

Position Statement

CLOA (Chief Cultural & Leisure Officers Association)

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Title of Position Statement

Sport, Physical Activity and Active Wellbeing

Purpose of the Statement

To set out CLOA's position regarding key issues in Sport, Physical Activity and Active Wellbeing to influence and shape thinking in relation to policy development.

Background / Context

Local government is a key deliverer, funder and supporter of sport, physical activity and active wellbeing. It owns the majority of spaces where these activities occur along with either managing these directly or compiling the contracts for many of these. For clarity these spaces can include leisure facilities, parks, community centres, schools etc.

Sport, physical activity and active wellbeing across the country is part of a complex eco-system and contributes to a wide range of outcomes for individuals and communities, from health & wellbeing, to skills, economic growth and increased social capacity and cohesion.

There is an increasing recognition of a shift beyond the prevention of ill-health towards the active creation of health and wellbeing within communities. Through enabling environments, inclusive opportunities and sustained engagement, local government and its partners support individuals to build healthy behaviours, resilience and social connections, underpinning a broader shift from a reactive, treatment-focused system to one that focuses on prevention and actively creates the conditions for people and communities to thrive.

Local government increasingly works with local partners (internally and externally) to develop and resource strategies and shared priorities for the delivery of these programmes, this can include Active Partnerships, local private and community providers, health partners and many more.

CLOA's Position

CLOA's base position is to recognise the following:

- Local government to be recognised as the key partner in the delivery of sport, physical activity and active wellbeing programmes and outcomes. Consultation with local government directly in future strategic planning by Sport England and DCMS
- Simplify the funding landscape and move towards a more coherent, long-term, strategic partnership investment settlement for place integrating with locally agreed strategies
- Remove duplication of effort across the system and create a single point of strategic discussion between DCMS and local authorities
- Revisit the balance between revenue and capital funding; investment in new capital schemes should always include appropriate provision for revenue
- Acknowledgment and integration of the Active Wellbeing Leadership Network in bringing partners together from across the full sector including local government, health providers, charities, workforce and private provision

Recommendations / Calls to Action

CLOA continues to contribute to national discussions on the future of sport, physical activity and active wellbeing, working closely with partners including the Local Government Association, Sport England, Active Partnerships and health system stakeholders.

In order to secure a sustainable, equitable and effective future for the sector, our members and our communities, CLOA calls for:

- **Formal recognition of local government as a primary delivery and commissioning partner** within future Sport England and DCMS policy frameworks, including direct and meaningful engagement with local authorities during the development of national strategies, investment programmes and funding criteria
- **A simplified and coherent funding landscape**, moving away from fragmented, short-term competitive funding programmes towards longer-term, strategic investment in place that aligns with locally agreed priorities and outcomes, including health improvement, prevention and tackling inequalities
- **A rebalancing of capital and revenue funding**, ensuring that investment in new or refurbished facilities is matched with sustainable operational funding, workforce development and community outreach, in order to maximise impact and long-term viability
- **Greater alignment between sport, physical activity and health policy**, including clearer integration with Integrated Care Systems (ICSs) and public health priorities, recognising the critical contribution of active wellbeing to prevention, population health and demand management, with

this alignment starting at central government level and flowing coherently through to local place

- **Stronger national support for the Active Wellbeing Leadership Network**, acknowledging its unique role in bringing together partners from local government, health, the voluntary and community sector, workforce bodies and private providers, and enabling it to act as a key mechanism for sector-wide collaboration and system leadership
- **A reduction in duplication across national bodies and programmes**, creating clearer accountability, shared outcomes and a single, strategic route for engagement between central government, arm's length bodies and local authorities

CLOA stands ready to continue working collaboratively with government and national partners to ensure that sport, physical activity and active wellbeing are fully embedded within place-based strategies, adequately funded, and recognised as fundamental to the social, economic and health outcomes of communities.