



Culture, Physical Activity and Health

Vision

To improve the quality of life and health for West Midlands' residents through the creation of culturally active communities, vibrant places and lasting prosperity.

West Midlands Priorities for Action

- Achieve a 1% year on year increase in the physical activity levels of the population of the Region and reduce the number of people in the Region doing no physical activity, sport and active recreation
- Proactively strengthen and develop partnerships at regional, sub-regional and local levels between arts and cultural sectors and health partners
- Secure a long-term health and physical activity legacy from the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games for the West Midlands. Capitalise on the hosting of high profile sports events nationally and regionally
- Capitalise on the planning system to assist with the provision of sports and leisure facilities
- Improve the quantity, quality and accessibility of cultural opportunities and places for children and young people (up to 25 years of age)
- Maximise the use of the arts and cultural sector in developing environments that support the delivery of modernised services, uptake of services and realisation of health priorities; whilst enriching the lives of patients, the wider community and staff.



Key Facts: In the West Midlands

- 69% of the adult population do not do enough physical activity to benefit their health and well-being (an accumulation of 30 minutes of moderate activity on at least five days of the week)¹
- 35% of men and 41% of women are classed as sedentary meaning that they do less than 30 minutes of physical activity a week²
- 70% of boys and 61% of girls aged 2–15 years meet the recommendation of one hour per day of physical activity³
- Around 650,000 people in the West Midlands take part regularly in sport and organised club activities supported by 25,000 volunteers⁴
- 19.3% of adults in the West Midlands regularly participate in sport and active recreation (3 or more 30 minute sessions per week), the national average is 21%⁵
- Activities for young people were ranked by adults nationally as the single most requested improvement in local services, with facilities for young children coming ahead of health, education and housing⁶
- 68% of boys and 60% of girls participated in active play on 5 or more days of the week⁷ despite recent research highlighting that 86% of children reported they would rather play outdoors than on a computer⁸



- 78% of the public believe the arts play a valuable role⁹
- 66% of the adult population had attended an arts event in the past 12 months while 67% had participated in an arts activity during the same period¹⁰
- Engagement in arts activities is highest in the Midlands and Southern Regions of England¹¹
- There are inequalities in the level and nature of engagement in arts activities¹².
 - 57% of women have done an arts activity in the last 12 months, compared with 47% of men
 - Those in lower socio-economic groups are less likely to have attended or participated in arts events and activities
 - 67% of white respondents have attended arts events in the last year, compared with 59% of BME respondents; 53% have participated, compared with 44%. However, Black or British Black respondents have above average levels of participation in dance, other than ballet
 - Those who live in rural areas are more likely to have attended arts events and participated in arts activities than those living in urban areas
 - Engagement declines in late middle age. Participation at least once a week is relatively stable (53-56%) for those aged under 65, after which it declines to just 38% of those aged 75+
 - 54% of those with a limiting illness or disability attended in the last year compared with 70% of people without a limiting illness or disability.
- In the West Midlands, the Arts Council through its main grant scheme *Grants for the Arts* gave out grants worth a total of £6,366,033 in 2005/06 to arts projects in the region; 48.4% of this was classified either as young people, learning or young people at risk projects
- Around a tenth (7%) of all adults volunteered in a culture or sport sector during the past year within the West Midlands¹³.

Culture: A Strong Force for the Common Good

The West Midlands has a rich and diverse cultural heritage and has long recognised the value of investment in developing a strong vibrant, cultural sector to make a lasting difference to people living in the Region.

The term culture is often used as a catch all phrase to describe a way of life. It surrounds us in our everyday lives and is reflected in building design, open spaces, urban and rural areas and our communities. What culture means to an individual is far reaching and complex. It generates activities that we value, is a huge part of our economy and regional prosperity providing reasons for earning money and helping us decide how to spend it. It enables us to stay healthy, explore our capabilities, develop social networks, work, play and enjoy what our Region has to offer, enabling us to live life to the full.

The sector incorporates a wide range of organisations: public, private and voluntary, delivering a wide range of facilities and programmes. It incorporates creative industries, arts, media, museums, libraries, heritage, architecture, sport and recreation, parks and open spaces, play, tourism, events and informal leisure opportunities and makes a huge contribution to the regional economy and the quality of life of people living in the West Midlands.



“Valuing People and Places”¹⁴ prioritises a number of ways in which culture can impact on the physical and mental health and well-being of the Region’s residents and visitors. A major driving force for cultural activities are the Local Authorities who, despite having no statutory requirement to do so, provide cultural services because of the contribution this makes to cross cutting agendas such as health, community safety, planning, regeneration, equality, sustainability, employment and the economy.

