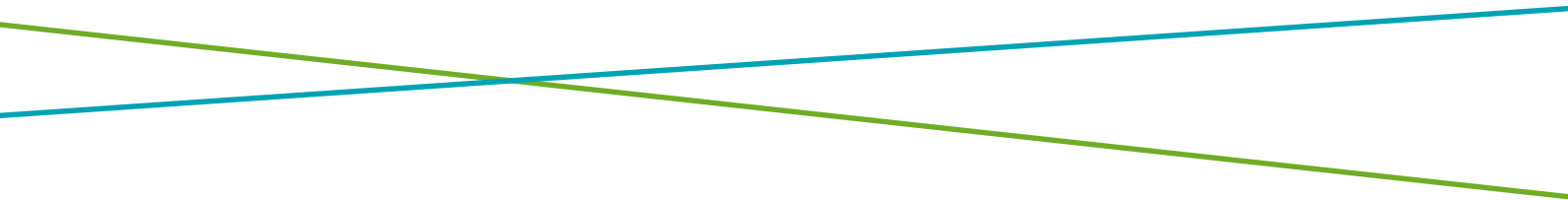
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Introduction

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council area, with a population of 181,000 works in partnership with local communities and organisations – including the public, voluntary, community and private sectors – to deliver a vision for the local area.

Stretching from Strangford Lough to South Armagh and taking in Newry city, Downpatrick and Newcastle, the district draws lovers of the outdoors with 150 kilometres of coastline, the glorious Mourne and Cooley Mountains and much more. Planned investment of around £200 million across the district is set to transform the lives of everyone in Newry, Mourne and Down. The Council's collaborative approach with partners and communities ensures the area has an exciting future, making the most of its multitude of assets.

Participation in sport and physical activity plays an important part in the lives of Newry, Mourne and Down's residents, whether in PE and sport at school, walking groups, formal sports participation, families and friends out and about and lots more. The district is unlike any other, offering exciting opportunities for recreation, both indoor and outdoor, on and off the water.

With new improved facilities and greater health promotion, more people take regular exercise than ever before, however, many people still don't make it a lifestyle choice. To a large extent we are responsible for our own health and wellbeing throughout our lives.

Living longer gives us the opportunity to improve the way we live, helping us to approach our later years physically fit and mentally sharp. This strategy aims to encourage us all to be more active whether through informal recreation activities or formal sport. We don't have to be Olympic athletes to see the benefits of being active – any amount of physical activity is better than none! At the outset it's important to realise that physical activity is not the only thing that benefits wellbeing but it is a great lifestyle habit that helps shape the quality of our wellbeing.

181,000
population

150km
coastline

£200m
planned investment



“To support and advocate for a welcoming district which is progressive, healthy and sustainable, providing better economic, environmental and social outcomes for all.”



Setting the Scene

Be Active has sprung from the clear message that participation in physical activity and sport leads to significant health and well-being benefits. This message is found in every strategic approach put forward by government and its agencies.

Programme for Government

Office of First Minister and Deputy First Minister

The new Programme for Government will ‘build on the outcomes-based approach that has defined strategic planning across the public sector’. Government departments and agencies are encouraged to work together to achieve more for everyone. The outcomes-based approach intends for departments and agencies to ‘create, or co-design and co-produce strategies and plans that cut across departments and sectors to tackle societal problems and improve wellbeing for all’.



Active Living

A Sport and Physical Activity Strategy for Northern Ireland
Department for Communities

Vision

‘Lifelong involvement in sport and physical activity will deliver an active, healthy, resilient and inclusive society which recognises and values both participation and excellence.’



The strategy looks to achieve this vision by increasing the percentage of the population involved in sport and physical activity. Strategic themes include:-



Recovering from the impact of the pandemic on sport and physical activity.



Promoting participation, inclusion and community engagement.



Promoting partnership and integration.

The Power of Sport

Corporate Plan 2021-2026. Sport NI

Mission Statement

'We are passionate about maximising the power of sport to change lives. By 2026 we want the power of sport to be recognised and valued by all.'



Sport NI's focus is increasing participation in the wake of the pandemic, looking especially at people in our society who are presently under-represented in sport and physical activity. The Power of Sport has two strategic outcomes:-



1
People adopting and sustaining participation in sport and physical activity.



2
Our athletes among the best in the world.

Sport NI recognises that how people participate in sport and physical activity is changing, often not within a sports club, so their work in creating opportunities for participation strives to suit as many people as possible and in the way they choose to be active.

Living Well Together

A Community Plan for Newry, Mourne and Down to 2030

Vision

'Newry, Mourne and Down District is a place with strong, safe and vibrant communities where everyone has a good quality of life and access to opportunities, choices and high-quality services which are sustainable, accessible and meet people's needs.'



Whilst the Council led the community planning process, Living Well Together was crafted by a range of sectors to address and improve the big issues that matter to the people of Newry, Mourne and Down, like:



Health



Education



Employment



Safety



Environment

The idea behind Living Well Together is that...

