

Chapter Three: Forward trends and behaviours that will impact the provision of sport and physical activity

Contents

Summary	2
Nation-wide sport and leisure trends	3
Opportunities for Lincolnshire-wide innovation.....	4
Digital rollout	4
“Atypical” active leisure	6
Using sport, physical activity, and leisure as part of a wider health strategy	7
Early provision.....	8
Activities in community venues	9
Challenges for provision.....	11
Confidence and self-efficacy	11
Lack of coordination	13
Insufficient funding	14
Lack of accessibility.....	16
Gaps in provision for defined groups.....	18
Cultural and Religious considerations.....	18
Gaps in provision for people with mental health difficulties.....	20
Gaps in provision for people with disabilities and multiple and complex needs	20
Gaps in provision for LGBTQIA+ people in sport	26
The role of data in future provision	27
Recommendations	31

Disclaimer:

This report has been produced for Active Lincolnshire and their partners by the Lincolnshire Open Research and Innovation Centre. The purpose of this market report is to support Active Lincolnshire and their partners with service development decisions, investment decisions, and funding applications.

The findings in this report are advisory only, and represent the researcher’s interpretation of available data. The reader is not obligated to take on any of the recommendations laid out in this report, in part or in full, and is responsible for doing their own due diligence before implementing the findings in any way, shape, or form.

Summary

This section of the report concerns itself with the forward trends and behaviours that will impact the provision of sport, physical activity, and leisure in Greater Lincolnshire.

The section will start with an overview of the nation-wide trends in sport, physical activity, and leisure provision. It will then examine trends for Greater Lincolnshire and Rutland, as presented by both open data and interview data gathered for this project.

The chapter will then look at the various opportunities for Lincolnshire-wide innovation, including:

- **Digital rollout:** Over the course of the interviews, many participants noted that the first year of the pandemic saw the successful rollout of an unprecedented number of digital tools to help people engage with the sport, physical activity, and leisure sector.
- **“Atypical” active leisure:** Participants in the interviews talked about the ways in which low-impact, low-stakes activities had powerful impacts on their clients, their clients’ with their bodies, and their clients’ outlook on exercise altogether.
- **Using sport, physical activity, and leisure as part of a wider health strategy:** Alongside “atypical” sport and physical activities, the interview data showed a rise in activities that are supportive of sport and physical activities.
- **Early provision:** Participants reflected on how important early engagement was for the sport, physical activity, and leisure sector.
- **Activities outside of leisure centres:** Some of the most impactful, influential events that could increase physical activity levels were the ones that happened on people’s doorstep.

With these opportunities in mind, the chapter will also examine the challenges to provision, including:

- **Confidence and self-efficacy:** The biggest barriers towards engagement with the sector, as identified by respondents, were self-efficacy, motivation, and confidence on the part of individuals.
- **Lack of coordination:** One of the main concerns raised by participants in this research project was the lack of coordination between providers of sport, physical activity, and leisure activities, and commissioners from the local authorities.
- **Insufficient funding:** After confidence, motivation, and self-efficacy were accounted for, cost and accessibility were the next most common deterrents for individuals to engage in the sector.
- **Lack of accessibility:** Over 50% of respondents of the survey somewhat agree and 19.2% strongly agree that people do not engage in sport and leisure activities because of cost, while 11.5% strongly agree and 65.4% somewhat agree that people do not engage in sport or leisure activities because of time.
- **Gaps in provision for defined groups:** As seen from Chapter 2, there are several groups in Greater Lincolnshire and Rutland for whom engagement with sport, physical activity, and leisure presents higher barriers than for others.

Finally, the section will end with some reflections on the role of digital tools for provision, and how open data and digital skills will impact how we source and take part in activity.

Nation-wide sport and leisure trends

Data from Sport England's latest Active Lives Report (November 20-21)¹ show that 61.4% of adults in England were classed as active², 11.5% were classed as fairly active³, and 27.2% were classed as inactive⁴. These levels remained somewhat stable over a 5-year period, although there appeared to be a drop in the overall population of active people in 2020 and 2021, likely corresponding with the COVID-19 lockdowns. Month-on-month data appears to confirm this, with activity picking up as restrictions eased.

In terms of demographics, the latest data from the Active Lives survey shows that men are more likely to be active than women (63% and 60% of the population surveyed, respectively); that people from more affluent backgrounds are more likely to be active than those in moderately affluent or non-affluent ones; that those aged 16-74 are significantly more likely to be active than those aged 75+ (with ages 16-34 being the most likely to be active); that those without a reported disability or long-term condition are more likely to be active than those with (66% and 45% of the population studied respectively), and that those from Mixed ethnic backgrounds and non-British white backgrounds were more likely to be active than other ethnic groups.

There were no significant changes noted in terms of gender, disability, ethnicity, and affluence-based demographics over time. While some fluctuations in numbers and percentages occurred, the overall ratios remained relatively stable throughout the 12 months displayed in the report. Physical activity in the 16-34 age group appeared to decline significantly over the year studied, however, compared to the 35-54 age group, which remained relatively stable over the same period of time. While activity levels were recovering among older adults, they were dropping off concerningly among younger people.

In terms of types of activity, there are several interesting trends observed over the period studied.

- By far, the greater increase was in “walking for leisure” which saw 2.4 million more people engaging with it over the period studied compared to the previous year (a 10% increase), and a 5.7 million / 24% increase compared to five years ago.
- By comparison, there was a sharp drop noted in Active Travel and Fitness Activities in 2020 and 2021 – likely due to the effects of the pandemic. Less drastic, but equally noted was a drop in swimming and team sports over the same time.
- Running and cycling for leisure appeared to experience a slight increase in popularity in 2020 before dropping off in 2021 – which is also an observation shared by participants.
- Fitness activities appear to be recovering to their pre-pandemic levels at a slower rate than team sports, for example, with the latter having more or less returned to their pre-pandemic levels and the former still not fully caught up.

¹ https://sportengland-production-files.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/2022-04/Active%20Lives%20Adult%20Survey%20November%2020-21%20Report.pdf?VersionId=nPU_v3jFjwG8o_xnv62FcKdEIVmRWCb

² Adults who reported engaging in an average of 150+ minutes of moderate physical activity per week.

³ Adults who reported engaging in 30 – 149 minutes of moderate physical activity per week.

⁴ Adults who reported engaging in less than 30 minutes of moderate physical activity per week.

In terms of behaviours observed, while perceived ability of participants has remained the same, and opportunity to engage in sport and physical activity has rallied, enjoyment in sport and physical activity appears to have decreased.

In addition to the findings of the Active Lives study, several significant changes have occurred since November 2021 that might impact the capability, opportunity, and enjoyment that participants might have of sport and physical activity:

- Inflation has increased to 8.2% at the time of this writing⁵.
- The overall unemployment rate in the UK has gone down to 3.2%⁶ however real earnings have decreased, despite a slight increase in nominal earnings. Job vacancies have also increased significantly.
- The Bank of England has announced a rise in interest rates, which impacts mortgages and credit for consumers.
- Quality of Life has decreased, with sport participation in particular reducing over the latest quarter.⁷

This could mean several things for the sector. Firstly, just as companies operating are all experiencing rising costs of labour and overheads, so are participants seeing a drop in disposable income, driven by stagnating wages and higher bills. Rising inflation and interest rates are likely to impact those from non-affluent and less-affluent backgrounds the most, making them even less likely to have the capability and opportunity to engage in sport, physical activity, and leisure.

Additionally, the decline in enjoyment in sport and physical activity might drive participants away from the sector; equally, however, there could be a great opportunity for new and interesting activities, particularly for “atypical” sport and physical activities.

Opportunities for Lincolnshire-wide innovation

This section will examine in more detail the opportunities available for companies in Lincolnshire. It will begin by looking at the rollout of digital tools, the growth of atypical active leisure, supportive activities for the healthcare sector, and the impact and importance of community centres for sport, physical activity, and active leisure.

Digital rollout

Over the course of the interviews, many participants noted that the first year of the pandemic saw the successful rollout of an unprecedented number of digital tools to help people engage with the sport, physical activity, and leisure sector. Examples included virtual and e-sport initiatives, but also the digitisation of services in leisure centres and gyms.

⁵ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/inflationandpriceindices/bulletins/consumerpriceinflation/latest>

⁶ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/bulletins/uklabourmarket/latest>

⁷ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/wellbeing/bulletins/qualityoflifeintheuk/august2022>

Indeed, the need for social distancing and high levels of hygiene during COVID-19 resulted in many gyms, leisure centres, and sport clubs introducing various digital tools to minimise face-to-face interactions. The rollout of self-check-in kiosks, digital bookings, and the usage of applications for people to manage and pay for their activities has resulted in a much more rapid digitisation than was anticipated for Greater Lincolnshire. And while there are some drawbacks to this rapid digital rollout, (to be discussed in the next section) there are also significant benefits to them.

What makes digital tools exciting for Greater Lincolnshire and Rutland is the opportunity to bring sport, physical activity, and leisure to individuals who, for one reason or another, cannot ordinarily access the sector. While many local charities, charitable trusts, and community interest companies offer a variety of activities depending on the needs of their community, cost, accessibility, and travel times are among some of the most common reasons why individuals do not engage with sport or leisure activities, as the next section will explore in more detail.

Additionally, digital tools offer the possibility for individuals to explore sport, physical activity, and leisure on their own terms, build up their confidence, and develop their interests. Among the participants of this research, there were providers of organised sport events who found that the wider usage of digital tools post-pandemic helped people engage in physical activity where they would not have done so face-to-face.

Case Study

Virtual Lincs

Virtual Lincs is an application launched by Lincs Inspire which provides virtual, on-demand, and live fitness classes. From their website: *“Lincs Inspire is a charitable trust – a non-profit organisation bringing leisure, sport, cultural and library services to local communities. The trust model is built around the principle that any surplus funds are ring-fenced and re-invested to support our charitable aims. Our purpose and ethos is rooted in our communities, helping to improve people’s lives and wellbeing by creating more inclusive places to live, work, and visit.”*

Lincs Inspire offer a variety of activities, but the Virtual Lincs application is a good example of the potential benefits and applications of digital tools for sport and physical activity:

- It allows for participants to select the level of course they feel most comfortable in.
- It allows for participants to play a video or tutorial at a speed they can follow.
- It allows for participants to tune into live classes without having to leave their home.
- It allows for participants to get practical guidance from their tutors during live classes.
- It allows for participants to replay the classes they are the most comfortable with as many times as they want.

While Virtual Lincs is just one of many applications that are available to people in Lincolnshire, it is a good example of what digital technology can do for participants, especially participants who feel unsure of where to start and how to build up the confidence they need to participate in face-to-face sport and physical activities.

