

## Being active

### What is a JSNA?

The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) is the comprehensive assessment of the current and future health and social care needs of children and young people aged 0 to 19 (25 with SEND) and their families, with a focus on improving the health and wellbeing and reducing inequalities. There are nine individual chapters that comprise this JSNA.

A Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) looks at all the information available around the current and future health and social care needs of populations in the local area. It will then use the data to inform and guide the planning and commissioning of health, well-being and social care services within a local authority. The implementation of recommendations will be overseen by the Health and Wellbeing Board.

As part of the JSNA's development, we have ensured the following principles and values have been considered:

- Think Family
- Our Way of Working and trauma informed practice.
- Prevention, early intervention and avoiding escalation of need.
- The voice of children, young people and families is central to the design, delivery and evaluation of service provision.
- Strength-based, personalised service provision focussed on relationships.
- Integrated services which mean that families tell their story once and can easily access seamless support.
- Equality.
- Reducing inequality.

### Chapters Introduction

Cheshire West and Chester Councils 0-19 (25 with SEND) JSNA aims to bring benefits by identifying key health, wellbeing, and social care needs. Findings will help the Council and its partners to make more informed decisions about how we provide support and services to achieve the best outcomes for our children, young people, and their families/carers.

Each chapter has considered literature relevant to the assigned area of focus, drawing on this information to highlight key points that could contribute to findings and recommendations.

Although each JSNA chapter can be read as an individual report. Throughout every chapter, there were common themes relating to how we collect and analyse data particularly in relation to outcome information for certain groups; how inclusive and consistent messages are communicated and how we would like to do more coproduction and peer mentoring.

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## 1. Introduction

Physical activity is crucial for children and young people. It promotes healthy growth and development, improves cardiovascular health, strengthens bones and muscles, helps maintain a healthy weight, and boosts overall mental well-being<sup>i</sup>. Regular physical activity also enhances cognitive function, concentration, and academic performance. It teaches important life skills like teamwork, communication, and discipline while reducing the risk of chronic disease in later life.

The benefits of physical activity for children and young people change throughout the years. In early childhood (0-4 years) physical activity supports the development of motor skills, coordination and muscle strength in infants and toddlers. Active play helps in the development of social skills, cognitive functions, and emotional regulation. For children aged 6-11, physical activity continues to promote motor skill refinement, bone development and muscle strength. Regular exercise helps maintain a healthy weight, cardiovascular health, and overall fitness. It also contributes to mental well-being. For young people aged 12-18, physical activity is crucial for healthy growth and development during puberty. It is also important for bone density, muscle mass and cardiovascular fitness. Physical activity can further help manage stress, improve mental health and build self-esteem.

Children who are more active are happier, more resilient and more trusting of others, but over half of our children and young people aged 5-16 are not active enough to enjoy these benefits, and activity levels among young adults (16-34) have also begun to decline. This is particularly true for girls, disabled young people, young people with long-term health conditions, those from less affluent families and youngsters from Black and Asian backgrounds. Current inequalities in sport and activity unfortunately start from a young age and they need to be addressed<sup>ii</sup>.

A child's earliest years have a powerful influence on their later health status. Forming positive habits and associations with being active are vital. Research suggests that parents and carers play a key role, with insight from Sport England stating that "children with active parents – particularly mothers – are more likely to be active themselves...and children who have positive experiences of sport and physical activity early on are also more likely to prioritise being active in later life". Children also need safe and appealing places to be physically active, such as parks, playgrounds and sports facilities, as well as opportunities in early years settings, schools and clubs which are engaging and inclusive.

As a society our level of physical activity continues to decrease, with numerous factors contributing to this. With children and young people this decrease is of great concern due to the benefits that physical activity has on health and wellbeing but also socially and academically. Physically active children are more likely to be active adults but an increase in screen time and other sedentary behaviours is putting the activity levels of our future adults at risk. Further barriers of course exist including a lack of safe places to play; an absence of walkable neighbourhoods and cycling and pedestrian-friendly places which is limiting or discourage active travel; parental influence and/or peer pressure which can greatly influence a child's decision to take part in physical activities; gender stereotypes and media influences which hinder engagement leave children feeling they need to look a certain way or that they can only participate if they excel at the activity. Cultural and socioeconomic factors such as family income and cultural norms can impact a child's opportunities for physical activity along with time constraints due to other commitments. Also, the quality of

the physical activity activities and/or education and its suitability to the cohort it is being delivered to can greatly impact engagement.