**by supporting
collaboration,
organisations can
work together
towards achieving
shared goals.**

Living Well Together has five outcomes, two of which are linked to Be Active



Outcome All people in Newry, Mourne and Down enjoy good health and wellbeing.

Indicator Level:

Why these matter?

Life Expectancy

Life expectancy is the standard measure of how long people can expect to live on average based on current age-specific mortality rates. It's important to note that life expectancy does not necessarily tell us about the quality of people's health and wellbeing.

Work Life Balance

Getting the right balance between work and private life largely defines people's lifestyle. The way people allocate and spend their time is partly determined by the cultural, social and policy settings in which they live. Committing to regular physical activity and/or sport helps achieve a healthy work life balance.

Preventable Death

Being more active is proven to help reduce the risk of certain conditions including heart disease, Type 2 diabetes, obesity, and some cancers whilst also improving mental health and wellbeing.

Health Status

People put their health along with employment at the top of what affects their living conditions. Here again, being involved in physical activity or sport makes a significant contribution to people's overall health status.

Outcome All people in Newry, Mourne and Down live in respectful, safe and vibrant communities.

Indicator Level:

Why these matter?

Social Connections

Sporting and recreational organisations provide material and emotional support as a matter of course and in times of need, as well as providing access to employment networks and other opportunities. Generally, we are happier when we engage with others.

Getting Started

The Council

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council is the biggest provider of facilities and services in the district for sport and physical activity, both indoor and outdoor. Here's the picture for just some of what the Council does: -

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council



Leisure centres each offering a range of facilities

5 leisure centres each offering a range of facilities, activities and programmes that encourage people to be active either as individuals or with friends and family or in organised groups and clubs – Downpatrick Leisure Centre, Newry Leisure Centre, Kilkeel Leisure Centre, Newcastle Centre, Ballymote Sports & Wellbeing Centre and over 80 outdoor sports pitches and facilities, both natural grass and artificial turf, accommodating a range of sports and activities for competition and training.



Be Active for Life programme

The Be Active for Life programme delivers over 200 physical activity opportunities across the district each week. Classes are very social but also help people to develop their physical literacy and improve their health and wellbeing. Cost is kept low to ensure it isn't a barrier to participation.



Be Active for Health initiative

Be Active for Health is a district wide initiative aimed at reducing health inequalities of residents targeting those with various chronic health conditions and those recovering from surgery. These include the physical activity referral scheme (PARS), Cardiac and Cancer rehabilitation. Be Active for Health is currently part funded by the Public Health Authority. This initiative is delivered across the district in Newry, Kilkeel, Newcastle and Downpatrick and includes indoor and outdoor group-based activities. Referred clients get access to Be Active for health classes, use of the Council's fitness suites and pools.



Summer Sports Camps

A key component of the Council's sports development annual budget is to provide financial assistance to sports clubs to deliver Summer Sports Camps during July and August. This assistance supports enriching experiences and opportunities for young people to engage in physical activity and sport with a focus on new participation and addressing areas of social need and under-represented groups.



Minor and Major capital grants

The Council's financial assistance to sports clubs also takes the form of Minor and Major capital grants. By supporting clubs to develop infrastructure which promotes a welcoming and accessible environment, the aim of the capital grants programme is to inspire individuals of all ages and abilities and from all backgrounds to embrace sport and physical activity.



Annual Sports Awards

In association with the Sports Association Newry, Down and South Armagh (SANDSA) the Council hosts the district's Annual Sports Awards. The award categories celebrate the remarkable achievements of teams and individuals who have made outstanding contributions to sport as well as paying tribute to coaches, volunteers, mentors, teachers and parents who are the backbone of the sports clubs and the community.



Generic training programme

The Council's popular generic training programme for sports clubs is delivered each year, offering a range of topics in response to expressed interest and level of demand. Topics include nutrition in sport, preparing a business case, mental health in sport and many others.



Elite Athlete Scheme

The Council's Elite Athlete Scheme helps amateur athletes in recognised sports participating at an international level by giving access to sports facilities for training prior to competition. Allied to this is the Recognition of Achievement for High Performance Levels in Sport, the aim of which is to promote and encourage high achievement in sport, so increasing participation at a local level.

Russell Gaelic Union Minor Capital Funding

The project has allowed teams, local schools/sports/community groups and under-represented groups to engage in outdoor basketball/netball at the club

'Confirmation of funding from Newry Mourne & Down District Council was received in 2022 and the Russell Gaelic Union development committee started work immediately in planning, monitoring, and evaluating this project, which opened in 2023. The 3G facility has allowed us to increase sporting activities for existing and new members and increase participation from under-represented groups such as females, people with disability and older people living in an area of high social need and growing population. The 3G facility allows the 30 teams within the RGU, local schools and local sports/community groups access to train and play in the autumn and winter.

Up until the facility opened there was only one 3G pitch in Downpatrick, based at a local school. The club is now able to involve other groups and sports clubs. We now host an after school's programme to increase numbers of young people engaging in sport. These primary schools are also able to use the facility during the day. Outdoor basketball and netball nets were purchased with Minor Capital Items funding and installed in the club's newly constructed 3G multi-sport court. The club linked with Down Netball Club to create a multi-sports facility which enhances the ways in which the site can be utilised.'