Website: <https://www.lincsinspire.com/virtual-lincs/>

“Atypical” active leisure

“Atypical” active leisure existed before the COVID-19 pandemic, but participants saw an increase of interest in these activities throughout lockdown. Examples of “atypical” sport and physical activities include, but are not limited to:

- Pole fitness;
- Aerial fitness;
- Circus workshop;
- Dance classes, both traditional and ballroom;
- Silent discos;
- Comedy fitness;
- Ultimate frisbee;
- Unicycling;
- Performance arts;
- Climbing walls, gyms, parkour clubs;
- Gardening classes;
- Walks, fishing, dancing clubs;
- Diverse music;
- Performance arts;
- Burlesque;
- LARP-ing (Live Action Role Play);

The interviewees talked about the ways in which low-impact, low-stakes activities had powerful impacts on their clients. They also talked about the ways in which their clients’ relationships with their bodies, and their clients’ outlook on exercise altogether, started to change as a result of engaging atypical physical activities. Many expressed the view that low-stakes activities, including atypical

active leisure, would make a great springboard for future, more intensive engagement with the sport and physical activity sector.

Case study

Dance Free

Dance Free is a Community Interest Company (CIC) that uses wireless headsets to organise silent discos in nature. Per their website: *“Dance Free is a free-movement activity held at varying beautiful locations in nature across Lincolnshire. It is a fun and welcoming space, everyone is welcome - anyone can participate, regardless of age, gender or ability. No experience is necessary. It is a mindful experience moving and connecting to the body through the music.”*

Dance Free started up during the COVID-19 pandemic as a means of engaging people with physical activity in a relaxed, non-stressful manner. The owner used her prior knowledge about music and movement to develop and launch the silent discos, with participants joining into their own community around the activity. Currently, Dance Free is run by the owner, with help from volunteers, but they are hopeful that they will be able to grow soon.

Silent discos are an atypical physical activity, but they have significant benefits for participants. For example, participants of silent discos reported better connection with nature and appreciation for nature; better connections with their own bodies and their own feelings; improvements in mood and mental health; and the ability to improve their physical fitness.

One of the benefits that Dance Free have observed is that their activities help people that would not normally engage in dance to, in fact, start dancing. Some of the reasons given why people would not normally go to a disco or a club include, but are not limited to:

- Not feeling comfortable in disco or club settings;
- Not wanting their night out to involve alcohol;
- Feeling self-conscious when dancing;
- Not being comfortable dancing to an audience;
- Stigma around men and dancing;

The benefit of having the wireless headsets and holding the activities in nature (on a beach, in the forest, in a field) is that participants can either dance on their own, together but apart, and join the group once they have warmed up. Additionally, the silent discos allow for participants to engage with physical activity on their own terms, to the degree they feel most comfortable in. These activities were seen as a chance to relax, release stress and worry, connect with nature, and connect with other people.

Website: [Dance Free \(wedancefree.com\)](https://wedancefree.com)

Using sport, physical activity, and leisure as part of a wider health strategy

Alongside “atypical” sport and physical activities, the interview data showed a rise in activities that are supportive of sport and physical activities, such as chiropractic, acupuncture, body conditioning

activities, and more. Furthermore, participants also spoke of their desire to work in closer collaboration with healthcare providers, to engage in dialogue and co-production.

Different participants and different companies had different groups of people that they wanted to engage with more: older people, inactive people, young people, people who might need a safe space to relax and engage in physical activity, and people with long-term health conditions. Between those who participated in the interviews and those who participated in the surveys, there was a wealth of experience and goodwill demonstrated in Greater Lincolnshire and Rutland's Sport, Physical Activity and Leisure sector.

One of the ways in which more cohesion can be achieved between providers is through social prescribing. Since before the pandemic, Social Prescribing has been taken up more in Lincolnshire, through both self-referrals and through GP services. The roles of link workers vary depending on the need of the client, but they broadly work to engage clients with their local community, help their clients find activity groups that suit their interest, help their clients get settled. Social Prescribing is, supported by Active Lincolnshire to better connect with and understand physical activity⁸.

Social prescribing link workers had a particularly important role during the pandemic in engaging with people who would not have otherwise been reached by services; in helping people identify goals they wanted to work towards; and in helping clients achieve those goals. In that regard, link workers have an especially vital role to play in the future engagement of citizens with the sport, physical activity, and leisure sector.

However, social prescribing was not the be-all-and-end-all for collaboration opportunities. Indeed, participants felt that there were many other organisations they would have loved to collaborate with, including but not limited to:

- Charities;
- Carers (professional and family);
- Support workers;
- Government bodies;
- Private sector partners;

Across the board, all participants felt the need for better, more real collaboration between stakeholders to change perceptions of public health. This increased collaboration was seen as vital for boosting physical activity at all levels, but especially for children and teenagers.

Early provision

Participants reflected on how important early engagement was for the sport, physical activity, and leisure sector. Many participants worked with children and teenagers, as well as their parents, in order to support them in accessing appropriate physical activity, and thus had a lot of observations they wanted to share about the value of sport, physical activity and active leisure for the family as a whole.

⁸ <https://www.activelincolnshire.com/what-we-do/in-health-wellbeing/social-prescribing>

The benefits of sport, physical activity, and active leisure early in life, according to participants, include: supporting emotional self-regulation, building up healthy habits, and increasing self-efficacy. The latter benefit is very pertinent in light of some of the challenges to provision, which will be discussed in the next section. Self-efficacy, or “an individual's belief in their capacity to act in the ways necessary to reach specific goals”⁹ is crucial for the building up of resilience in young people, their willingness to try new things, and their ability to problem-solve.

However, participants also noted that the delivery of successful early provision also required effort, and investment, as well as the participation and cooperation of parents. Indeed, parental support was seen as especially important given the amount of time, travel, and money needed for children to engage in certain sport and physical activity. Many participants noted that provision was not evenly distributed across the county, and children interested in pursuing more intensive sporting careers would have to travel even further to access elite coaches.

Nevertheless, participants were optimistic about the opportunities for early provision of sport and physical activity and felt that they could be combined with other community projects to engage the entire family together.

Activities in community venues

Some of the participants in this research project discussed the ways in which leisure activities are being taken more into the community. Indeed, those participants felt that some of the most impactful, influential events that could increase physical activity levels were the ones that happened on people's doorstep.

One notable example given were running events – Lincoln Half Marathon, Park Runs, Fun Runs – which can be organised to take the event right past people's doorsteps. These events, as explained by a representative of Curly's Athletes, can be both big and small, local and regional, and serve to increase aspiration and passion among local residents.

Additionally, Lincolnshire is known for its Steampunk culture, with the Asylum Steampunk Festivals¹⁰ providing annual opportunities for leisure as well as physical activities (Dances, Performances, Parades, Walking tours, Penny-farthing bicycle rides, etc.)

Indeed, an emphasis was placed in interviews on the impact of small, local events. Those events were seen as most effective when they were tailored to the needs of the local community, and aimed at addressing specific problems (lack of self-efficacy, lack of motivation, poor activity levels, poor engagement among women and girls.) Participants brought up the importance of role models – not just in terms of famous people, but also in showing that “people like me” can do a specific sport or physical activity.

Community centres and village halls came up frequently in the interviews as an untapped resource. Participants who were trustees and board members told stories of how they came into the role by virtue of necessity – the village was about to lose its library, or there was not enough support to keep

⁹ [Self-Efficacy Teaching Tip Sheet \(apa.org\)](#)

¹⁰ <https://www.asylumsteampunk.co.uk/asylum-steampunk-festival/>

their local swimming pool open, or they wanted to make sure there was still a space for local residents to meet and socialise.

Community centres and village halls offer a cost-effective way for local residents to engage in sport and physical activity such as judo club, drama club, cheer group, keep fit, tai chi, bands/local discos. Additionally, they also offer various activities that serve to promote community spirit, such as “Live and Local”¹¹, coffee morning, and fundraising. These spaces are very well-placed for supporting families, elderly-residents, and under-served communities, for both leisure and volunteering, and can be vastly more budget-friendly than larger leisure centres.

Case Study

Village Halls and Community Hubs

Crowland Community Hall is an example of the opportunities for both provision of activities and upskilling that could occur in community hubs and village halls across Greater Lincolnshire and Rutland. The organisation was founded as a measure for the local community to preserve their library, and create a more robust, more responsive offer in response to the needs of their community.

As described by the trustees of Crowland Community Hall, the organisation’s goal is the *“advancement of education for the benefit of the public in Crowland and the surrounding areas by the provision of library services; To further or benefit the residents of Crowland and the surrounding areas (...) in a common effort to advance education and to provide facilities in the interests of social welfare for recreation and leisure time occupation with the objective of improving the conditions of life for the residents.”*

Crowland Community Hall took advantage of the pandemic to renovate and make their building more accessible to the public. It was a good example of a local provider who was able to make the most of a difficult situation by taking the forced downtime of the pandemic as an opportunity to expand on their services, signpost them better to the public, and increase visibility for local activities.

In terms of support offered to the community, Crowland Community Hall offers a library, a space of hobby groups, craft, Judo, Tai Chi, and local music. They are also a cost-effective alternative for events, weddings, birthday parties, and christenings.

Website: [Crowland Hub](#)

However, community centres are also often overlooked in terms of funding and support because of the sizes of their operations, which is something that will be discussed in more detail in the next section.

¹¹ Home : Live & Local (liveandlocal.org.uk)

Challenges for provision

Having examined some of the opportunities for sport and physical activity in Greater Lincolnshire and Rutland, this section will turn to challenges to provision. As identified by survey respondents and by interview participants, the main themes of this section are as follows: Confidence and self-efficacy (the role of mental health for participants), the lack of co-ordination between providers and commissioners, accessibility challenges, cost and funding challenges, and the gaps in provision for defined groups.