Public Health England (PHE) has co-produced the 'Everybody active, every day' framework, a national, evidence-based approach to support all sectors to embed physical activity into the fabric of daily life and make it an easy, cost-effective and 'normal' choice in every community in England<sup>iii</sup>. Last updated in 2021, the key outcomes within the Public Health Outcomes Framework (PHOF) are central to the success of this approach, i.e., the percentage of children and young people who are physically active.

More recently, in August 2023, the Government launched 'Get Active: a strategy for the future of sport and physical activity'. This ambitious strategy sets out to make it easier for people to get physically active and ensure the sport sector can thrive in the years ahead. By 2030, the Government want to see 2.5 million more adults and 1 million more children being classed as active in England<sup>iv</sup>.

Locally, the All Together Active Strategy (2022), a Cheshire and Merseyside Population Health Board programme of work has been developed to get 150,000 more people active across the sub-region<sup>v</sup>. The strategy takes a whole-systems approach to increasing the number of active people and decreasing sedentary behaviour. The All Together Active Strategy sets out that physical activity needs to be embedded in every setting which can support physical activity, making it easier to be active and change behaviours across all stages of the life course.

The scope of this 'being active' chapter was to review the existing offer across the borough, considering barriers and highlighting opportunities to improve children, young people and families ability to be physically active in a way which suits their needs and their developmental stage. With a particular focus on:

- Movement and play during the early years (from conception), in settings, at home and in leisure, community and open spaces (conception - 4)
- Organised sport and physical activity in educational settings and other settings in which children and young people spend time (5-19; <25 SEND)
- Community and leisure activities which encourage physical activity (ALL age)
- Active travel and being active at home (5-19; <25 SEND)
- Appropriate advice and guidance to support physical activity

## 2. Summary

Physical activity throughout childhood is importance for many reasons. It supports physical and mental development, but also enhances cognitive function, concentration, and academic performance. It teaches important life skills like teamwork, communication, and discipline while reducing the risk of chronic disease in later life. This chapter has highlighted a move from unstructured to structured physical activity for many of our children and young people, also a decline in participation as children reach adolescence and beyond, particularly for girls. Also clear is changes in the types of activities children and young people want to take part in, which is key to increasing engagement and participation. There is a key role for parents and carers in both supporting their children's movement and activity but also positive role modelling, but also a clear role for educational establishments, as well as leisure providers, community organisations and the local authority. A joined-up

system-wide approach is essential to increase the physical activity levels of our children and young people.

### 3. Physical activity levels of children and young people in Cheshire West and Chester

New physical activity guidelines were introduced by the Chief Medical Officer in 2019 setting out the volume, duration, frequency and type of activity required across the life course to achieve general health benefits. These guidelines updated the existing guidelines for adults, children and young people, early years (under 5's - infants who are not yet walking and children capable of walking), older people (65+ years), disabled adults, and pregnant women. The guidelines allow for more flexibility in achieving recommended levels of physical activity and recognise the potential benefits of "small behavioural changes and tailored messages to address inequalities"<sup>vi</sup>.

The guidelines state that for the early years' cohorts, 1- to 5-year-olds should aim for at least 180 minutes of movement per day, this can include a range of physical activity such as jumping, using playground equipment, climbing, skipping, messy play, walking, swimming, cycling, scooting and playing with objects. For under 1's the recommendation is at least 30 minutes across the day, from the activities above but also including tummy time.

For children aged 5 to 18 years, guidelines state they should engage in medium to vigorous physical activity for an average of at least 60 minutes per day across the week. This can include all forms of activity such as physical education, active travel, after-school activities, play and sports. Children and young people should engage in a variety of types and intensities of physical activity across the week to develop movement skills, muscular fitness and bone strength. Children and young people should aim to minimise the amount of time spent sedentary, and when physically possible should break up long periods of not moving with at least light physical activity. The evidence suggests, however, that a significant proportion of adolescents do not meet this minimum standard<sup>vii</sup>.