Sports Clubs

Newry, Mourne and Down

With around 25,000 sports club members in Newry, Mourne and Down, or 14% of the population, it's clear that formal sport is a big part of people's lives in the district. There are around 40 different sports on offer in approximately 250 clubs, everything from athletics to coastal rowing and from angling to Gaelic games, to mention a few. Some sports, such as Gaelic games have many more clubs than others, yet all clubs offer opportunities for people to enjoy physical activity at a level that suits them.

People say they join sports clubs in the district because they are *'welcoming and well run and it's good for mental health and wellbeing.'* Many people stay in a sports club throughout their life, becoming a volunteer in later years. This reflects the sense of belonging, friendship and community engagement found in sports clubs that is so important to our wellbeing. Mostly, people only leave sports clubs because of a change in circumstances, such as moving away from the area.

The district's sports clubs have fewer female participants than male, a ratio of 1.5 to 1. This picture is the same in sports clubs across the country, however, female membership of sports clubs in the district is rising faster than male membership, encouraged by the success of women's sports in recent years and their higher profile in the media. There's never been a better time for girls and women to take up sport.



Volunteers

4,000 +

Over 4,000 volunteers help to run the district's sports clubs, mostly motivated by having a child involved in the club but also because they love the sport and want to give something back to their community.

1,600

An estimated 1,600 people are coaches in the district's sports clubs, more than twice as many males as females. Only half of the clubs are happy with the skill level of their coaches.



60%

60% of clubs report it is difficult to recruit female coaches. Consequently, there are clear opportunities to make sports coaching attractive to females, perhaps by offering introductory coaching courses focusing on females.

79%

Whilst most - 79% - of the district's sports clubs focus on creating health and wellbeing opportunities for people of all abilities.



42%

Only 42% of the district's sports clubs have a health and wellbeing policy.



Support

The district's sports clubs get support from several organisations; for *financial support* and *facilities* they mostly rely on Newry, Mourne and Down District Council; for *training support* and *general advice* they mostly rely on their governing body. They also get support from Sport NI. The clubs work in partnership with local schools and community organisations.



Community Survey

Being Active in Newry, Mourne & Down



A major survey of the district's residents, attracting nearly 600 responses, revealed a good deal of information about how active they are, the importance they place on being active, the activities that are most popular and what motivates them or holds them back from being active. Respondents were asked to think about 'how many days are you physically active in a typical week and at what level?'

34%

of respondents are active on 5 days or more

58%

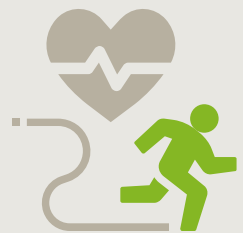
of respondents are active on 2, 3 or 4 days

80%

of respondents reckon they are **moderately active to very active**

20%

of respondents are either **inactive** or **mildly inactive**



The World Health Organisation

The World Health Organisation recommends doing 30 minutes of activity on 5 days a week to help towards good health and wellbeing.

34%

of survey respondents achieve this

12%

of respondents are only active on **1 day** or not at all

99%

agree that '*being physically active can benefit and improve my general health and wellbeing.*' As a result, there's a big gap between the *knowing* and the *doing*.

Activities & Sports



Here's what respondents said about the activities and sports they take part in.



People can enjoy these activities either as individuals or in small groups. Given the district's easy access to inland and coastal waters, it's no surprise that water-based sports are also popular. More formal activities and sports returned much lower percentage results, eg 7% for Gaelic games, 6% for association football. Formal activities and sports generally take place within a club environment as part of a group. The results here show that less formal activities, especially walking, are easily accessible and enjoyed by many people.

Motivation



The survey quizzed respondents on their motivation for being active and reasons for not being more active. The top motivations for being active are to do with how people feel about themselves.

Top reasons for being active			Top reasons for not being active		
1	84%	to improve my overall health and fitness	1	37%	I don't have time due to work and/or family commitments
2	66%	to make me feel better	2	29%	lack of facilities in my area
3	54%	to maintain my mental health	3	24%	I don't have enough money
4	49%	to help control my weight			

Motivations linked to sports performance are much lower rated at around 5%.

Other lesser reasons mentioned; *'the weather often puts me off'*, *'don't know what's on in my area'*, *'I'm too tired to do exercise'*, *'I feel self-conscious'*, *'I feel my age – over 60 – is a barrier to participating more.'* Only 1% said *'I'm just not interested in being more active.'* This strategy will promote people's motivations for being active and work to challenge the barriers.

Education Survey

Schools, encouraged by the Education Authority, are increasingly embracing community use of their sports facilities outside curriculum time. When this happens it's a win-win for the schools and the communities they serve.

The education survey wanted to find out about the constraints facing schools regarding community use and their thoughts on working in partnership with the Council.

