**The role of culture & leisure in improving health &wellbeing**

**Professor Mike Kelly, Director of the Centre for Public Health Excellence at The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE)** participated in one of the roundtable sessions facilitated by cCLOAto discuss and develop the key messages and actions needed to create the right local environment and has saidof the final publication “We welcome cCLOA’snew publication on *the role of culture and leisure in improving health & wellbeing*. Physical activity has an important role in helping prevent serious conditions: illnesses linked to inactivity include coronary heart disease, diabetes and breast cancer. As highlighted in the new report, NICE has produced a range of public health guidance and briefings for local government, which make evidence-based recommendations on the most effective ways of supporting local populations to be more active to help improve health.  For example, NICE recommends that local authorities put in place local programmes to support walking and cycling, which could include community-wide events, such as mass participation walking groups, community challenges and activities targeted at families and children.  The new cCLOAreport will support professionals in developing leisure opportunities that will help improve the health of local people.”

**Public Health England (PHE)** has also welcomed the report; **Dr Justin Varney, Consultant in Public Health Medicine, Adults and Older People** said “PHE welcomes this report from the National Leisure & Culture Forum and Chief Cultural & Leisure Officers Association. Not being physically active enough can incur significant health, economic and social costs on the individual and local communities. Evidence from countries that have made a positive impact on physical activity levels have demonstrated the need for cross-sector collaboration to deliver long-term change. The culture and leisure sector has a unique role to play in this process and in encouraging more people to get more active more often.”

**Mike Diaper,** **Executive Director of Community Sport, Sport England** concurred stating that

“Reducing inactivity is increasingly important priority for local authorities and sport can play a key role in achieving this. From armchair exercise classes for older people to aqua aerobics to pop-up table tennis, we are committed to working with local authorities to make sport accessible to all age groups and abilities so that they can enjoy its health benefits. We look forward to continuing our work with cCLOA to help sport engage with the health and wellbeing agenda.”

The Local Government Association (LGA) have been involved in supporting the development of the guidance and **Councillor Katie Hall, Chair of the Community Wellbeing Board** **and Councillor Flick Rea MBE, Chair, Culture, Tourism and Sport Board at the LGA** reflected that, “Many people have talked about the return of public health to its natural home in local government, but we think the agenda is far more radical. It is about developing a new culture in which health is at the heart of integrated planning and services, and in which all parts of the council and all of the providers delivering services on the councils behalf understand how they can contribute to better public health outcomes.”

Adding, “Bringing the analytical rigour of public health professionals to bear on the information and insight councils have about their local populations is surely one of the great opportunities of the next few years. We know that our current health and social care system is unsustainable and will buckle under the weight of demand unless we re-engineer our planning and service provision to promote physical activity, healthy choices, protect health, prevent sickness and intervene early to minimise the need for costly hospital treatment”

**Carl Bennett, Interim Chairperson at the Chartered Institute for the Management of Sport and Physical Activity (CIMSPA)**, who contributed to the guidance said, “It’s evidently clear to CIMSPA that there is massive value in leading a healthy and active lifestyle and that this has the possibility to achieve many benefits, which help to address so many of the pressing issues relating to social and clinical investment decisions. CIMSPA has a role in ensuring all those working in this sector can articulate these benefits across a wide range of partners and is the reason why we endorse this document so that it helps inform those conversations with our members and wider stakeholders. As CIMSPA progresses the professionalisation of the sectors personnel it is crucial we utilise guidance such as this to help improve wider understanding of the benefits of leading a healthy and active lifestyle and so that we design and introduce measurable, effective and progressive services that achieve the outcomes we all require”.

**Sallie Barker, Interim Chief Executive of the Sport and Recreation Alliance**, welcomed the guidance adding, “There’s no doubt that physical activity has a vital role to play in tackling some of our most pressing public health challenges. Working in partnership, local authorities and the governing bodies of sport and recreation can make significant progress towards ensuring that all individuals have the capability, opportunity and motivation to be physically active for life. We warmly welcome this document from cCLOA promoting more effective engagement and collaboration at the local level – which of course needs to be matched in central government.”

Culture can also play a major role in supporting health and wellbeing, whether it be participating in an activity, visiting a theatre, museum or library, or by contributing as a volunteer and **Sir Peter Bazalgette, Chair of Arts Council England** said, “The arts work everywhere in our communities; helping the retired, the marginalised, the lonely and the sick. We arrange dance classes, organise choirs and hand out books. The arts are a critical factor in social engagement. Councils and health providers already know that ensuring access to high quality cultural opportunities boosts mental health, inclusion and happiness. Whilst artists and cultural organisations make a positive difference to people and communities on a daily basis. We need to get better at delivering this message more widely. *The role of culture and leisure in improving health and wellbeing* is a much-needed tool to help commissioners keen to work with the cultural sector, and arts organisations looking to better articulate their role, understand the policy context and engage more effectively with health and care providers.”