In February 2022, new Guidelines on Physical Activity for Disabled Children and Young People were published. The new guidelines recommend disabled children and young people undertake 120 to 180 minutes of aerobic physical activity per week at a moderate-to-vigorous intensity; complete challenging, but manageable, strength and balance activities three times per week, which are particularly beneficial for muscle strength and motor skills. For example indoor wall climbing, yoga, and modified sports such as basketball or football to build up slowly to avoid injury; and to break down exercise into bite size chunks of physical activity throughout the day to make it more manageable.

#### 3.1 Movement and play during the early years (from conception), in settings, at home and in leisure, community and open spaces

##### 3.1.1 The Health Survey for England (2012)

The Health Survey for England 2012 (as detailed in National Centre for Sports and Exercise Medicine, 'Physical activity in the early years: Evidence briefing')<sup>viii</sup>, included physical activity assessment for children measured by parental report. Parents were asked to report children's physical activity excluding the time that they spend in childcare settings/ school. Activity levels as reported by parents are presented as the proportion of children meeting the under-fives physical activity guidelines of at least 180 minutes per day. Findings from the survey showed that:

- 91% of children aged 2-4 years did not meet the physical activity recommendations.
- Only 9% of boys and 10% of girls aged 2-4 years met the under-fives physical activity guidelines.
- 84% of children aged 2-4 years engaged in low levels of physical activity, classified as less than one hour per day.
- 56% of boys and 58% of girls aged 2-4 years walked/cycled to school once a week, however only a small proportion of these travelled actively every day (25% of boys and 21% of girls).

It should be noted that activity levels were reported by parents and did not capture time spent at childcare settings or school so overall activity levels could be higher when this is taken into account.

### 3.1.2 ActiveCHILD Study

Cheshire West and Chester were fortunate to be part of a five-year NIHR study which looked at physical activity in the early years with a view to producing recommendations for health professionals on how to increase physical activity and movement in the under 5's. The ActiveCHILD study led by Researchers at Newcastle University from 2016-2021, collected physical activity data for 282 children, a third of whom were from Cheshire West and Chester. Of the 282 children, 56% were female, with a mean age of 21 months, covering all index of multiple deprivation deciles. The activity levels were measured using an accelerometer. Parents were asked to place the monitor on their child's hip or lower back and wear it for seven consecutive days during waking hours, except water-based activities.

The ActiveCHILD study sought to advance evidence about everyday movement and physical activity in children across developmental and health states. The baseline results show that young children spend, on average, six hours per day in some form of movement activity, including just under three hours of intense physical activity, with nine in 10 children meeting current mainstream physical activity guidelines. Mobility (fundamental movement) capacity emerged as a key predictor of both the total and intense physical activity and going outdoors also emerged as a predictor. There was little evidence that children's physical activity relates to their health-related quality of life.<sup>ix</sup>

Whilst noting that there is a difference in the time period of reporting in the ActiveCHILD and Health Survey for England reports, the difference in physical activity levels recorded in each of the reports could be attributed to the collection of data during childcare for those participants who took part in the ActiveCHILD research, suggesting that childcare settings are important for physical activity in the early years.

Findings from the ActiveCHILD research shows the actions families involved in the study took to facilitate a child's physical activity, the most commonly reported actions were: participate in physical activities with the child; supervise the child's participation in physical activity; making a point to let the child have fun in physical activities; and going for walks, bike rides or to the park with the child. One action potentially limiting physical activity was commonly reported: choosing for the family to stay at home rather than go out.

In January 2023, the ActiveCHILD research team worked closely with colleagues at the council and the Integrated Care Board to run a workshop involving key stakeholders to start to think about how the ActiveCHILD research can be used in policy and practice locally. The



visual minutes were captured in the image below. Actions will be taken forward by a working group with progress fed back regularly.



### 3.2 Organised sport and physical activity in educational settings and other settings in which children and young people spend time (5-19; <25 SEND)

### 3.2.1 Active Lives Survey

Sport England coordinate an annual survey and report detailing the self-reported physical activity of children and young people across England. This is reported nationally and also broken down to local authority level and disseminated through local active partnerships.