Council

Most schools – 88% - already work in partnership with the Council and all the respondent schools expressed interest in exploring new opportunities to help the Council deliver this strategy.

Community

All the schools surveyed either presently open their sports facilities for community use or would consider it in the future.

Barriers

There are several barriers to schools being able to open to community use; these include: -
Insurance concerns
Preparing a user agreement
Extra staffing and resource costs

Facilities

Some of the schools highlighted that community use of their premises outside curriculum time is not part of their remit, suggesting that third party involvement would be needed.



Community use of schools outside curriculum time has been increasing in recent years and the schools' survey evidences a willingness on the part of the district's schools to embrace the communities they serve in this way. Several schools plan to develop their outdoor sports facilities in the future to assist in delivery of curriculum and community activity. Here's a flavour of what they say: -

'We would need help to develop our facilities to bring them to a level where they can be used by the local community. We are regularly asked by local clubs as we have the space to provide sporting facilities but at present do not have them in place.'

'We have big ambitions to develop our facilities to improve the community links and improve our existing facilities for our students and the people of the surrounding area. We would love the opportunity to develop links with the Council.'

'The Council could have an event to meet PE staff and gather information on sports and activities played in each school. Children are more likely to engage in activities outside of school if they have a link; more opportunities for Council-led activity initiatives within schools could help.'



Activity Provider's Survey



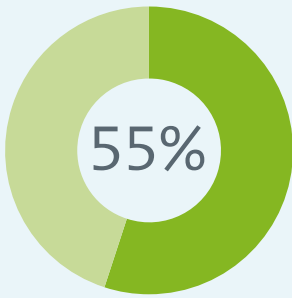
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sports and activity
providers representing
responded to the survey

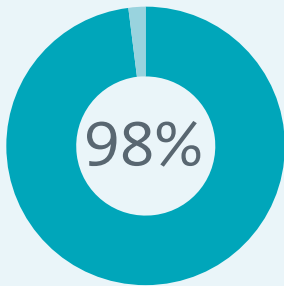
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different activities
represented in the survey

These providers are mostly sports clubs, but they also view themselves as a social enterprise, providing physical activity, sports, and wellbeing activities to benefit local communities.



have already delivered activities in partnership with the Council



are interested in exploring opportunities to help the Council deliver Be Active



Organisations offering physical activity and sports opportunities to local communities are clearly a key resource in taking the strategy forward

These organisations deliver their activities in many different facilities, including:



Public parks



Green spaces



Beaches



Rivers



Lakes



Greenways



Countryside



Hills

However, the need for facilities and other challenges often hold activity providers back from doing more. Here's what two of them said:-

'Providing free information/talks/demonstrations for how to eat and exercise, specifically tailored for individuals who are over-weight, could be beneficial.'

'Tell us what support is available to us for us to work together in advertising and offering activities to young and old.'

Living Longer

Most of us want to live as long and as well as possible. To achieve this, we must be active throughout our lives, from an early age into our later years. The idea of our working life ending when we hit 60 or 65 years of age is ill-suited to long lives, but we need to change how we think about how we approach living longer.

Our quality of life at all ages – physical and mental – benefits from being active, helping to keep us well and able to participate in society and our communities to the level of our choosing.

IT'S UP TO US!

‘We don’t stop being active because we grow old, we grow old because we stop being active.’

Newry, Mourne and Down’s Health

- 1 Life expectancy at birth in Newry, Mourne and Down is 78.9 years for men and 82.7 years for women, both slightly higher than the average for Northern Ireland.

- 2 In the district’s most deprived areas men can expect to have a shorter life by about two years and women by about six months.

- 3 Hospital admissions in the district’s most deprived areas are higher than for across the district.

- 4 Prescription rates for mood and anxiety are also higher in the most deprived areas.

- 5 The Department of Health Inequalities Annual Report for 2023 shows that of the 53 health outcomes measured in Newry, Mourne and Down, 15 are worse than the Northern Ireland average.



Be Active for Life Rena's Story

'I am a 77-year-old widow lady. I attend the Be Active programme because I am a firm believer that exercise can strengthen bones, muscles and help improve your memory. It increases the release of endorphins leaving you feeling uplifted. This can be a great benefit to people who are suffering from depression and mental health issues.'

'The classes are so much fun and everyone who goes truly enjoys them. The music, the laughter, the companionship and at the same time getting a good workout, this all helps towards a healthy body and mind. The coaches are very respectful of all ages and take stock of people's health issues.'



Be Active for Life Ana's Story

'After a heart attack, Ana joined the Cardiac Rehabilitation Programme in Newry Leisure Centre. 'In a weird way, having a heart attack was one of the best things that ever happened to me because it gave me the opportunity to reassess my life and gave me the tools to maintain a healthy lifestyle. The programme at Newry Leisure Centre played a vital role in this transformation. It made me enjoy exercise again, something I never thought I'd say.'

'The programme not only helped me regain my physical strength but also taught me what exercise can do for my mental health. I came to realise that the combination of physical and mental wellbeing is essential. I can confidently say the rehabilitation programme has changed my life. It has given me the knowledge to help me lead a healthier and happier life. I'm grateful for the opportunity to be a part of this programme and for the positive impact it has had on my overall wellbeing.'

