



RESEARCH
INSTITUTE



Active Bucks Independent Evaluation 2015– 2017: A Summary



Introduction

Foreword

The case for increasing levels of physical activity is compelling – helping people to live happy, healthy lives as well as delivering wider benefits such as improved educational attainment, reducing demand and costs to health and social care, and enhancing community cohesion. Increasing levels of physical activity is a key focus for Bucks, particularly reducing the proportion of people who are inactive – as this is where the greatest health gains can be made.

Active Bucks was developed to provide a population-level, evidence-based approach to increasing activity levels amongst our residents, particularly those that are least active. Unlike traditional physical activity programmes, we were keen to ensure significant community engagement was undertaken to deliver activities that residents wanted, to increase the likelihood of success and sustainability of the activities. We have also explored how we can offer 'stealth' activities as an innovative approach to engaging inactive residents.

We commissioned this independent evaluation to assess the overall impact of the programme on activity levels, mental wellbeing, and social cohesion. To do this, we have adhered to the principles within the Standard Evaluation Framework for Physical Activity to enable comparability to other projects, help support scalability, and support future investment into physical activity.

Of paramount importance to the success of the project in engaging inactive residents and sustaining 64% of activities beyond the funded period has been the role of our partners across the county. Our partners helped shape, drive, and promote the programme, particularly those engaged in the project steering group and all the local activity providers who delivered high-quality physical activity provision, enabling us to recruit and retain our residents in regular physical activity. I would like to offer our sincere thanks to partners, providers and the public for helping to make this programme a success.

Dr. Jane O'Grady
Director of Public Health
Buckinghamshire County Council



Learnings

Nine key areas of learnings have been highlighted from the Active Bucks programme. These learnings cover reducing the barrier of cost, controlling where possible external factors, utilising performance management tools to ensure effective delivery, ensuring good communication links between participants and deliverers, and using a booking system for accurate data collection. In terms of the evaluation, learnings revealed that certain data collection methods were discovered to be more appropriate than others.

Recommendations

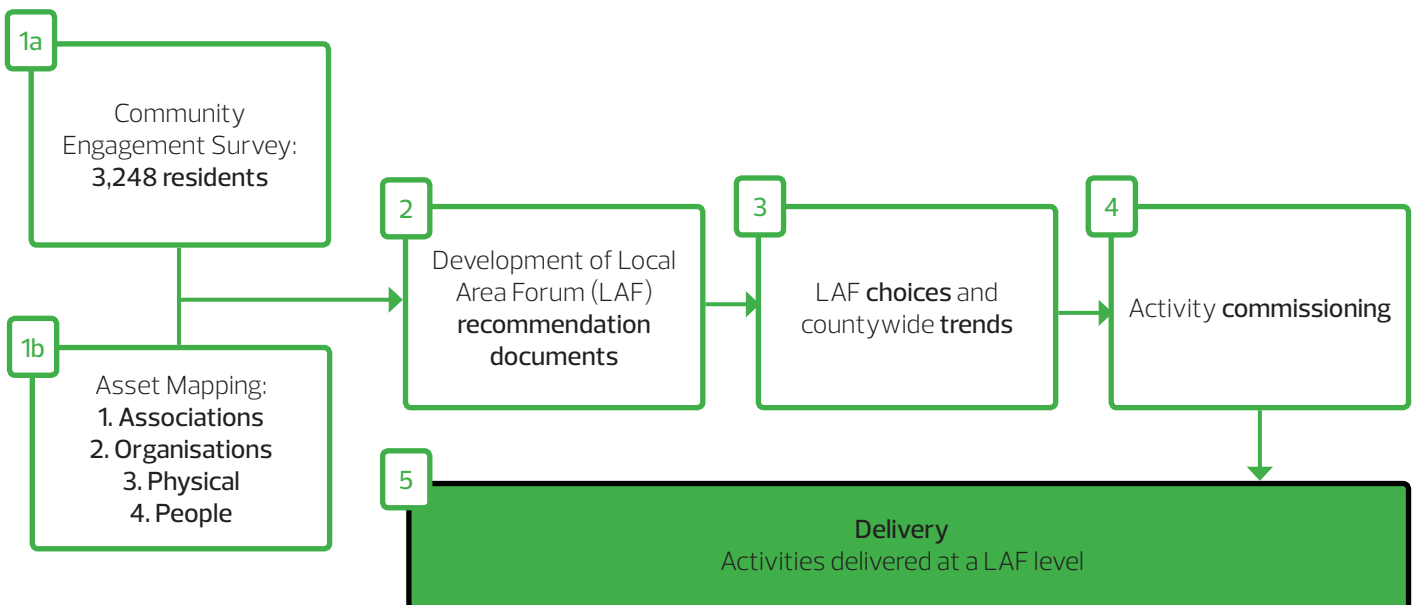
Due to the unique nature of Active Bucks, learning and good practice from the programme has been collated and 10 recommendations have been suggested for others planning, commissioning and delivering similar programmes in the future. These include continuous and shared learning between deliverers as well as being flexible in their delivery approach. The activities should focus on key motivators for the local communities that bring people together and support social cohesion, whilst having appropriate monitoring processes in place. The cost of activities is important for engagement, retention, and sustainability. Utilising volunteer networks can help to support programmes. Within Buckinghamshire, the groups that have been under represented by the programme so far have been identified, such as men and Black and Minority Ethnic groups, and projects to specifically address this have now been commissioned.