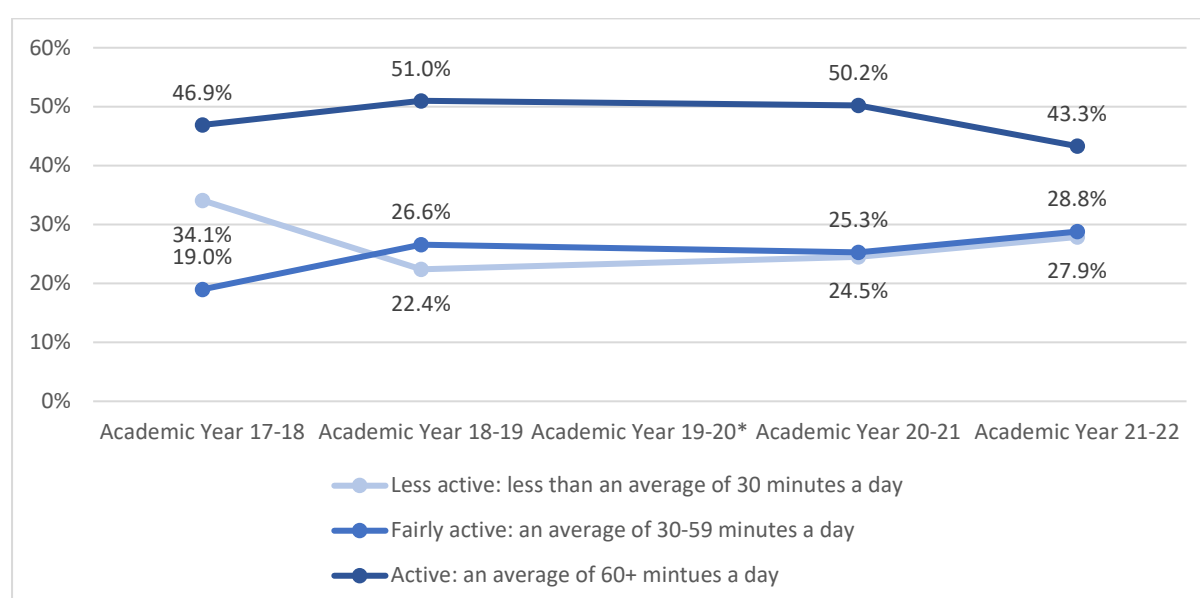
Data collection for the Children and Young Person Active Lives Survey is done in schools and therefore is up to 16 years of age. A large limitation to the results reported is the number of responses, with a current target of 300 per local authority per school year, there is also (understandably) a lag in the release of the data as it is collected nationally but things can change and evolve at 'Place' very quickly. Detailed school reports are generated but sent directly to the schools therefore to see the detail behind some of the data the schools must share the reports.

Latest data for the England suggests that children and young people's activity levels overall have recovered to pre-pandemic levels with 47% of children (ages 5-16) meeting the Chief Medical Officers' guidelines of taking part in an average of 60 minutes or more of sport and physical activity a day. Alongside the growth in the number of active children, the number of less active children (those doing less than 30 minutes of physical activity a day) has decreased by 143,000 (2.3%). However, there is an increase in the number of children and young people doing no activity at all in the previous seven days, up by a quarter of a million (3.3%) since pre-pandemic<sup>x</sup>.

For Cheshire West and Chester, the Children and Young Person Active Lives Survey release (January 2023 – academic year 2021-22), suggests that 43.3% of children (age 5-16 years) in Cheshire West and Chester were meeting the UK Chief Medical Officers' (CMOs') recommendation that children and young people (5 to 18 years) are physically active for an average of at least 60 minutes per day across the week. The Active Lives survey data for Cheshire West and Chester (2021-22) reports a 6.9 percentage point reduction in active children, a 4.3 percentage point increase in fairly active children (to 28.8% 2021/22) and a 3.4 percentage point increase (to 27.9%) in inactive children since the previous year. The trend over time is illustrated in chart 1. Since the 2018-19 academic year, there has been a decrease in the proportion of children (aged 5-16) who are meeting CMO recommendation of 60+ minutes a day of activity, however, since the 20/21 academic year the proportion of children who are fairly active has increased.