Confidence and self-efficacy

When examining the results of the survey, respondents noted that from their perspective, the biggest barriers towards engagement with the sector were self-efficacy, motivation, and confidence on the part of individuals. By contrast, respondents did not consider safety or lack of confidence in the providers themselves to be a barrier to engagement, as seen in the figure below:

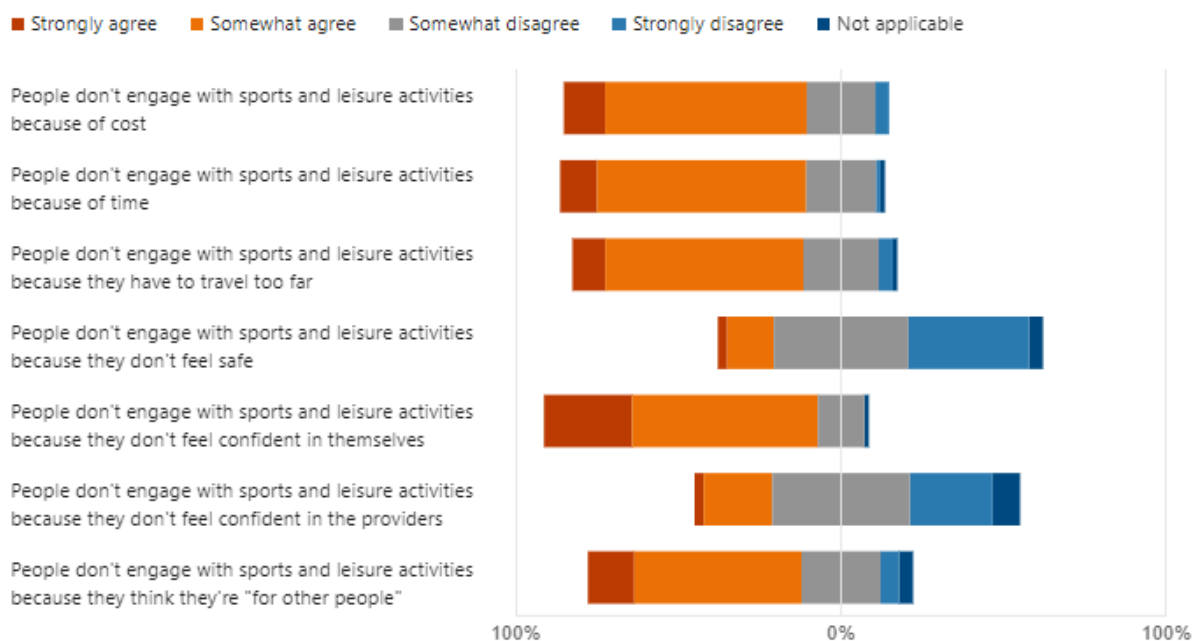


Figure 1: Survey Question 13: To what extent do you agree with the following statements about motivations to be engaged in physical activity?

Some respondents took the opportunity to expand further on their answers, commenting about the role of motivation and seeing your peers engage in physical activity. Noteworthy themes in the answers included:

- People form their attitudes toward physical exercise early on and are less likely to change them as adults without significant influence from their peer group.
- Certain activities have a reputation for being for “certain kinds of people” which presents a significant barrier to entry.
- Volunteering would be a great route to physical activity for inactive people, because it helps build up their confidence and self-esteem.

“Confidence is an issue but so is motivation and self-esteem. Volunteering would be a good route to improving numbers of active [sic] people. Plus, more cycles in the community at affordable prices, access to swimming pools and moving away from 'stuffy and clicky' walk groups and towards more exciting activities. Gardening is a great way for over 55's to get more active.”

- Survey respondent, Charity

Respondents also noted that, to some degree, there will always be people who make the conscious choice not to engage in exercise or physical activity, regardless of how much information and public messaging there is out there, or how effectively it is shared with them. That is not to suggest there is no point in information sharing or active campaigning, but it does demonstrate a “pick your battles” kind of outlook among the community interest companies, charities, and other voluntary organisations in the sector.

Participants did not all display a laissez-faire approach. Some expressed the view that the sector can do more to educate citizens about the benefits of physical health, invest more in programs for the young, invest more in elite coaching, and take a more proactive approach about reaching out to under-served groups. There were also views expressed among some participants that employers and campaigners should not be afraid to take a harder line with citizens, adopting similar tactics for promoting physical activity as anti-tobacco campaigns.

The latter view – that harder tactics should be adopted when trying to reach inactive populations – is espoused by some nation-wide health campaigns and can be seen in various proposals, such as the idea of changing food packaging to reflect how much exercise it takes to burn off the calories. However, experts seem divided on the impact of such tactics¹² and campaigners have raised concerns that certain tactics risk exacerbating or triggering disordered eating behaviours in vulnerable populations¹³. This report will go more into depth about the impact of the pandemic on mental health and on those living with eating disorders, but it is worth noting that the population susceptible to engage in disordered eating and over-exercise is often overlooked when health and exercise campaigns are crafted.

Interview participants noted that many of the interventions needed to help citizens with their confidence, mental health, and self-efficacy are expensive, and resources are limited. Some participants noted that in some areas, men are more active than women; whereas in other areas like North East Lincolnshire, that trend was inversed. A combination of national and local approaches are needed, as well as a community element to the provision.

Equally, participants acknowledged the importance of habit-building and enjoyment for the success of any intervention. There was an understanding that mental health and mental health first aid had to be embedded into practice in order to help people put the “should” into action. Participants noted that understanding healthy guidelines and putting them into practice were two different challenges, and that a welcoming environment, organic engagement, and strong leadership were as crucial to people’s long-term success as any other factor.

¹² [Why food labels showing the exercise needed to burn off calories won't work for everyone \(theconversation.com\)](https://www.theconversation.com/why-food-labels-showing-the-exercise-needed-to-burn-off-calories-won-t-work-for-everyone)

¹³ ["Exercise targets would trigger my eating disorder" - BBC News](https://www.bbc.com/news/health-55888888)

Lastly, participants also discussed the importance of a joined-up approach in helping citizens achieve their goals. The lack of co-ordination and the tendency for organisations to work in silos was identified as a major challenge to provision, which is what the next section will focus on.

Lack of coordination

One of the main concerns raised by participants was the lack of coordination between providers of sport, physical activity, and leisure activities, and commissioners from the local authorities. Given the size of the county, and the number of micro companies in the sector, it is worth asking to what extent coordination and cooperation is possible; nevertheless, one of the concerns that the participants expressed was that there was simply not enough information about what was available, for whom, and how different people could access it.

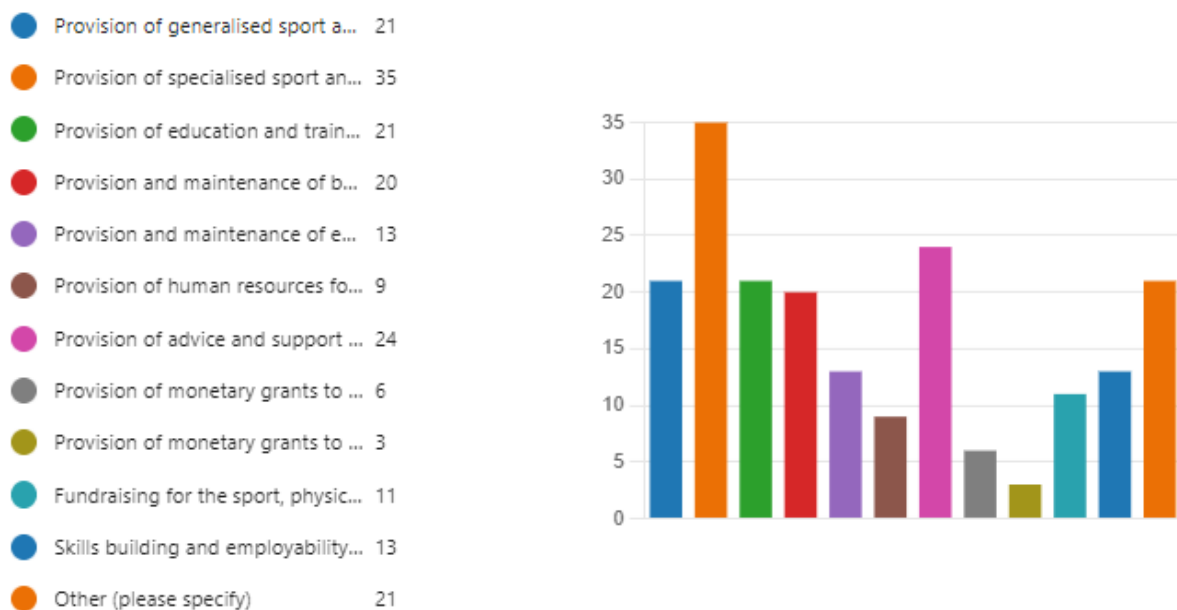


Figure 2: Survey Question 8: Please describe the activities of your company

Both open data and survey data suggest that most charities and voluntary sector organisations offer a mixture of services – from buildings and open spaces to human resources, advice and support. Almost half of the respondents up to 30/08/2022 also used the opportunity provided to give further details about the activities of their charity, trust, or voluntary organisation, listing activities such as:

- Opportunities for civic engagement.
- Providing support to veterans and ex-servicemen.
- Provision of academic and non-academic learning.
- Provision of a public library.
- Provision of IT equipment, and more.

However, there appears to be no coordination between providers in terms of what is being offered, what is being commissioned, and for what purposes. Rather, it appears that different community interest companies, charitable trusts, and voluntary organisations provide whatever their local community needs at any given point.

To some extent (possibly due to accessibility, demographics and distance) many of the respondents noted later in the survey that their members would take advantage of certain sport, physical activity, and leisure options if they were available to them – but it is also worth noting that many mission statements of the smaller voluntary organisations in Greater Lincolnshire and Rutland focus on providing a local service.

However, another reason for this lack of co-ordinated approach, according to interview participants, was the lack of support from healthcare providers, medical practitioners, and other stakeholders. To some extent, participants felt that this was due to different organisational cultures, but they also observed that even within the same profession, different people had different views about the role of exercise in people’s health. One participant talked about how they felt that younger doctors tended to prescribe physical activity for mental health more, whereas others were perceived as discouraging their patients from engaging in physical activity at all.

Participants also expressed the sentiment that there had to be “more doing” and “less talking” on everyone’s part to address low activity levels in the population. Examples of how that might be done included, but were not limited to sharing success stories, sharing what works, having integrated healthcare systems, stopping with the duplication of activities, having a more proactive approach towards planning and investment, and having a very clear understanding of what “collaboration” means. It was felt by some participants that a more considered approach towards business planning might be beneficial for joined up working, as having more competition did not always result in better services for citizens. This could mean more business support, more consultation with smaller providers, and more strategy applied to planning.

Finally, data from both survey and interviews showed that many smaller providers felt overlooked and left behind when the conversation turned to funding and general business support. Interviewees described all the ways in which their organisation could have grown, both in employment and in provision, if they were simply given the support they needed to improve their facilities and bring more elite coaches onboard. People who sat on the board of trustees in charities and in community halls felt that they would benefit a lot from having more professionals on the board, or at least having access to professionals who were savvy in business matters. Unfortunately, many small providers felt they could not afford such support, and they did not have access to the funding to do it either.

Insufficient funding

After confidence, motivation, and self-efficacy were accounted for, cost and accessibility were the next most common deterrents for individuals to engage in the sector. The issue of cost is expected to persist and increase in severity, as household budgets become more and more constrained. Indeed, as one survey respondent noted:

With the constant news of cost of living increase we have seen a dramatic increase of cancellations stating they can no longer afford to maintain a membership.