What is Active Bucks?

Active Bucks was a two-and-a-half-year programme developed and commissioned by Buckinghamshire County Council (BCC), using a community engagement approach to get residents engaged in physical activity.

- Aims**
1. To increase the number of Buckinghamshire residents classified as active.
 2. To reduce the number of Buckinghamshire residents classified as inactive.
 3. To provide a range of high-quality evidence-based and best practice physical activity provisions that meet the needs of Buckinghamshire residents.
 4. To engage local communities with the planning, delivery and sustainability of the programme.

Asset Mapping and Community Engagement



Activities The delivery of Active Bucks was divided into three strands: LAF-chosen activities, Green Space Structured activities, and Green Space Stealth activities

LAF-CHOSEN activities were selected by each LAF following the Asset Mapping and Community Engagement process to understand what was required. These activities, delivered by local providers, were wide ranging to meet the needs of each specific LAF. LAF-chosen activities also included Simply Walks.

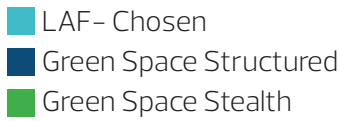
Green space activities were based on the countywide popularity of park activity, which was identified during the initial engagement process and supported by the strong academic evidence that green spaces increase the benefits of physical activity

GREEN SPACE STRUCTURED activities took place using local green and open space and were advertised as such.

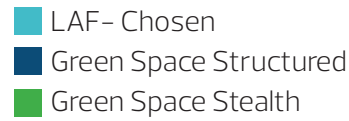
GREEN SPACE STEALTH activities utilise the local green and open space however the activities were not advertised as physical activity, and have physical activity as a secondary outcome of the participation. Examples include bushcraft and Nerf games for children, photography walks and dog agility for adults.

