

Physical activity

Headlines

Locally in 2009, only 66% of 14 year olds did the recommended amount of physical activity, i.e. 60 minutes each day. 1 in 8 (13%) 14 year olds in Kirklees were sedentary, i.e. less than 30 minutes activity each day.

Locally in 2008:

- People with certain long term conditions were more likely to do no physical activity, i.e. 1 in 3 (35%) of those with heart disease or diabetes; 1 in 5 of those with high blood pressure or pain.
- More adults aged 18-64 on a low income were likely to do no activity, 17% compared with overall, 8%.
- 1 in 4 (26%) of people aged over 65 years reported taking no physical activity.
- 1 in 8 adults were physically inactive, as were 1 in 8 of 14 year olds. Dewsbury and Batley had the most inactive adults (15%, 14%) and 14 year olds (14%, 19%). South Asian people (18%) were more likely to do no activity than any other ethnic group (11%).

All were similar to 2005.

Why is this issue important?

Regular physical activity of a moderate intensity can bring about major health benefits by¹:

- Reducing the risk of coronary heart disease, hypertension, stroke, diabetes and some cancers, especially colon cancer and breast cancer.
- Reducing the risk of death and ill health for those who are overweight or obese, helping to avoid weight gain and maintain weight loss.
- Supporting musculoskeletal health, protecting against osteoporosis and benefiting those with osteoarthritis and low back pain.
- Reducing the risk of depression and dementia in later life, being effective in the clinical treatment of depression and, more generally, making people feel better and feel better about themselves^{2(p9)}.

What significant factors are affecting this issue?

Levels of knowledge and confusion about the physical activity messages and a number of myths about physical activity continue.

Provision of appropriate activity opportunities is also an issue. Activity opportunities are present throughout our daily lives but are often ignored. The quality of the environment can have a direct influence on levels of physical activity³. Safe, attractive and interesting parks and streetscapes, along with good urban design, can be a key motivator for walking and cycling. Natural environments also can offer important settings for health enhancing physical activity.

Therefore, the key message is to increase walking and use of stairs in daily life. Having the motivation and support to change activity behaviour is a key issue locally.

Which groups are most affected by this issue?

Locally, in 2008, 28% of adults did the minimum recommended levels of moderate activity of 30 minutes more than five times a week, more than in 2005 but less than 34% nationally. As age increases, activity drops^{4,5}.

Overall 1 in 8 adults (12%) did no physical activity at all, worse than in 2005⁷.

Children and young people⁶

Locally, in 2009:

- Only 66% of 14 year olds did the recommended amount of physical activity, i.e. 60 minutes each day, compared to 64% nationally in 2007⁴.
- 1 in 8 (13%) of 14 year olds in Kirklees were sedentary, i.e. did less than 30 minutes activity each day.
- Girls spent less time in non-school organised activity, with 1 in 3 (33%) taking part for 60 minutes or more compared to nearly half of (45%) boys.
- Girls were less likely to take up a club or team activity, 1 in 12 (8%) compared with 1 in 8 (12%) boys.
- South Asian 14 year olds spent less time in non-school organised activity, with only 1 in 3 (35%) taking part for 60 minutes or more compared with 2 in 5 of white (45%) and black young people (42%).

People with long-term conditions⁷

Locally in 2008, those with certain long-term conditions were more likely to do no physical activity than those who did not have such conditions (4%):

- 1 in 3 adults with heart disease (35%) or diabetes (30%).
- 1 in 5 adults with high blood pressure or with pain.
- 1 in 6 (17%) adults with backache.
- 1 in 6 (17%) adults suffering from depression, anxiety or other nervous disorders.
- 1 in 8 (13%) adults with asthma.

Women of childbearing age⁷

In 2008, locally, only 1 in 3 women aged 18-44 years reported doing the recommended levels of moderate physical activity weekly, with 1 in 20 doing no activity.

People with a low income⁷

Lower income groups are less active^{2(p10)}. Locally, in 2008, 17% of adults aged 18-64 years on a low income did no activity compared to 8% overall. Those claiming council tax benefit were more likely than the general population to be sedentary, i.e. 17% and 12% respectively.

Older people⁷

Locally, in 2008, 1 in 4 (26%) of people aged over 65 years did no physical activity compared to 1 in 14 (7%) of those aged under 65 years.

Black and minority ethnic people⁷

In 2008, black (16%) and south Asian (18%) people in Kirklees, were more likely to do no activity than white people (11%).

All of the above were similar to 2005.

Where is this causing greatest concern?

Physical inactivity is a cause for concern across all parts of Kirklees^{6,7}, especially:

- 1 in 6 (15%) adults in Dewsbury and 1 in 7 (14%) adults in Batley did no physical activity at all.
- Women aged 18-64 years in Mirfield were least likely to do the recommended level of physical activity.
- In Batley 1 in 5 (19%) of 14 year olds were inactive i.e. did less than 30 minutes each day, compared to 1 in 14 (6.8%) in Mirfield. Dewsbury (14%), Huddersfield South (14%) and Huddersfield North (15%) also had significantly higher rates of inactive 14 year olds.
- Batley had the fewest 14 year olds achieving the recommended levels, 58%, compared to Mirfield with the highest, 77%.

Views of local people

“She is an angel when she has been allowed to run around in the park, if she is in all day she is a nightmare.” (young mum, north Kirklees)*

Consultations commissioned with a variety of groups of people helped to understand the barriers to becoming more active. These consultations¹², undertaken with women of childbearing age (WOCBA)^{7,8}, people with long term conditions (LTC)⁷, older people (OP)⁹, teenage girls (TG)¹⁰, south Asian women (SA)¹¹ and 14 year olds (CYP)⁶ found:

- Nobody to go with was a key concern, particularly when starting or returning to physical activity after a break (WOCBA, OP, and LTC).
- Lack of suitable, culturally appropriate, gender specific activity opportunities (TG, SA, WOCBA).
- Fear of activity being detrimental to health and lack of knowledge on what and how much to do (LTC).
- Not aware of local opportunities (ALL).
- Not enough time to undertake physical activity (CYP, WOCBA).
- Inability to self motivate, need someone to help and support, “someone like me”. (LTC, WOCBA).
- Lack of confidence: “I am not good enough”. (CYP, OP, TG).
- Do not enjoy it (CYP, TG).
- Affordability. In particular linked to gym membership (CYP, WOCBA and SA).

These reinforce the perception that physical activity is an add-on to daily living rather than being part of it, which it needs to be.

What could commissioners and service planners consider?

Consider how they raise awareness of key messages about physical activity, tailoring them to the needs of the specific population groups they work with, and making activity part of daily life.

Enable people, particularly those groups most affected, to access the opportunities to increase physical activity that will best meet their needs and making activity part of daily life.

Incorporate opportunities to increase physical activity in organisational plans and strategies where appropriate, such as those focusing on transport and the environment.

Ensure an appropriate infrastructure is in place across Kirklees to deliver the range of physical activity opportunities that will be necessary to meet the needs of the population now and in the future.

* Voices of children and young people quoted are from local involvement projects and social marketing insight.

References

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