- Survey respondent, Community Interest Company

However, cost is also a challenge that providers cited a lot when asked about the biggest current barriers to them delivering new services. Throughout the interviews, it was generally agreed that

everyone could do with more advice on getting funding, particularly those who worked in charities and community venues. Many interviewees from that sector talked about how effective they had been in the past in delivering services quickly, to budget, and stretching out limited resources. The lack of access to large pots of money encouraged boards of trustees to be creative in budgeting and fundraising, which allowed them to weather many difficult periods.

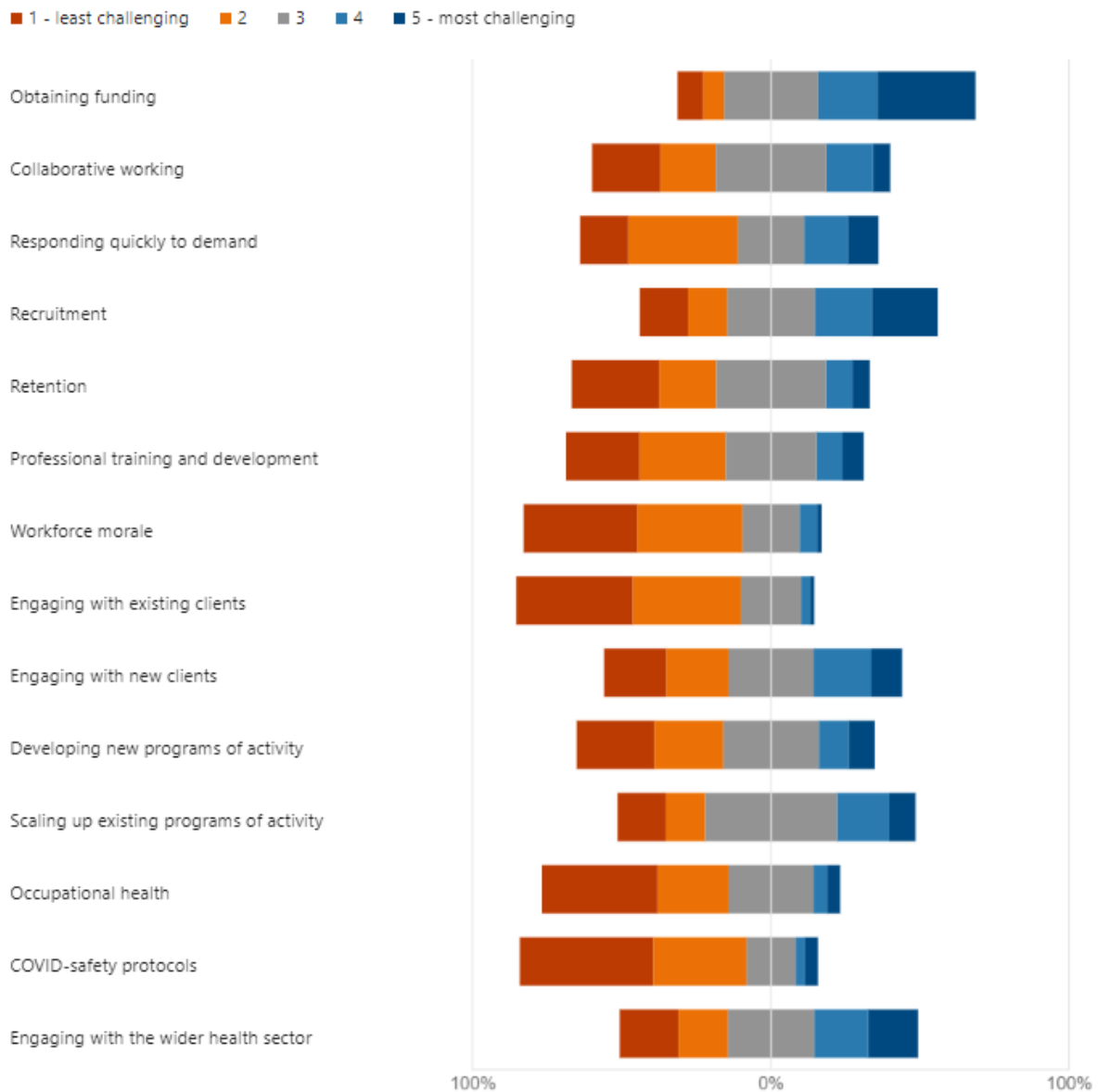


Figure 3: Survey question number 15: To what extent are the following a challenge to your organisation?

At the same time, participants noted that many organisations who didn't need support with funding in the past had to look for alternative ways to pay the bills now. This will be discussed in more detail in the section on COVID-19 and the Cost-of-Living crisis, but many interviewees gave examples of how their charity or community interest company had to make sacrifices or change their ways of working in response to the rising costs of fuel and utilities. One charity talked about how reluctant they were to put up the prices for venue hire because they didn't want to put off their regulars. They understood that they were effectively subsidising those groups to encourage them to continue to use those

spaces, but they didn't want to pass off the rising cost of utilities on to the end customer for as long as they could. This was understood not to be a sustainable decision in the long run, and underscored the importance of more support for small providers.

Lack of accessibility

As seen from section 3.4.1, over 50% of respondents somewhat agree and 19.2% strongly agree that people do not engage in sport and leisure activities because of cost, while 11.5% strongly agree and 65.4% somewhat agree that people do not engage in sport or leisure activities because of time. 15.4% strongly agree and 53.8% somewhat agree that people do not engage in sport or leisure activities because of the distance they have to travel.

These findings were consistent with open data for Lincolnshire, which shows the distribution of provision across the county. While at first glance, the map of different charities, societies, and for-profit companies in the sector suggests an even distribution of services, once the query is limited to sport and leisure provision, it reveals that most companies offering sport, physical activity, and leisure as their primary activity appear clustered around specific areas and large tourist centres, making them less accessible to those living in rural settings, and those with limited transport links.

That is not to say that people are not willing to go the distance and cost in order to engage in sport and physical activity – as evidenced by section 3.4.1, participants were of the opinion that, given sufficient motivation, people would travel in order to engage in sport and physical activity.

(M)any of our members would go swimming if we had a pool near us. Some of our members do have cars so can travel many miles. Some of our members engage in various group physical activity groups according to their ability.

- *Survey respondent, Charity*

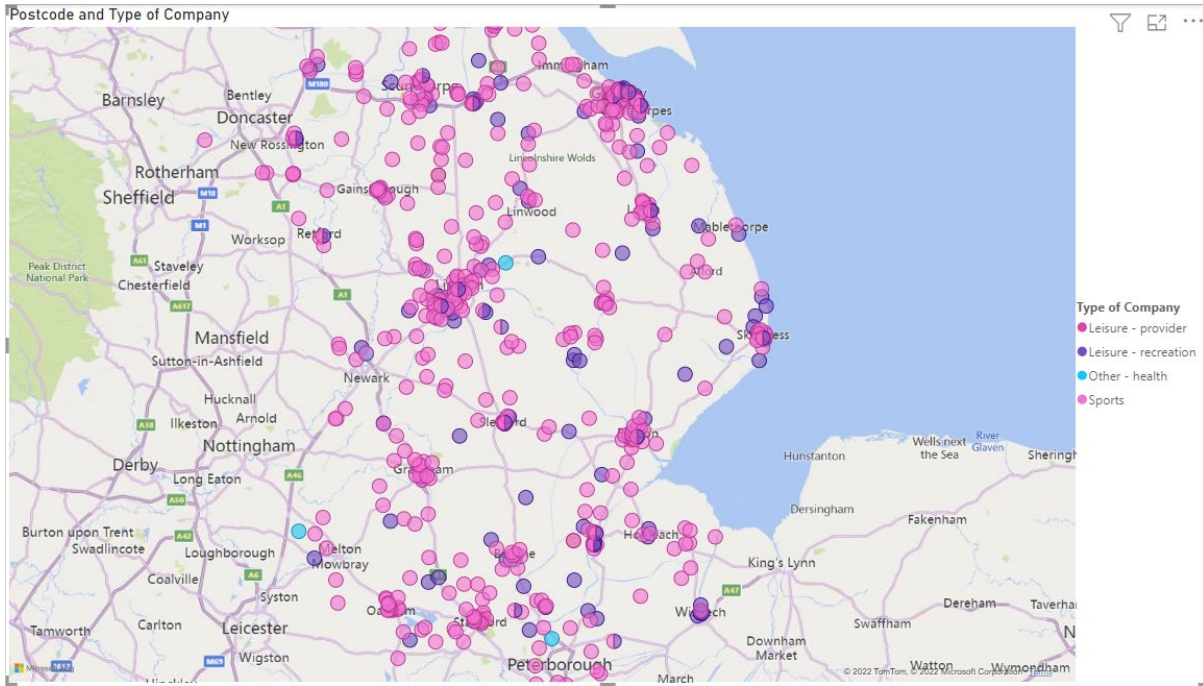


Figure 4: Distribution of Leisure providers across Greater Lincolnshire and Rutland

At the same time, interviewees noted that depending on location, citizens might simply not have the time to engage in sport and physical activity. One example given was of shift patterns in certain industries, as they were seen as not being ideal for active lives. This is particularly relevant for Greater Lincolnshire and Rutland, where 21% of the population in employment works for 45 hours or more per week.

	Greater Lincolnshire and Rutland	
	number	%
T17:1 (Under 10 : All people)	18,800	4%
T17:2 (Under 10 : Male)	4,200	2%
T17:3 (Under 10 : Female)	14,100	6%
T17:4 (10 to 34 : All people)	160,000	31%
T17:5 (10 to 34 : Male)	41,100	15%
T17:6 (10 to 34 : Female)	118,900	47%
T17:7 (35 to 44 : All people)	233,700	45%
T17:8 (35 to 44 : Male)	142,900	53%
T17:9 (35 to 44 : Female)	90,800	36%
T17:10 (45 hours plus : All people)	110,200	21%
T17:11 (45 hours plus : Male)	80,800	30%
T17:12 (45 hours plus : Female)	29,400	12%

Figure 5: Hours worked Greater Lincolnshire and Rutland, 12 months to Q2 22¹⁴

¹⁴ Annual Population Survey, NOMIS [Nomis - Official Census and Labour Market Statistics - Nomis - Official Census and Labour Market Statistics \(nomisweb.co.uk\)](https://nomisweb.co.uk)

Throughout all the interviews, the importance of creating fun, accessible exercise, and encouraging movement was emphasised. However, it was also agreed that a one-size-fits all provision wasn't ideal – different groups need different support.

Gaps in provision for defined groups

As seen from Section 2: Forward Trends in Population Growth and Demographics, there are several groups in Greater Lincolnshire and Rutland for whom engagement with sport, physical activity, and leisure presents higher barriers than for others. Additionally, as seen in section 3.2, many of the groups that struggle to engage with sport on a national scale are very highly represented in Greater Lincolnshire – older people, ethnic minorities, people with disabilities and long-term conditions, and people living in non-affluent areas.