Engagement and Follow Up

3,922 participants

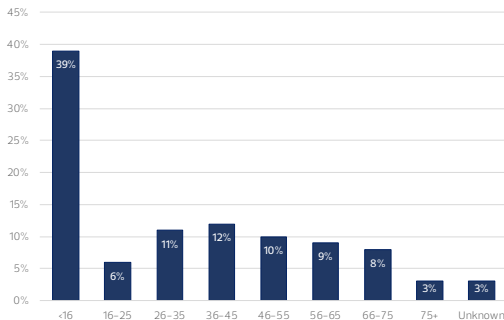


27,212 attendances

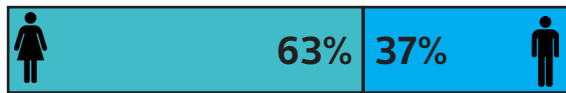


Participant Demographics

Age



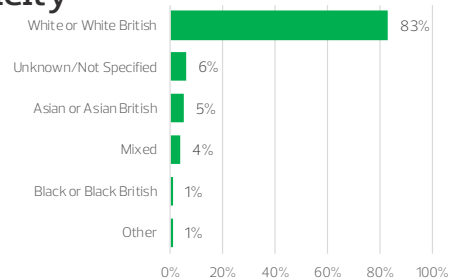
Gender



Disability

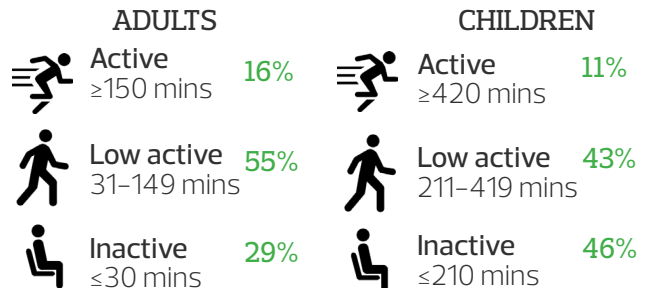
10% of participants reported having a disability

Ethnicity



Baseline Physical Activity

Measured according to CMO guidelines for minutes of moderate activity per week.



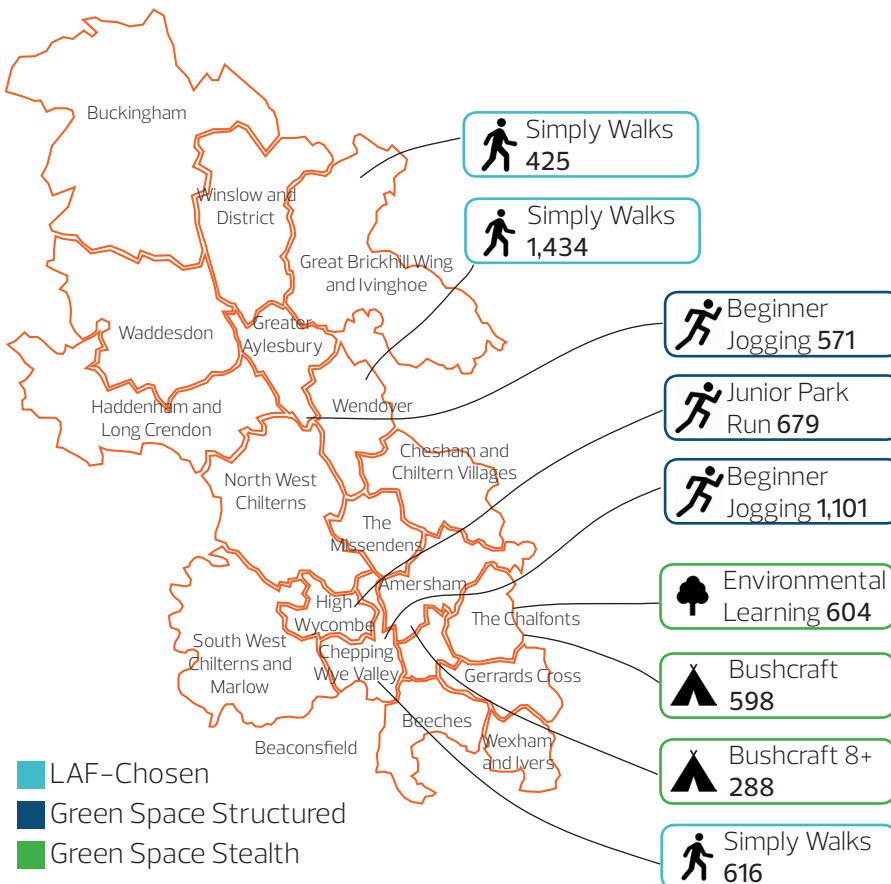
Longitudinal Behaviour Change

Follow up was conducted with registered participants at 3, 6, and 12 months to understand how their behaviours towards physical activity changed and the associated benefits this had to mental wellbeing and social cohesion. Participants were tracked between baseline and each of the 3 time-points.