The cultural sector in the Region are already contributing to and complementing the health agenda in a number of ways:

- Delivering programmes to decrease health inequalities at a local level
- Working with the health sector to aid the development of patient centered and community care programmes
- Improving quality of life through leisure and recreation opportunities from sports to arts and learning programmes
- Improving the built environment through high quality architecture and arts and design programmes
- Inspiring people to discover positive alternatives to drugs, crime and anti-social behaviour
- Providing leisure, recreation and community facilities and enhancing the use of green open spaces. People are at the heart of cultural activity in the West Midlands and if we are to be successful in developing a culture of health and well-being in the Region developing and enhancing partnerships between the two sectors will be critical.



Developing an Active Population

Physical inactivity is a major causal factor in the development of chronic disease. A physically active lifestyle can regulate weight, decrease the risk of chronic conditions and improve social and mental well-being. It aids child development (both social, physical and emotional) enabling children to remain fit and healthy. It is also important in older age groups and aids cognitive function, decreases the risk of falls and enables us to maintain independence into our later years¹⁵. Physically active people tend to have better mental health and higher scores for positive self-concept, self-esteem, enhanced moods, higher levels of alertness and mental ability, including the ability to learn¹⁶. Yet as a nation we are becoming less active.

The estimated cost of physical inactivity to the NHS and the economy in England has been estimated at £8.2 billion annually while it is recognised that getting sedentary people a little more active constitutes a huge challenge but it is one that will provide huge gains for public health¹⁷.

The Game Plan Strategy¹⁸ sets the challenge for England to become the most active and successful sporting nation by 2020, recognising the need to increase participation in the population at large whilst maintaining continued focus on the groups that traditionally have low participation levels. These include people living in deprived communities, people with disabilities, older people, women and girls and people from BME groups. Further priority groups include targeting employers to raise the profile of the potential of workplace activity programmes to benefit the economy and health and well-being of employees. This is explored further in the Economy and Health Chapter.



The infrastructure to deliver a more active nation is evolving and is vital if the targets for success and participation levels are to be met. The Regional Sports Board and the delivery system for sport is focusing on ensuring that County Sports Partnerships and Community Sports Networks are established to lead the strategic development and delivery of sport, active recreation and physical activity.

The Physical Activity Network for the West Midlands provides a regional voice for physical activity and links to wider partnerships that are contributing to the delivery of increasing activity levels in the Region for example: the Youth Dance and Dance agencies infrastructures, Travelwise and Healthy Schools Infrastructures.

There are a plethora of programmes designed to increase activity levels running across the Region for example, green activity programmes, walk for health, Physical Education School Sport and Club Links, dance activities, exercise referral schemes, sculpture trails, community sport programmes and active travel programmes.

Play also contributes to children's activity levels producing physical, cognitive, imaginative, creative, emotional and social development benefits. The infrastructure for the development of play in the Region is expanding and will aid the wider development of an active younger generation.

Moving towards an active population is a long-term aim and requires the development of strong, effective partnerships to drive forward the developments required to achieve this aim against a culture of declining activity levels.

The London 2012 Olympics and Paralympic Games and Health - 'An Event Which Will Inspire a Generation and Leave a Lasting Legacy'

The 2012 Games aims to deliver the best games ever, producing economic, social health and environmental benefits for the whole of the UK.

The infrastructure for ensuring that the West Midlands benefits from the games in its widest sense is dependent on strong partnerships existing at a local, sub-regional and regional level working to capitalise on the potential of the Olympics to make a difference and leave a lasting legacy for the Region. The Regional Leadership and Executive Advisory Groups for the 2012 Games are responsible for the development of the strategies and plans to ensure this legacy is realised. It is imperative that we seize the opportunities that this presents to improve health and well-being and tackle health inequalities in the Region to deliver on the wider health agendas and create a culture where choosing the healthier option is the easy and desired option.

Alongside this focus on harnessing an Olympic and Paralympic legacy, there will also be huge potential to deploy other high profile sporting and cultural events to meet wider health outcomes and participation objectives.

Improving the Quantity, Quality and Accessibility of Cultural Opportunities for Children and Young People

Cultural activity is crucial in providing children and young people with opportunities to be active, play, learn, create, explore capabilities, develop social networks and have fun. As such it is key to their physical, cognitive, imaginative, creative, emotional and social development and quality of life.

The importance of play within strategies to decrease obesity levels and reduce anti-social behaviour should not be underestimated. Recent surveys of children and young people highlight dissatisfaction with current play

provision and show a need to continue to improve the design, maintenance and supervision of public spaces and opportunities for play and recreation.

Engaging with health, children's services and education will be key to ensuring that the needs of children and young people are integrated within planning processes and enable increasing opportunities for play, creativity, learning, out of school and holiday activities and club development.