Cultural and Religious considerations

Culture and religion, in addition to ethnicity may be relevant factors to consider when establishing/promoting sports. After Christianity, the largest religions in the UK as per the 2011 census were, in order: Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism, Judaism and Buddhism¹⁵.

Sport England¹⁶ have found that participation in sport and physical activity is higher among some faith groups than others, for example *“amongst those practising a religion, those of a Buddhist, Christian, Jewish or Sikh faith are more likely to be physically active. In contrast, activity levels are lowest amongst those who practise Islam.”*¹⁷.

Sporting Equals¹⁸ is an organisation that promotes ethnic diversity in sport and physical activity which may be able to provide advice and guidance relating to the engagement of people from various ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds in sport and physical activity. Upon registration with them it is possible to download various reports relevant to equality and diversity in sport. Lincolnshire-based organisations Centre for Reconciliation¹⁹ and JUST Lincolnshire²⁰ may also be able to provide support and advice regarding religion and cultural matters locally relating to sport.

Network Steet Games²¹ provide a guide to engaging females from BME communities and different cultural backgrounds²² in sport. They describe important factors to consider as including:

- Female only sessions.
- Female exclusive environments.
- A relaxed clothing policy which is well publicised.
- Parental approval and building relationships.
- Understanding of the Faith calendar.
- Using faith centres to host activities.

¹⁵https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_the_United_Kingdom#:~:text=Eurostat%27s%20Eurobarometer%20survey%20in,9.9%25%20Anti%2Dtheists.

¹⁶<https://www.sportengland.org/>

¹⁷<https://www.sportengland.org/know-your-audience/demographic-knowledge/faith-groups>

¹⁸<http://www.sportingequals.org.uk/research-and-advice/research/>

¹⁹<https://tcf-reconciliation.org/>

²⁰<https://www.justlincolnshire.org.uk/>

²¹<https://network.streetgames.org/>

²²<https://network.streetgames.org/sites/default/files/Us%20Girls%20How%20to%20Guides%20BME%20Reduced.pdf>

Islam

The Muslim Sports Foundation²³, the Muslim Association of Great Britain²⁴ the Muslim Women in Sport Network²⁵ and the Women in Sport's Insight pack²⁶ may be able to provide guidance on the promotion of physical activity within the Muslim community of Greater Lincolnshire and Rutland. Some key recommendations from the Women in Sport Insight Pack in relation to engaging Muslim Women and girls in sport include:

- **“Promotion:** Use **relatable role models** and people within the local Muslim community to promote sports opportunities. Using images of Muslim women and girls participating in sport in promotional materials can increase awareness of the possibilities, as long as you have permission from participants to use these images. Include relevant information that will put participants at ease, such as that sessions **are led by a female coach in a private space**. This will provide reassurance that the needs of Muslim girls and women have been considered and met.
- **Sport in schools:** Consult with girls and their parents to ensure that the right steps are taken to be **inclusive and responsive** to the specific needs of Muslim girls.
- Enable Muslim girls to **wear clothes they feel comfortable in**. This removes the potential barrier that adhering to Islam dress protocols presents.
- **Be aware of holidays** such as Ramadan, when rituals such as fasting might impact the ability of Muslim students to participate in P.E. and other physical activities.
- **Enable privacy**, such as private areas for changing in changing rooms and separated showers”.

Hinduism

Hindu Matters in Britain²⁷,²⁸ and the Hindu Council UK²⁹ may provide guidance on engaging Hindu communities in sports and physical activities.

Sikhism

Guidance on engaging Sikh communities in sports and physical activities may be found from Sikh Sport³⁰, who “*promote sport positively with families, youth and communities whilst increasing the awareness of important Sikh values*”. Other information may be obtained from Network of Sikh Organisations³¹ and from the British Sikh Report 2020³², a report “*created by Sikhs about Sikhs, and for everyone with an interest in the lives of Sikhs in Britain*”.

Judaism

US based, Jewish Sports Now³³ may be able to provide guidance regarding the engagement of Jewish communities in sport. Other sources of information may include the sports pages of Jewish News, the UK's biggest Jewish newspaper³⁴.

²³ <https://muslimsportsfoundation.org.uk/>

²⁴ <https://www.mabonline.net/muslims-in-sports/>

²⁵ <https://mwisn.org/about-us/>

²⁶ <https://www.womeninsport.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Muslim-Women-and-Girls-Insight-Pack-FINAL.pdf>

²⁷ www.hindumattersinbritain.co.uk

²⁸ <https://www.hindumattersinbritain.co.uk/Page/sports>

²⁹ <http://www.hindu counciluk.org/>

³⁰ <https://www.sikh sport.co.uk/>

³¹ <https://nsouk.co.uk/>

³² <https://britishsikhreport.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/British-Sikh-Report-2020.pdf>

³³ <https://jewishsportsnow.com/>

³⁴ <https://www.jewishnews.co.uk/topic/sport/>

Buddhism

The Buddhist Society³⁵ may be able to provide guidance regarding the engagement of Buddhist communities in sport.

Gaps in provision for people with mental health difficulties

Mental health was a considerable topic of conversation, particularly after the pandemic. More time will be spent discussing the impact of COVID-19 on the mental health of individuals, but there is one gap in provision that is particularly relevant to the sport, physical activity, and leisure sector. That gap being provision for those who suffer with eating disorders and other adjacent mental health conditions.

Data on eating disorders is limited, especially on the regional level, and getting treatment has historically been very difficult. Research published by the charity B-Eat in 2017 also showed how long waiting times are for individuals with suspected or confirmed eating disorders to receive specialist treatment pre-pandemic³⁶ - post-COVID, those waiting times are likely to increase.

What this means for the sport, physical activity, and leisure sector is that there are significant opportunities for new, innovative interventions, delivered to those who need it most. However, it also means that the sector must be very mindful of its messaging and the way it approaches working with “atypical” clients, regardless of whether they are children or adults. In recent years, a big focus of the UK’s public health strategy has been obesity and childhood obesity. Yet, eating disorders are, by and large, a hidden problem, and that even people out of treatment might relapse into destructive behaviours under the wrong conditions.

Additionally, it is worth noting that while sport and physical activity are shown to improve the symptoms of certain mood affective disorders (such as depression) and certain neurotic, stress-related and somatoform disorders (such as generalised anxiety), certain conditions can overlap and exacerbate one another, which further emphasises the need for comprehensive mental health education and mental health first aid training within the sector. Indeed, as some of the participants note, mental health education and mental health first aid are being introduced more and more as part of the training of staff, but it is important to remember that unless a client comes out and says what they are struggling with, it is impossible to know what might be going on in their lives. The experiences that clients have will determine whether they are likely to return to a leisure centre or continue with a new sport or physical activity, so that kind of education and training, arguably, deserves to be prioritised.

This is even more the case for provision aimed at people with multiple and complex needs, physical disabilities, and long-term conditions.

Gaps in provision for people with disabilities and multiple and complex needs

Data on people living with disabilities have been taken from NOMIS³⁷ data on individuals in receipt of disability benefits. As such, these data are likely to provide a conservative estimate of the number of

³⁵ <https://www.thebuddhistsociety.org/>

³⁶ <https://beat.contentfiles.net/media/documents/delaying-for-years-denied-for-months.pdf>

³⁷ <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/query/construct/summary.asp?mode=construct&version=0&dataset=115>

people living with disabilities in the Greater Lincolnshire and Rutland area, as there may be also those who are disabled, but not eligible for disability benefits; those who do not realise they are eligible and have not made a claim; and those with disabilities who do not wish to make a claim.

Data are provided for the period of November 2018, as beyond this date, this data collection has been discontinued. This shows that as of 2018, there were a total of 31,000 people in receipt of disability related benefits across the whole of Lincolnshire and Rutland, with the greatest number in Lincolnshire, and the fewest in Rutland.

A breakdown of the data by gender shows that there are slightly higher numbers of male than female claimants in all four areas, with an average of 54% claimants across the Greater Lincolnshire and Rutland area being male.

A breakdown by age shows that in each area there are more claimants who are aged 65 and over than there are of children under 16, or of 16-64 year olds. This difference is particularly pronounced in Lincolnshire where there were 9,310 claimants who were aged 65+, compared to 6,040 under 16s, and only 5,500 aged 16-64.

By exploring age and gender across each area (as shown below), it can be seen that in all four areas there are more male claimants in the Under 16 and 16-64 age categories, but more females in the 65+ age group. This suggests that currently older women are more likely to be recorded as having disabilities, however it is likely that this may change over the next few years, as younger men (who are currently more likely to be recorded as having disabilities) move into older age groups.

People Living with Disabilities in Greater Lincolnshire and Rutland

Area	Under 16*	16-64*	65+*	Calculated Total*	Total provided by NOMIS
Lincolnshire Total	6040	5500	9310	20850	20860
Lincolnshire Men	4200	2890	4300	11390	11410
Lincolnshire Women	1840	2610	5010	9460	9460
Rutland Total	170	120	200	490	550
Rutland Men	120	80	80	280	300
Rutland Women	50	40	120	210	250
North East Lincolnshire	1180	1610	1880	4670	4720
North East Lincs Men	820	880	880	2580	2570
North East Lincs Women	360	730	1000	2090	2150
North Lincolnshire	1170	1620	2060	4850	4870
North Lincs Men	800	840	890	2530	2540
North Lincs Women	370	780	1170	2320	2320

*These figures show totals calculated using the raw data provided by NOMIS in order to provide a breakdown of claimants by age and gender. As these do not take into account “negligible” returns which are anonymised at a granular level, the totals may not exactly match with totals reported by NOMIS but have been provided here for transparency.