	3 months n=62	6 months n=38	12 months n=14	Children n=12 (parents' perceptions)																																				
Physical Activity	↑ 12% ↓ 10%	↑ 20% ↓ 17%	↑ 57% ↓ 14%	↑ 5% ↓ 11%																																				
Mental Wellbeing	↑ 25.1 ↓ 25.7	↑ 23.9 ↓ 24.6	↑ 25.2 ↓ 25.8																																					
Social Cohesion	<table border="1"> <tr><th>Category</th><th>Baseline</th><th>3 months</th></tr> <tr><td>Trust</td><td>14.0</td><td>13.9</td></tr> <tr><td>Attachment</td><td>16.6</td><td>16.3</td></tr> <tr><td>Tolerance</td><td>13.9</td><td>13.7</td></tr> </table>	Category	Baseline	3 months	Trust	14.0	13.9	Attachment	16.6	16.3	Tolerance	13.9	13.7	<table border="1"> <tr><th>Category</th><th>Baseline</th><th>6 months</th></tr> <tr><td>Trust</td><td>14.1</td><td>13.6</td></tr> <tr><td>Attachment</td><td>16.5</td><td>16.5</td></tr> <tr><td>Tolerance</td><td>13.6</td><td>14.2</td></tr> </table>	Category	Baseline	6 months	Trust	14.1	13.6	Attachment	16.5	16.5	Tolerance	13.6	14.2	<table border="1"> <tr><th>Category</th><th>Baseline</th><th>12 months</th></tr> <tr><td>Trust</td><td>14.9</td><td>13.6</td></tr> <tr><td>Attachment</td><td>17.4</td><td>17.1</td></tr> <tr><td>Tolerance</td><td>15.0</td><td>14.1</td></tr> </table>	Category	Baseline	12 months	Trust	14.9	13.6	Attachment	17.4	17.1	Tolerance	15.0	14.1	
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Activities

Top 3 attended activities by strand

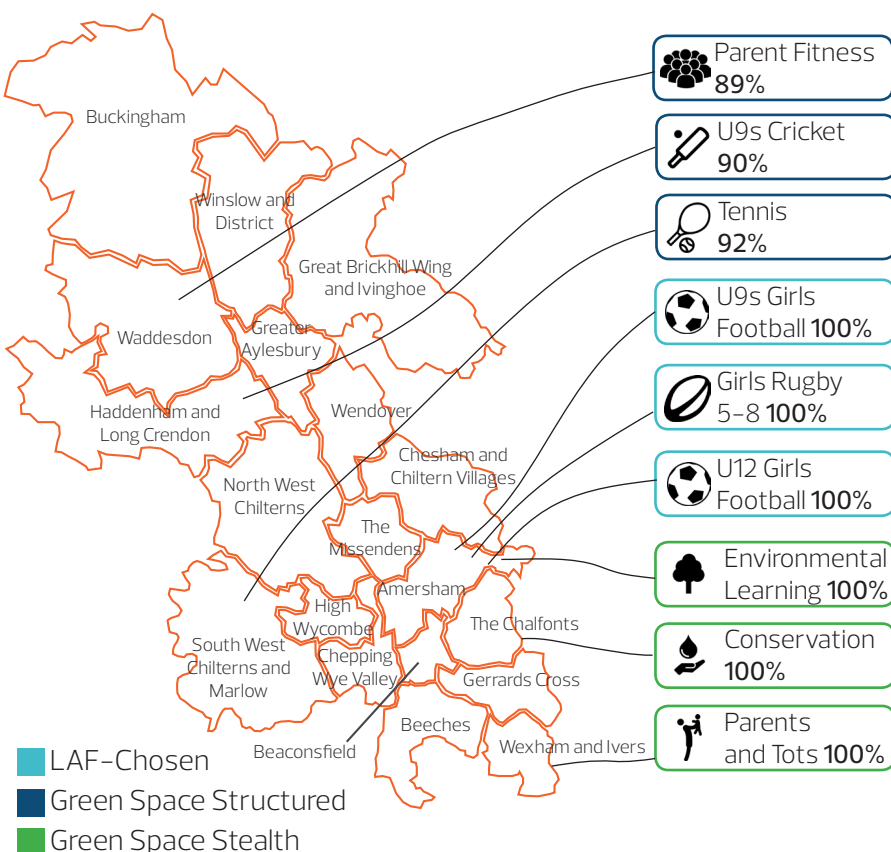


Across two years of Active Bucks delivery:

193 activities were commissioned

activities were delivered fully **157**

Top 3 retained activities by strand



34%

of participants attended at least half of the available sessions of a specific activity

28%

of participants attended at least 60% of the available sessions of a specific activity

Community Champions

Community Champions are volunteers who choose to offer their time to promote, support and contribute to the Active Bucks programme.