What are the Benefits of Being More Active?

Being Active

1

By the time we reach 60, many of our health outcomes have already been determined. So, staying active throughout our lives really helps us stay mobile and independent in later years.

2

Staying active helps improve sleep and boosts our self-esteem. It helps us feel happier by reducing feelings of stress and it encourages a sense of achievement.

3

Being active with other people in family or community groups encourages a sense of wellbeing and makes children feel good about themselves whilst reinforcing family bonds.

4

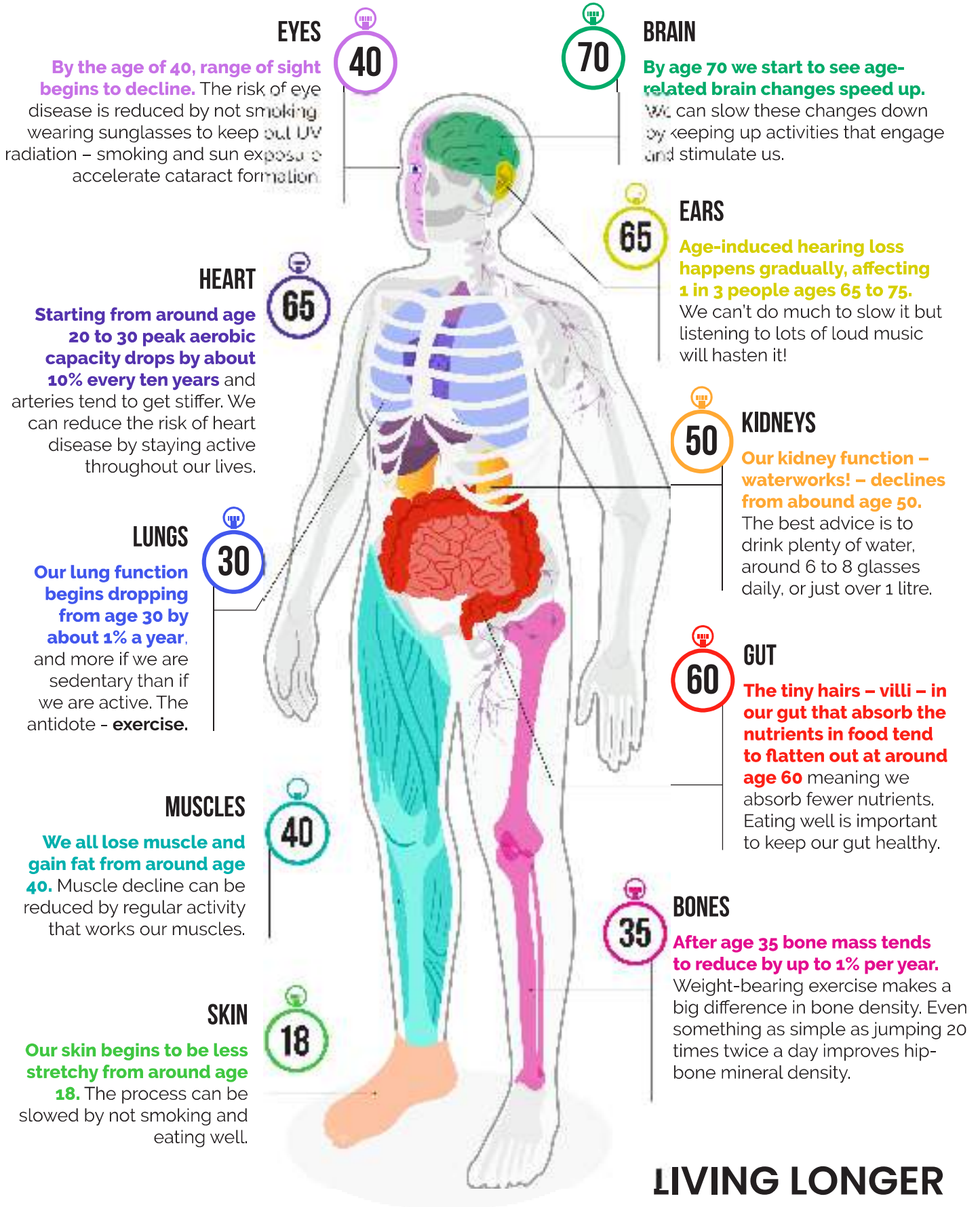
We can reduce the risks of many chronic diseases by being active, including heart disease, some cancers, Type 2 diabetes, stroke, and osteoporosis.

5

Whatever our age or ability, even small changes to our active lives will make us feel good, give us more energy, and help us live longer and better.

6

Making fitness a habit can help with breathing difficulties, high blood pressure and bone health.



LIVING LONGER

Age when body part begins to falter

As suddenly as aging can feel, no-one wakes up in an old body without getting some warning signs first, yet if we know what's coming, we can plan to give certain parts some extra care to help us live longer and better. Perhaps we need to know a bit more about how putting on the years affects our body parts and what we can do about it. We're never too old to help our body and our mind!