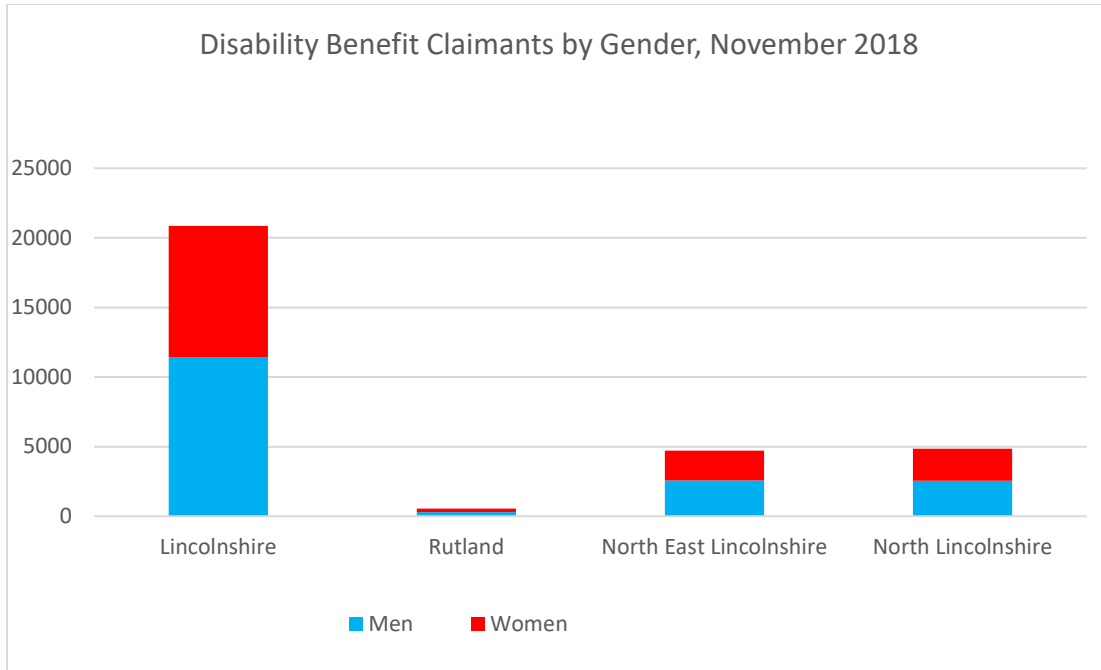


Figure 6: Disability Benefit Claimants by Gender

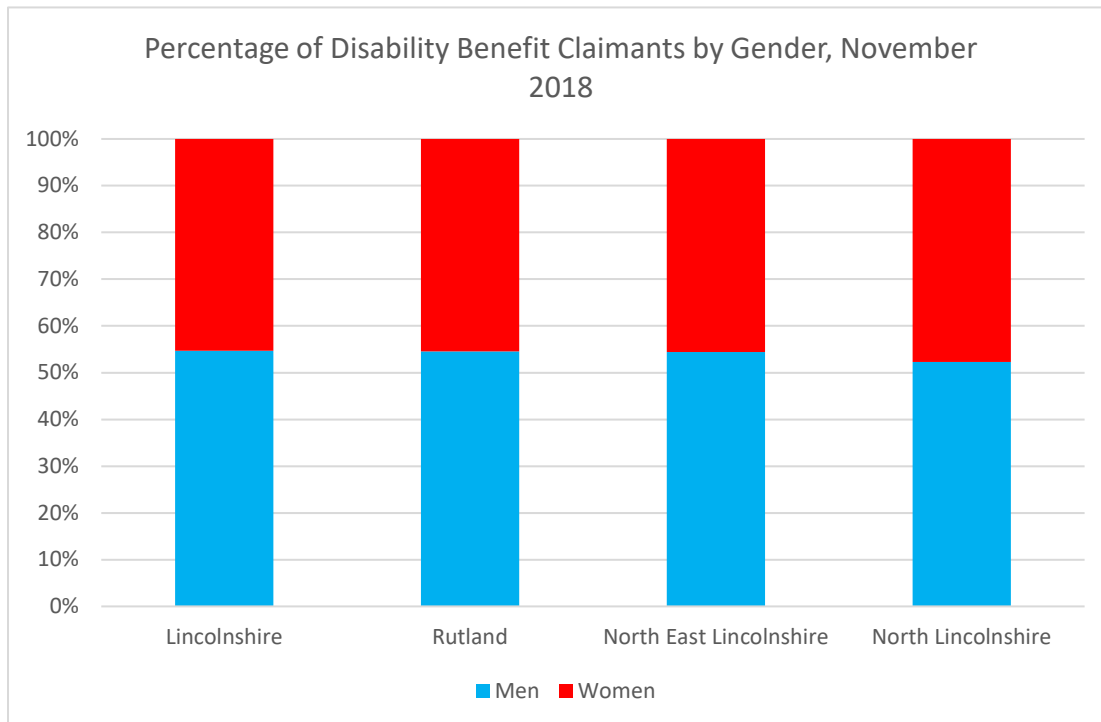


Figure 7: Percentage of Disability Benefit Claimants by Gender, November 2018

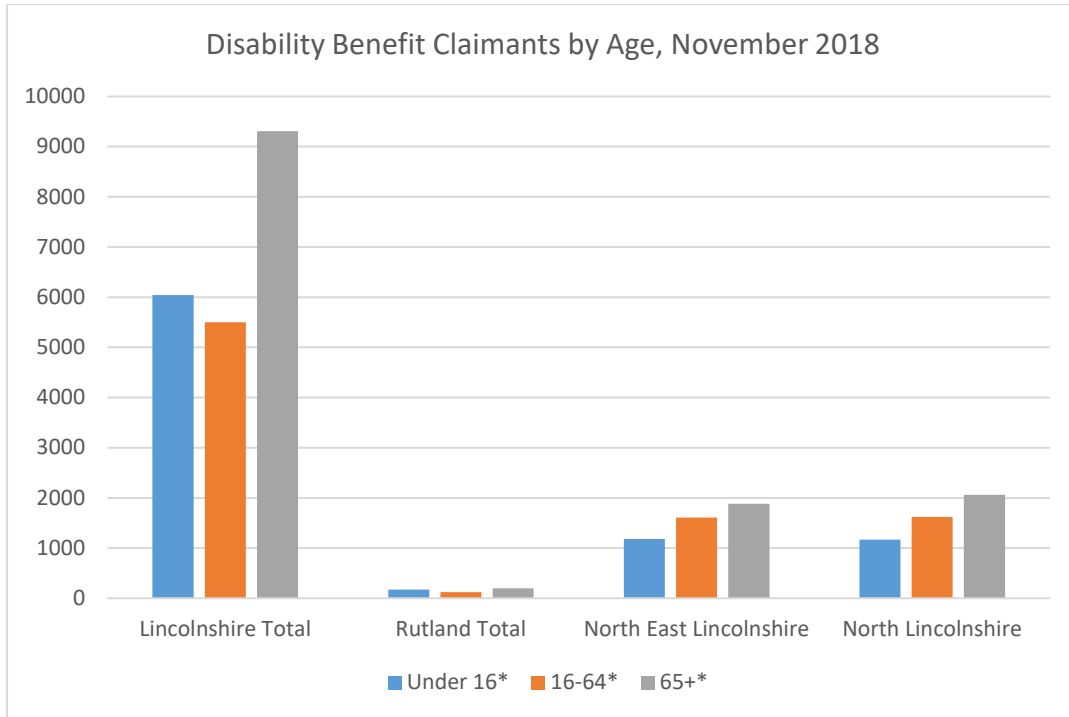


Figure 8: Disability Benefit Claimants by Age, November 2018

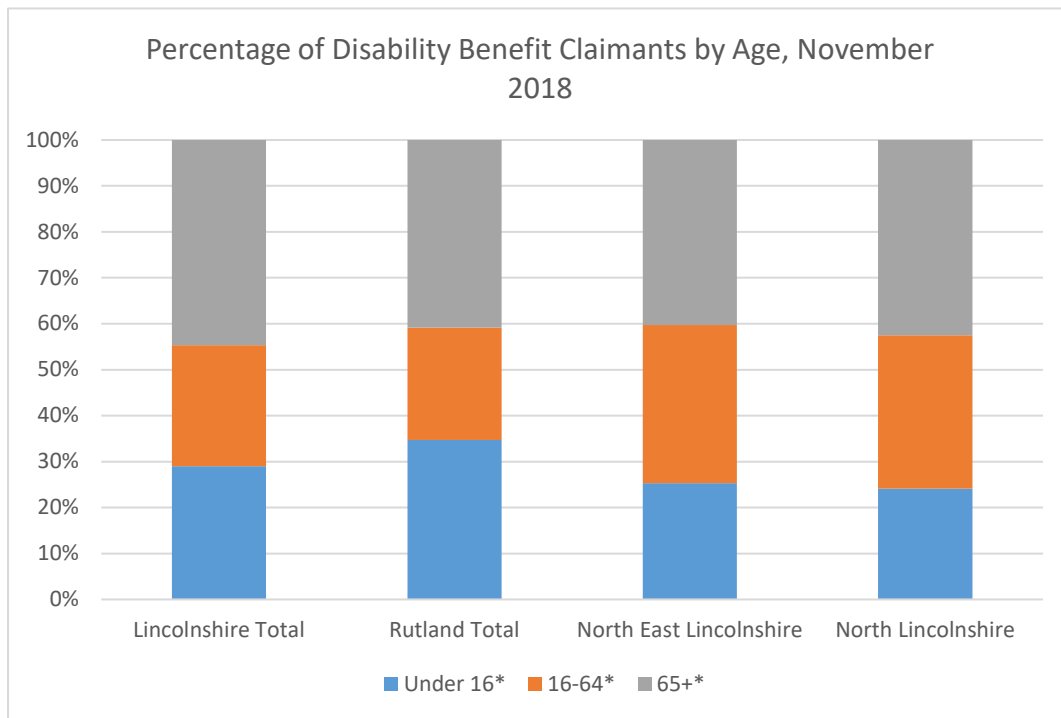


Figure 9: Percentage of Disability Benefit Claimants by Age, November 2018

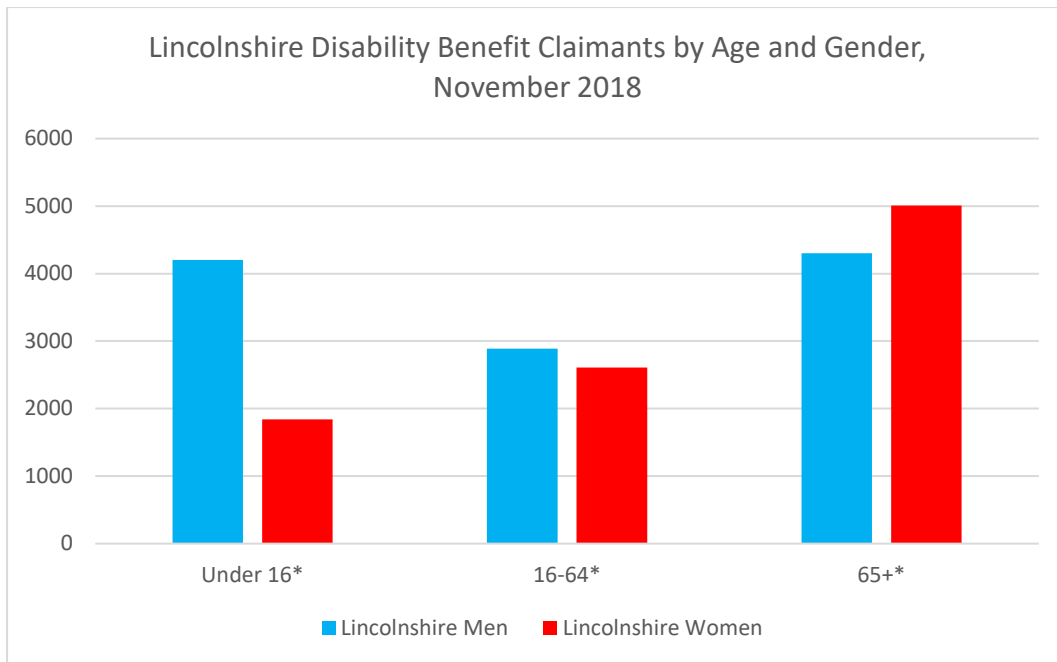


Figure 10: Lincolnshire Disability Benefit Claimants by Age and Gender, November 2018