54 Community Champions

19 LAF Areas

620 volunteer hours



After the programme was over:

75% continued with Active Bucks activities

43%
continued
volunteering

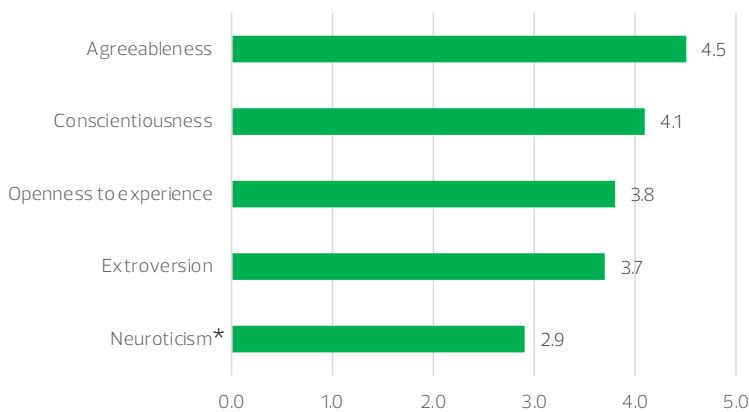
17% began volunteering with a non physical activity programme

4% began volunteering with a different physical activity provider

4% became an activity provider

What are they like?

Community Champions personality traits



They showed the following characteristics:

- >> Cooperative leaders
- >> Outgoing and confident
- >> Task and ego orientated
- >> Motivated by self, not others
- >> Can lead to greater adherence to activity
- >> Medium to high emotional intelligence

What training did they receive?

Community Champions received bespoke training to allow them to effectively support delivery, signpost activities to residents. The percentage attending each CPD course is below:

Active Bucks Workshop **24%**

Safeguard training **7%**

Walk Leader Training **13%**

Mental Health First Aid LEAP **6%**

StreetGames Volunteer Workshop **13%**

Engage Disengaged Workshop LEAP **6%**

Red Cross Everyday First Aid **11%**

Run Leaders course **4%**

Communications



1,840 activities listed on Active Bucks website



673 vouchers downloaded to try an activity for free



479,740 reach of Active Bucks Facebook page



22,350 users engaged through Facebook advertising



A wide range of engagement and communication tools were used including a website (www.activebucks.co.uk), Facebook and Twitter. The website supported residents to find activities they were interested in that were local to them, at a convenient day and time. It listed both Active Bucks activities and wider activities delivered across Buckinghamshire. Facebook and Twitter signposted users to the main website and acted as information hubs. Bright, eye catching flyers were designed for each activity and displayed on websites and social media as well as printed and distributed across the county.

Sustainability

One of the major successes of the programme was the number of activities successfully sustained beyond the initial 6-month funding period. Activities were classified as sustained if they met one of three criteria:

- 1) delivery was continued beyond Active Bucks funding (**continual sustainability**)
- 2) the activity was combined with other activities to ensure continued delivery (**transfer of participants**)
- 3) the activity will be continued beyond Active Bucks funding, but will be delivered seasonally and has not yet commenced (**seasonal sustainability**)

64% of activities were sustained in total

59% of activities delivered were initially sustained beyond the funding period.

5% were seasonally sustained.

Return on Investment

Return on Investment (ROI) was estimated using the 'Sport England's Economic Value of Sport – Local Model' which estimates the health cost savings and other health benefits. This highlighted potential health cost savings of:

£685,717 from engaging individuals not meeting the CMO guidelines.

£423,314 through maintaining the activity levels of individuals already meeting the CMO guidelines.

The tool neglects the health cost savings for children participating in the programme and does not account for the ongoing return on investment from the 64% of activities that have been sustained past the funding period, therefore, it is suggested that this is an underestimation.



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To view the full report please visit:
<http://researchinstitute.ukactive.com/projects/more/8263/page/1/active-bucks-evaluation>