Vision, Objectives and Themes



Vision



Choice

The vision for Be Active

Being Active is a Lifestyle Choice for everyone in Newry, Mourne and Down.

Objectives

The vision will be achieved through these objectives



Fitness

Activity and Sport

Activities and sports suited to all ages and abilities for fun, fitness and competition.



Lifestyle

Active lifestyle

Organisations working together to promote active lifestyles and deliver programmes in partnership.



Support

Programme Support

Supporting the district's sports clubs and activity providers in delivering activity programmes that suit everyone's needs.



Themes Consultation helps inform these four themes and the outcomes expected through their delivery



Theme 1

Community

Encouraging individuals, families and community groups to take responsibility for their own physical activity and wellbeing profile, especially thinking of those who are less active than others.

Outcome

More people enjoying physical activity and sport at the level of their choosing and making it a lifestyle choice.



Theme 2

Sports Providers

A focus on the district's sports clubs and activity providers, encouraging them to embrace physical activity and wellbeing alongside their primary sport.

Outcome

Sports clubs and activity providers welcome the whole community and promote athletes and officials development at all levels of participation.



Theme 3

Partnerships

Working together to make the best use of resources and influence more people to adopt active lifestyles, especially people who are mostly sedentary.

Outcome

Shared responsibility and commitment by stakeholder organisations.



Theme 4

Telling Everyone

With the help of role models and effective marketing we need to constantly put the benefits of an active lifestyle in front of everyone in such a way that they decide to have a go and keep at it.

Outcome

Everyone knows about the opportunities for participation in sport and physical activity.

Theme 1

Be Active – Community

Begin active with family and friends or in a group is a great way to encourage each other and benefit our physical and mental health. There's no better place to enjoy sport and physical activity as part of a community than in the district's sports clubs which between them offer around forty different sports.

Exercising regularly will benefit you the most. It doesn't have to be at a set time of day or in the same place. Make being active suit you and your lifestyle and you're more likely to keep it going. This approach will work for you regardless of where you live or your socio-economic status.

Sport and physical activity can be enjoyed as a recreational activity such as walking, as a group activity, perhaps Parent and Baby, as a structured sport in a sports club or in one of the Council's sports development and activity programmes.

Children should try to be active every day – any amount of physical activity is better than none. Adults too should be physically active every day, aiming for at least 150 minutes weekly of activity that makes you slightly out of breath.



Financial Assistance – Summer Sports Camps Tollymore United FC

Tollymore United FC used their award in 2023 to engage girls, ethnic minorities (refugees living in Newcastle) and children living with a disability, including autism in a range of activities. More than 150 young people enjoyed a week of fun activities, increasing their awareness of the importance of physical and mental wellbeing. The project was hailed as a 'win win' for the young participants and for the club, with volunteer coaches gaining valuable experience and the club's profile raised.

Strategic Actions – Community

- 01

BE ACTIVE FOR LIFE PROGRAMME

Promote and deliver Be Active for Life for all ages and abilities. Each Be Active for Life programme will focus on key groups, covering all ages and all abilities. The aim is for programmes to be as inclusive as possible.

- 02

BE ACTIVE FOR HEALTH INITIATIVES

Continue to deliver Be Active for Health initiatives, eg PARS, MacMillan Move More and others. The Physical Activity Referral Scheme (PARS) works with around 400 individuals each year across the district, shaping physical activity profiles to suit their needs.

- 03

COUNCIL-LED ACTIVITY PROGRAMMES

Grow Council-led activity programmes with schools across the district. Opportunities for regular physical activity in school settings have reduced in recent years. These Council-led programmes seek to re-introduce young people to physical activity in a way that encourages them to adopt it as a lifestyle choice.

- 04

MULTI-SPORT CAMPS

Deliver multi-sport camps for children and young people at various times of the year, eg summer, Halloween. School holiday periods, including half-term weeks, allow the delivery of daytime multi-sport camps offering indoor and outdoor sports and activities. These camps introduce young people to sports they haven't tried before and provide opportunities to continue the sport in local sports clubs and organisations.

- 05

COMMUNITY-BASED ACTIVITY PROGRAMMES

Build community-based activity programmes for individuals; upskill volunteers and coaches to deliver local programmes. Consultation evidence signifies potential within communities for individuals to become leaders and coaches in activities, eg walk leaders, that benefit their own communities. Local people delivering activities at a local level will help to engage with minorities groups and people for whom transport may be a challenge.

Strategic Objectives	Outcomes
Physical and Mental Health	More people of all ages and abilities take exercise on a regular basis, enough to benefit their health and wellbeing.
Equality of Opportunities	Regardless of where people live in the district, their socio-economic status or their time of life, everyone has the same opportunity to enjoy physical activities that benefit their health and their living experience.

Theme 2

Be Active – Sports Providers

Many community groups, sports clubs, and commercial operators all offer opportunities to be more active; they encourage people to take up sport, they develop people through sport, they imbue in people a love of sport and they gift people with an active lifestyle that becomes part of who they are, as a result, helping to shape and define local communities.