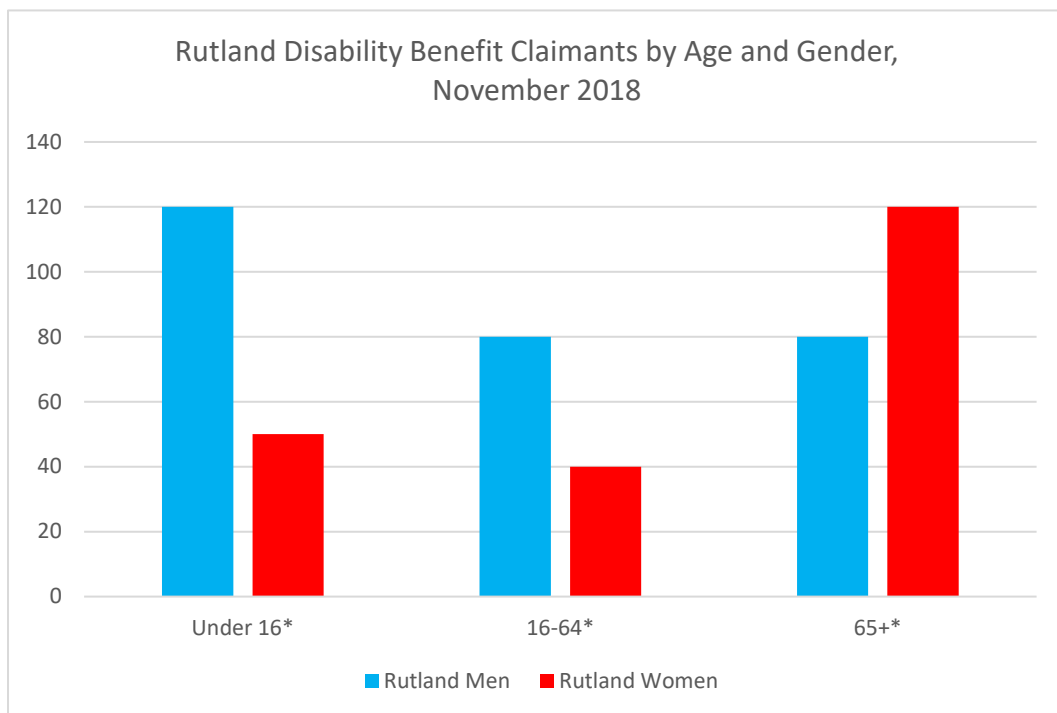


Figure 11: Rutland Disability Benefit Claimants by Age and Gender, November 2018

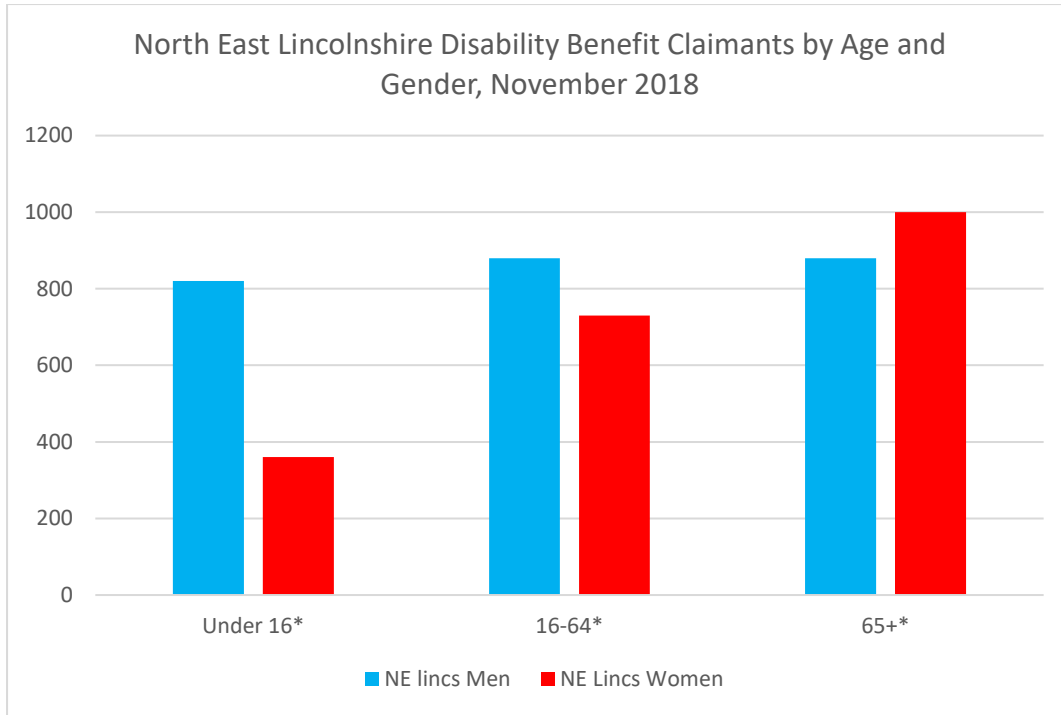


Figure 12: North East Lincolnshire Disability Benefit Claimants by Age and Gender, November 2018

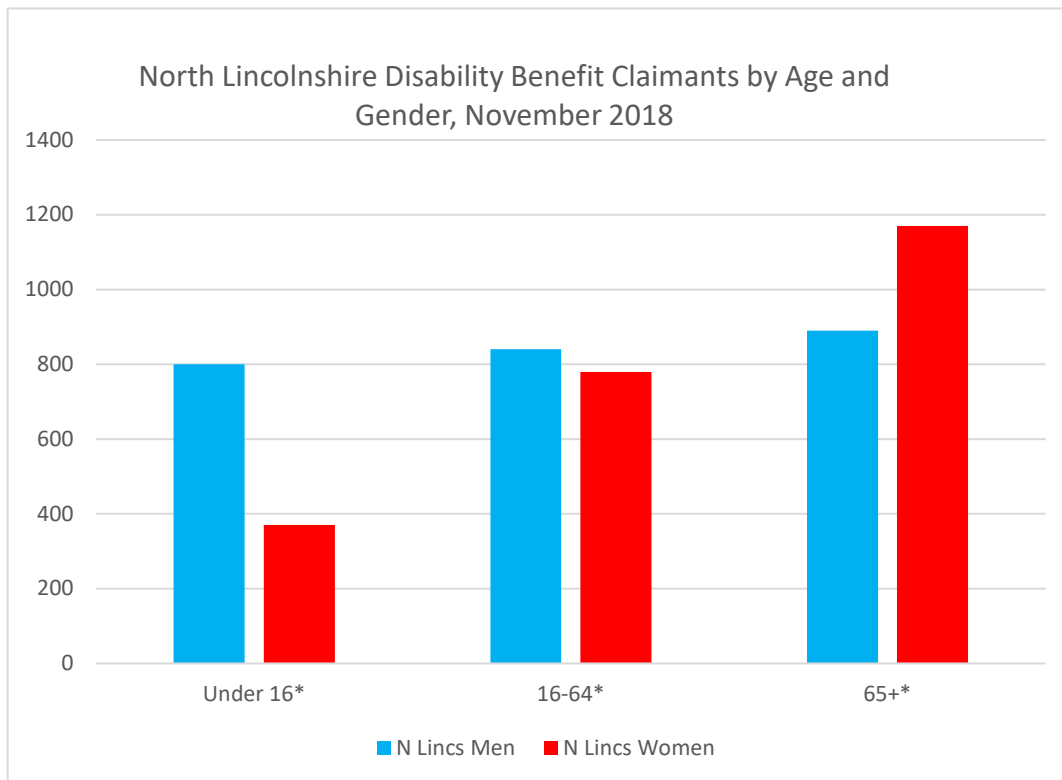


Figure 13: North Lincolnshire Disability Benefit Claimants by Age and Gender, November 2018

Gaps in provision for LGBTQIA+ people in sport

Demographic data on the size of the LGBTQIA+ population of Greater Lincolnshire and Rutland is scarce, as demonstrated by Part 2. Information about the companies, charities, and mutuals in Greater Lincolnshire and Rutland that specifically support LGBTQIA+ patrons is also scarce. Only one club is listed as being LGBTQ+ friendly in Lincolnshire according to Pride Sports³⁸ and it is unclear how many other sport, physical activity, and leisure providers in the area have adopted a code of practice that might foster an inclusive environment for LGBTQ+ individuals.

That can pose a problem to getting individuals active and promoting growth in the sector. A report commissioned by Sport England in 2016, shows that:

- 55% of LGBT men were not active enough to maintain good health, compared to 33% of men in the general population.
- 56% of LGBT women were not active enough to maintain good health, compared to 45% of women in the general population.
- 64% of LGBT people who identified as something other than male or female (e.g. genderfluid or genderqueer) were not active enough to maintain good health³⁹.

More recent data from Active Lives (Published April 2021, and covering 2019-2020 period) shows some improvement, with 70.5% of gay and lesbian people were classed as active⁴⁰, compared to 67.5% of bisexual people who participated in the survey. For those who reported having “other sexual orientation”, that number dropped to 49.7%. No data was shared about gender identity and physical activity.

However, data from both Sport England⁴¹ and the Equality Network⁴² shows that there is a widespread perception of sport as being not friendly to the LGBTQ+ community. The research presented by the Equality Network does specify that barriers to accessing physical activity are smaller, but respondents in their study felt that sport was not friendly to LGBTQ+ people. For that same reason, it is very difficult to get a sufficient data about the numbers of LGBTQ+ people participating in sport and physical activities, as the perceived unfriendliness of that environment might discourage them from disclosing that part of themselves to their teams or their coaches.

Guidance on helping LGBTQ+ people get active seems scarce and limited. A 2020 review on widening the participation of transgender and nonbinary individuals in sport has not yet been published, despite the release date being pushed back twice⁴³. Some guidance is available from Pride Sports⁴⁴ but it is not complete.

³⁸ <https://pridesports.org.uk/>

³⁹ <https://sportengland-production-files.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/pride-sport-sport-physical-activity-and-lgbt-report-2016.pdf?VersionId=HWrXN2KhPLBV8mmOIEqCEh7E1FF0xZKM>

⁴⁰ completing 150+ minutes a week of moderate intensity physical activity.