Enriching Lives Through the Creation and Improvement of Healthcare Settings

Within the West Midlands, cultural sector partners are increasingly working in partnership with health and well-being partners to create improved or new environments for health care within local communities for example; Hospital PFI projects, regional LIFT initiatives, and Healthy Stadia programmes. There is evidence from some studies that art in hospitals can improve health outcomes. For instance:

- Patients exposed to art needed less analgesia and had shorter post-operative stays¹⁹. Exposure to the arts in healthcare settings was shown to reduce the need for sedatives after urological²⁰, orthopaedic or plastic surgery²¹ and to reduce the need for analgesics following gynaecological surgery²²
- A study on cancer patients showed that exposure to live music and/or visual arts diminished the consumption of drugs required both for anaesthesia and analgesia. It also boosted patients' immune system function by reducing stress while undergoing treatment²³
- Many maternity units now include specially designed delivery areas featuring the arts because so many studies show reduced blood pressure in mother and child, reduced need for pain relief, reduced need for caesarean sections, and shorter labour
- There is a significant body of evidence that art improves outcomes for mental health service users
- Shorter hospital stays and reduced drug usage mean cost savings.



Investment by the NHS offers a real opportunity to showcase the work of local artists and creative firms as well as those from further afield. Artists and arts organisations are working with architecture and master-planning teams from the outset of developments, contributing to the overarching vision and providing creative solutions to design issues. This work is fostering community ownership of health care settings, increasing uptake of services, decreasing vandalism to premises and contributing to wider social, physical and economic regeneration.

The use of cultural venues for the delivery of patient focussed services in the community is becoming more widespread. For example, Birmingham's Health Exchange Programme highlights how libraries can offer facilities and resources to both individuals and health related voluntary organisations and the Bookstart scheme promotes a lifelong love of books with health visitors and clinics issuing packs to parents or guardians which include childrens books and information about local library services.

A Partnership Approach

To tackle issues such as obesity, sedentary behaviour, poor mental health, stress, binge drinking and smoking a cultural and societal change is needed. The development of robust partnerships between the health, cultural and

sport sectors at all levels will be key to making this change a reality, building upon the current evidence base to develop practical, innovative solutions to the challenges facing us. The cultural sectors can change the way communities access services, influence the design of services and provide targeted activity to achieve public health objectives or lead to health outcomes, for example:

- Participation in arts, leisure and recreation activities can empower individuals by building confidence and self-esteem leading to an increased ability to manage chronic conditions
- Increasing health literacy through development and delivery of engaging and accessible health information
- Effective community consultation and engagement in service reconfiguration and delivery
- Engaging communities in ways that develop social capital and cohesion
- Developing a workforce able to deliver modernised services.

Case Study - Ballet Hoo

Ballet Hoo was a two year partnership project with the aim of working with disadvantaged teenagers from the black country and Birmingham, to turn around their own chaotic lives through a powerful combination of ballet and personal development. The project culminated in a performance of 'Romeo and Juliet' at the Birmingham Hippodrome in September 2006 and four prime time television programmes, 'Ballet Changed My Life'.

Alongside the disciplined physical rehearsal schedule, participants set three personal life goals, one of which had to be related to improving their mental or physical lifestyle. The raising of the young people's fitness combined with positive gains in their self-esteem meant that health was at the heart of this arts project.

Of the young people who completed both phases of the project; 70% completed all three life goals, with 75% achieving their healthy lifestyles goal. These included giving up/moderating their drinking, giving up smoking, becoming more relaxed, improving fitness, managing anger, decreasing stress and eating more healthily. 75% of the young people wanted to maintain their involvement in the performing arts through dance, drama, work placements and gaining qualifications. When asked what difference the project had made in their lives the replies included the following statements:

“Provided the Inspiration to aspire to be something”

“It's helped with discipline and commitment”

“Helped me to explore my potential”

“Given an outlet for self expression”.

As a result of the project, a Leaps & Bounds Charitable Trust is being established to run similar projects for future cohorts of young people. Healthy lifestyle challenges will continue to be an integral part of future projects.

The partners in the project were: Dudley, Sandwell, Wolverhampton and Birmingham Local Authorities, Birmingham Royal Ballet, Youth at Risk, Black Country Connexions, the Learning and Skills Council, Diverse Productions and Channel 4.



Main Partners

Culture West Midlands	Sport England	Physical Activity Network for the West Midlands
Arts Council England	Play England	Government Association Partnerships
WMLGA	GOWM	WMRA and Partnerships
NHS West Midlands	NHS Trusts	PCTs
Local Authorities	Voluntary and Community Sector	
Museums, Libraries and Archives Council, West Midlands		
CSIP	AWM	

Weblinks

<http://www.sustainable-development.gov.uk/>
<http://www.sportengland.org>
<http://www.wmpho.org.uk/paf>
<http://www.whi.org.uk>
<http://www.artscouncil.org.uk>
<http://www.creativeremedies.org.uk>
<http://www.kingsfund.org.uk>
<http://www.nesta.org.uk>
<http://www.culture.gov.uk>
<http://www.london2012.com>
<http://www.ncb.org.uk/Page.asp?sve=912> Childrens Play Council
<http://www.mlawestmidlands.org.uk>
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