In short, they are part of the fabric of society, making a positive and valuable contribution both socially and economically. Sports on offer in the district mirror those on offer across Northern Ireland, a mix of land based and water-based, indoor and outdoor, team and individual, recreation and competition.

There is really something for everyone from Gaelic sports to soccer, from athletics to angling, from cricket to sailing, to mention a few. Sports providers in the district see themselves as part of the community; in a recent Sport NI survey here's how they described what they are about: -

- We are a community organisation looking to create health and wellbeing opportunities for people of all abilities.
- We are welcoming, well run and recognised in our community.
- People come to us because they want to be more active, and they want to make new friends.
- People volunteer to help because they want to give something back to their community.
- We are a club catering for adults and young people, women, and men, old and young.

Financial Assistance – Minor Capital Funding Dundrum Cricket Club

Dundrum Cricket Club secured Minor Capital funding to support their youth and women's cricket initiative. In the three years to 2023 youth membership increased from single figures to over 60 members and the club's first female team was established. The funding award was used to purchase training equipment for the growing youth membership and the new women's team. The club reported that the new equipment led to 'increased membership, more coaches, better overall skills and a positive trajectory; these things will make the club sustainable.'

Strategic Actions – Sports Providers

- 01

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMMES

Continue to develop and deliver financial assistance programmes to sports providers in line with need and evolving circumstances. The Council’s range of financial assistance programmes presently covers Summer Camps, Minor Capital, Major Capital, Multi-sport, and recognition of high achievement for athletes.
- 02

GENERIC TRAINING PROGRAMMES

Provide a generic training programme for clubs, including governance needs to support clubs in their growth, development and planning.
- 03

SPORTS ASSOCIATION NEWRY, DOWN AND SOUTH ARMAGH (SANDSA)

Working with the Sports Association Newry, Down and South Armagh (SANDSA) forum, review its role, structure, and operation. Sports forums exist in most local authority areas, bringing together sports clubs and other sports providers to work for and represent the sporting family.
- 04

NEWRY, MOURNE AND DOWN SPORTS AWARDS

Continue to recognise clubs/individuals through the annual Newry, Mourne and Down Sports Awards. The review should also include an assessment of how the awards are operated, and where responsibility lies with Council departments, leading to a recommendation on its future operation. The Sports Awards programme is essential in supporting and recognising sporting achievement throughout the district.
- 05

LEASING POLICIES

Council to support clubs with available funds through a leasing policy for Council-owned ground/facilities and service level agreements. It is often the case that sports clubs deliver services to their local communities in areas where the Council has a limited presence. Supporting clubs in these areas by leasing ground and/or facilities and putting in place a service level agreement benefits the community and helps deliver on ‘Living Well Together – A Community Plan for Newry, Mourne and Down to 2030’.

Strategic Objectives	Outcomes
Support for Sports Providers	The district’s sports providers will continue to be supported to improve facilities and programmes, benefiting local communities socially and economically.
Connecting with Young People	Initiatives involving sports provider organisations and schools will increase participation in a range of sports.
Better Awareness	Through the annual Sports Awards residents are more aware of role models in sport and community pride is enhanced.
Improved Health Outcomes	In supporting sports providers to increase participation in physical activity and sport, the overall health and wellbeing of the district’s residents will improve.
Better Quality Opportunities	Sports providers offer attractive services that assist in their own development and sustainability.

Theme 3

Be Active – Partnerships

Consultation for Be Active clearly points to the desire by all organisations with an interest in promoting physical activity and sport to work together to achieve better outcomes.

The Council already works with a wide range of organisations to promote and deliver physical activity and sport, including sports providers, sport's governing bodies, Sport NI, schools, the Public Health Agency, community groups, the Southern Health and Social Care Trust, the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust and many more. Be Active is set to build on existing partnerships and create new ones with the objective of achieving more together.

Whilst the Council is the lead organisation, Be Active can only achieve its full potential through well-defined partnerships in which everyone plays their part. Physical activity and sport touches on every aspect of society. Investing in community sport and physical activity has an economic and social value including physical and mental health and wellbeing. Such investment has been shown to improve educational attainment, reduce crime and increase consumer expenditure, all leading to a healthier and happier society. Every £1 spent on sport and physical activity is estimated to generate £3.91 in value.

Clearly sport and physical activity is a powerful tool in changing society for the good. It is this recognition that leads government to encourage its departments and agencies to work in partnership and use sport and physical activity to help achieve their objectives. Investment must make a difference to the sections of society which generally don't get involved in sport and physical activity. Sport NIs recent 'Build Back Better' funding programme demonstrated that by thinking outside the box and working together, it is possible to achieve this.

Financial Assistance – Major Capital Funding Newry City Athletic FC

With the help of a Major Capital grant from the Council, Newry City Athletic FC will convert an existing grass pitch to 3G at Newry Showgrounds and carry out other improvements to the site. The club's objectives in this project are to increase participation in sport by young people, women and girls, those from socially disadvantaged backgrounds and those with physical and mental disabilities.