⁴¹ <https://www.sportengland.org/research-and-data/research/lgbtq>

⁴² <https://www.equality-network.org/our-work/policyandcampaign/out-for-sport/the-facts>

⁴³ <https://www.sportengland.org/know-your-audience/demographic-knowledge/lgbt/review-transgender-inclusion-domestic-sport-uk>

⁴⁴ <https://pridesports.org.uk/resources/>

The role of data in future provision

The Good

The opportunities for data and digital tools are significant for the Sport, Physical Activity, and Leisure sector. This report owes a lot of its findings to open data, including information made available by the ONS, NHS, NOMIS, the UK Government, and local authorities. Well-coordinated data dashboards can help policy-makers in making fast, real-time decisions in order to maximise resource usage and deliver tailored solutions that the population needs.

An oft-cited example of digital technologies being put to good use is Joe Wicks' Keeping the Nation active initiative during COVID-19. This initiative, delivered through YouTube, was a great example of how a well-aimed, targeted intervention could be delivered quickly and efficiently to a large number of people. However, one aspect of this case study that is less often discussed is the sheer volume of data that can be accessed through YouTube's analytics. There are granular data which could then be used to target and improve existing interventions in real time. Geography, demographics, watch time, most viewed videos and most viewed parts of the videos – those are just a handful of the metrics that are available. A more locally-delivered intervention – perhaps, one aimed at getting inactive people engaged into some gentle form of physical activity – could review their data throughout the period of the intervention and adjust what they are delivering, doing more of what worked and less of what did not.

To give another example, fitness applications often apply data from their users to drive engagement – either through offering incentives for positive actions, or offering “nudges” when they deem that a person has become disengaged from the activity they signed up for. The kinds of incentives and “nudges” vary from application to application, but they are all based on the same principle.

However, opportunities for data to be deployed in the service of getting more people engaged in the sport, physical activity, and leisure sector are balanced against significant barriers to application. Namely, the digital divide and how it manifests in Greater Lincolnshire.

The Bad

Interview data suggests that in practice, data and digital tools have had a mixed effect on both the side of the employers and on the engagement with sport, physical activity, and leisure on the part of citizens. On the part of the employers, interviewees note that automation has taken away jobs from frontline staff – for example, self check-in kiosks and vending machines have replaced reception and hospitality staff. At the same time, interviewees noted that the rollout of automated/digital tools did not appear to increase participation in leisure centres. Indeed, in some cases, interviewees felt that automated/digital tools actively harmed participation, by creating barriers to entry.

It is worth noting that the impact of automated or digital tools on the sector did not occur in isolation. Pre-COVID, Greater Lincolnshire had a pronounced deficit in skills, and was identified as being at particular risk of automation⁴⁵ because of the makeup of local companies, levels of investment, and

⁴⁵ [Probability of automation in England - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://ons.gov.uk)

the provision (or lack thereof) of training for staff looking to upskill and move into different roles. The table below shows some of the roles most “at risk” of automation:

SOC10M – Description	Probability of automation
	<i>Source: Annual Population Survey 2011-2017, Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC) and Frey & Osborne probabilities</i>
Waiters and waitresses	72.81%
Shelf fillers	71.70%
Elementary sales occupations n.e.c.	70.69%
Bar staff	70.66%
Kitchen and catering assistants	69.20%
Farm workers	69.05%
Sewing machinists	68.64%
Cleaners and domestics	68.13%
Tyre, exhaust and windscreen fitters	68.07%
Vehicle valeters and cleaners	67.77%

Furthermore, qualifications held in Greater Lincolnshire have consistently lagged behind the rest of Great Britain as illustrated in the table below:

Qualifications (Jan 2019-Dec 2019)⁴⁶	Lincolnshire	Lincolnshire %	North Lincolnshire	North Lincolnshire %	North East Lincolnshire	North East Lincolnshire %	Great Britain
NVQ4 And Above	134800	30.6%	29000	28.3%	22200	23.20%	40.3%
NVQ3	102500	23.3%	18500	18.0%	21000	22.0%	18.2%
NVQ2	97500	22.1%	20400	20.0%	22300	23.4%	17.1%
NVQ1	53500	12.2%	14400	14.0%	12900	13.4%	10.0%
Other	28700	6.5%	8600	8.4%	6900	7.30%	6.7%
No Qualifications	23400	5.3%	11600	11.3%	10200	10.70%	7.7%

LORIC’s past research has noted that there is a pronounced gap in literacy skills among adults in Greater Lincolnshire – a gap which has largely remained a hidden problem due to various individual and systemic issues.⁴⁷

Beyond the workforce issues that the skills gap represents, there is also the digital divide and how it manifests itself in Greater Lincolnshire and Rutland. The digital divide is a combination of intersecting factors that impact an individual’s likelihood to access and take full advantage of digital tools⁴⁸. Those factors include barriers of infrastructure⁴⁹; barriers of resources⁵⁰; barriers of education⁵¹; and

⁴⁶ Source: ONS Annual population survey, as seen on NOMIS (local area profile)

⁴⁷ <https://loric.thedata.place/dataset/adult-literacy-in-greater-lincolnshire>

⁴⁸ Past LORIC research.

⁴⁹ Can individuals get access to reliable, strong WiFi in their area?

⁵⁰ Can individuals purchase the hardware and software necessary to use the tools?

⁵¹ Do individuals know how to safely use the digital tools to their fullest?

emotional barriers⁵². Depending on how many of those barriers a person or community encounters, and to what extent they can overcome them, is what determines the breadth and depth of the digital divide for that person, or that community.

All this to say, there is a structural issue that prevents people from using digital tools to access sport, physical activity, and leisure; and that structural issue may well be beyond the ability of an individual leisure centre or gym to solve. When potential participants are put off by an app or an automated check-in desk, it may be for any number of reasons, including:

- Thinking that this is too complicated.
- Concerns about privacy.
- Feeling like they are not getting that “human touch” when coming to the leisure centre or gym.
- Thinking “this place is not for me” because they associate digital tools with expensive, “posh” places.
- Not understanding what is expected of them.
- Not having access to a smartphone or a computer.
- Not having access to digital banking tools.

Leisure centres and other sport facilities appear to have taken notice of that. According to interviewees, they are seeking to invest more in frontline staff, such as reception and hospitality, in order to cater to a wider range of clients. However, this is also where many interviewees come up against the recruitment and retention problem that was described in chapter one.

As described by interviewees, the staff and resource shortage has led to a lot of multi-tasking on the part of the existing staff. Some of the situations described in interview included managers taking on hospitality, reception, and housekeeping jobs alongside their contracted duties to maintain business continuity. While some leisure centres were implementing initiatives to increase staff retention, this was not evenly distributed and varied from place to place.

Moreover, even if all structural and individual barriers to engagement were removed, there is one final challenge in applying a utopic data model to the sport, physical activity, and leisure sector: namely, data quality and availability.

The Complicated

Open data is data that are easily accessible, published under an open license, and published in a form that is both readable by humans and by computers. Open data is the ideal for policy-makers and companies as it allows them to make evidence-based decisions quickly and with minimal challenge to obtaining that evidence.

Unfortunately, there is not open data on all possible subjects, and what is available is of varying quality. To give an example encountered within the preparation of this report, the demographic data for Lincolnshire, North East Lincolnshire, and North Lincolnshire took days to compile, sort out, and be made presentable. By comparison, the data for Rutland only took a couple of hours. There were no

⁵² Does an individual’s socio-economic or cultural background prevent them from accessing digital tools?

differences in the operations being performed, just on the publishers and how they made their data available to the general population.

Naturally, there are paid-for services that provide similar or even better data – Van Djick Bureau, for example – but the key problem is that an annual licence to those services can cost anywhere from £5,000 to £50,000. It is a model that prices out micro, small, and even some medium-sized businesses; and if a company does not see the immediate return on investment of the product, it is less likely to want to seek it out in the future.

Harnessing the power of data for positive behaviour is a challenging endeavour that not all companies working in the sector can reasonably engage with. Cost barriers, skills barriers, and data literacy barriers can all hamstring an initiative, no matter how well-designed it is or how well it tests with focus groups.

Finally, the challenges to “nudge theory” which have been published in recent years. As reported, there is emerging evidence that “nudges” – techniques designed to change people’s behaviour – are not as effective as initially represented, or at the very least, their return on investment is very small compared to their cost.⁵³ As such, it is worth considering what may be the most effective and the most impactful changes that the sector can make in order to encourage more people to engage with sport, physical activity, and leisure providers.

⁵³ <https://theconversation.com/nudge-theory-doesnt-work-after-all-says-new-evidence-review-but-it-could-still-have-a-future-187635>

Recommendations

As demonstrated by this chapter, there are significant opportunities for developing provision in Greater Lincolnshire and Rutland. However, there are multiple individual, organisational, and structural challenges that may prevent citizens from engaging with the sector. As such, the recommendations that are put forward are aimed at addressing these challenges:

- Interventions aimed at increasing the confidence and self-efficacy of citizens. Examples include:
 - Targeted activities, based on consultations with various user groups (see chapter 2 for more details.)
 - Activities for ethnic minorities.
 - Activities for people with mental health difficulties.
 - Activities for people with disabilities.
 - Resources, training, and support for providers to better engage with people with multiple and complex needs.
 - As there was little or no data on the experiences and needs of non-binary and transgender people, there is a need for more research and direct engagement with LGBTQIA+ individuals to support them to engage with the sector.
- Interventions to address the lack of accessibility to sport, physical activity, and leisure in certain parts of the county. Examples include:
 - More funding for taking activities “on the road” or to local community centres.
 - More funding for local trainers.
 - More training and support for local providers.
 - Investment in increasing both the accessibility of venues and the accessibility of programs.
- Interventions to address the lack of coordination between stakeholders within the sector. Examples include:
 - Better networking for all organisations with the sector.
 - Direct engagement with small providers, CICs, and charities that operate in the sector.
 - More targeted aid for small providers.
 - Better conversations between public sector (NHS, councils, GLLEP) and small providers, particularly the third sector.
- Increasing access to funding, both in terms of direct grants and in terms of information and aid to help providers access funding. Examples include:
 - Better signposting for funding calls.
 - Better information and support to help small providers apply for funding.
 - Building partnerships between small providers, charities, and CICs, and the public sector (NHS, councils, the GLLEP) to create continuity of funding. (See chapter 1 for more recommendations).
- Interventions aimed at increasing provision for specific demographic groups (see chapter 2 for more details.)
- Raising the profile of “atypical” active leisure and showcasing the good work done by providers within that part of the sector.
- Increasing early provision, both directly (through targeted programs) and indirectly (through measures that will increase access to these programs).
- Use data alongside local skills and knowledge to improve service delivery and increase access to programs.

The above list is advisory and non-exhaustive.