Strategic Actions – Partnerships

- 01

DEVELOP PARTNERSHIPS
Continue to work with existing partners and develop new partnerships to develop high quality sports and physical activity programmes across sectors.

- 02

COMMUNITY ACCESS
Work with the Education Authority to increase community access to local school sites outside curriculum time by addressing constraints such as insurance, user agreements and operational arrangements.

- 03

FUNDING PARTNERS
Continue to work with funding partners in the development of facilities and activity programmes for sport and physical activity throughout the district.

Strategic Objectives	Outcomes
Community Access	Sports facilities in all ownerships not usually made available for community access will be opened up and used to their full potential.
Partnerships	Partnerships involving existing and new groups and organisations are more equitable and supportive. District-wide programmes are delivered to a consistently high standard.
Evaluation	Partnership working is monitored and periodically reviewed to ensure sustainability. Responsibilities of each partner group are understood.
Together	There is a sense of stakeholder organisations working towards the same end goal as a collective and achieving more together.

Theme 4

Be Active – Telling Everyone

Exercise in the form of sport and physical activity is known to be good for us but we must constantly promote the message until it becomes a lifestyle choice for everyone. How we promote the benefits of sport and physical activity must be easy to understand.

Sport and physical activity are now promoted by government and its agencies as a single message; when we do sport we're also doing physical activity. The challenge is to get everyone to be more active more of the time. Government strategies such as Sport NI's 'The Power of Sport' highlight the benefits of being involved in sport and physical activity at all levels, as a player, a coach or an administrator.

The Department for Communities 'Active Living: Sport and Physical Activity Strategy' states that through its messaging it wants to: -

- **Teach children in school about being active**
- **Help more people understand why taking part in sport and physical activity is a good thing**
- **Help people find new ways of becoming active**
- **See more people being active and staying active.**

Active Living goes on to say 'The benefits and transformational impacts of participation in sport and physical activity are well known and well documented.'

The benefits accrue to individuals and to wider society. Despite this, a significant proportion of our population does not regularly participate in sport or physical activity. Research shows that across the island, women, those with disabilities, people on lower incomes and those from socially deprived urban and rural areas are less likely to engage in sport and physical activity. Inactivity or sedentary lifestyles can lead to physical and mental ill-health and to social exclusion. Encouraging those who are inactive to take the first steps to encouragement in sport and physical activity can be life changing. This is a key public health message but getting the message across to inactive groups can be challenging.'



Strategic Actions – Telling Everyone

- 01

SOCIAL MEDIA
Review and continue communicating with individuals, clubs and partner organisations via social media platforms and direct contact in accordance with the Council’s IT strategy.

- 02

MESSAGING
Council will monitor, update and refresh their databases on a regular basis. With approximately 250 sports clubs in the district and around 25,000 members, messaging sports clubs about activities and programmes can be very effective.

- 03

ROADSHOWS
Council will host regular roadshows for clubs to raise awareness of funding opportunities and the support that is available from the Council’s Sports Development team.

Strategic Objectives	Outcomes
Better Understanding	More people of all ages and abilities will better understand the benefits of being more active to their physical and mental health and wellbeing.
More Participation	Through better understanding more people, especially non-active people, will take the first step towards being more active, and participating in competitive sports.
Consistent Messaging	The same message is promoted across all organisations.
Broader Reach	Messaging the benefits and how to get started on the road to being more active reaches parts of society where it’s most needed.

Sport and Physical Activity Strategy

The Council will work with key stakeholder organisations to prepare work programmes for each theme and share responsibility for delivering them.

This will involve partner organisations who work within the district. Many organisations have contributed to the Be Active strategy and it is essential that they get involved in its implementation.

The group of organisations tasked with delivering the strategy will create detailed action plans for each theme, identifying which organisation is responsible for their delivery as well as monitoring outputs and evaluating outcomes.

The objective is to deliver the strategy and ensure it is progressing the strategy vision and objectives. The Be Active strategy must now deliver regular reviews during the strategy period.



Themes and Outcomes Reviewed

Be Active will be delivered over a five year period from 2025 to 2030

Strategic Themes

Outcomes

1 Community

More people enjoying sport and physical activity at the level of their choosing and making it a lifestyle choice.

2 Sports Providers

Sports clubs and activity providers welcome the whole community and promote athletes and officials development at all levels of participation.

3 Partnerships

Shared responsibility and commitment by stakeholder organisations.

4 Telling Everyone

Everyone knows about the opportunities for participation in sport and physical activity.

At the end of the 5 year strategy period the extent to which Be Active has realised its vision will be assessed by the group of organisations responsible for delivering the strategy. They'll address: -



What did we do?



How well did we do it?



Is anyone better off?

Strategy

This strategy once adopted by Council will transform how sports clubs and activity providers throughout the district engage with their communities. More people living in Newry, Mourne and Down will enjoy healthier lifestyles by taking up sport and being more active.



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