There is missing data for academic year 19-20 due to a count of less than 30 responses, as when the count is below 30 there is insufficient confidence that the survey result is a true reflection of the situation in the population.

**Chart 1: Levels of activity for Children and Young People in Cheshire West and Chester over time**



*Source: Active Lives Survey (Children and Young People)*

Local insight and club level national data suggest that sports clubs are recovering from the impacts of the pandemic and improving year on year currently, however this finding suggests an overall reduction in physical activity levels amongst children and young people aged 5-16. Therefore, it is possible to speculate based on local insight that the increases in inactive children could be attributed to those who do partake and/or are not interested in taking part in conventional sports team or individual sport.

As part of the Active Lives Survey, children and young people are asked which activities they have taken part in over the past week, the activities are detailed in Table 1. The table shows that the most popular activities for children and young people across Cheshire West and Chester include sporting activities, active play and informal activity, active travel and walking. All activities listed in the table below have seen an increase since 2018-19 apart

from sporting activities (slight decline from 92.6% to 84.4%) and dance. The change in activities over time is shown in chart 2.

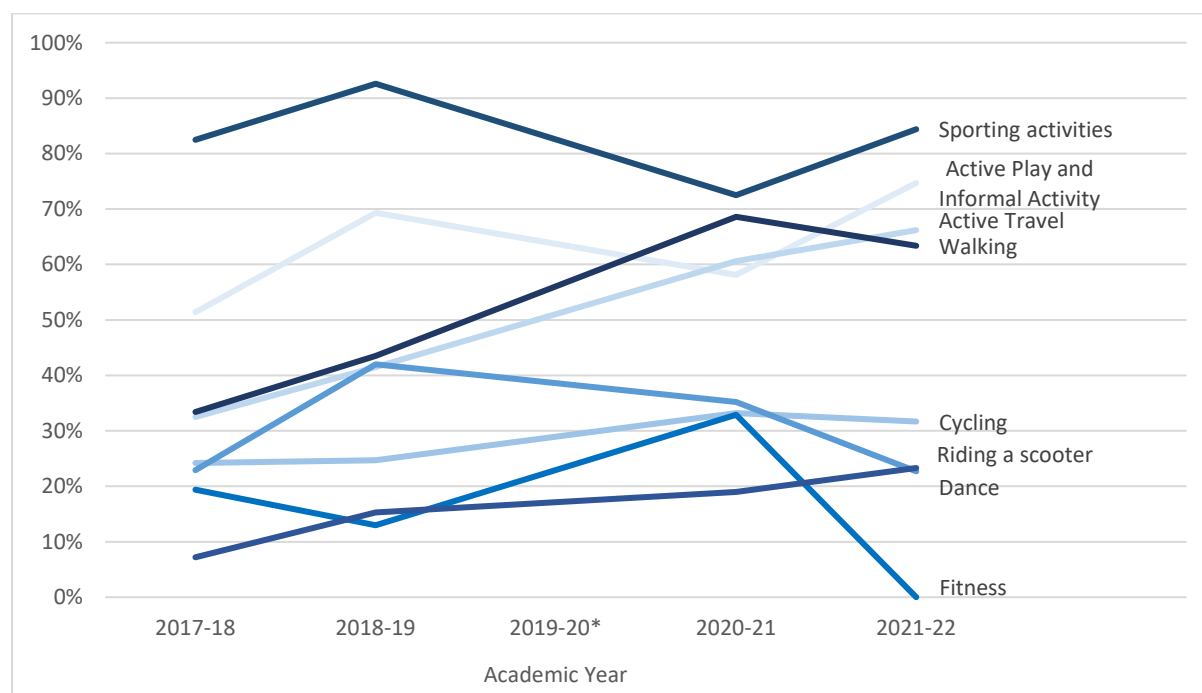
**Table 1: The percentage of Children and Young People in Cheshire West and Chester who took part in a range of activities from 2018/19 - 2021/22**

| Activity                          | Academic Year |         |          |         |         |
|-----------------------------------|---------------|---------|----------|---------|---------|
|                                   | 2017-18       | 2018-19 | 2019-20* | 2020-21 | 2021-22 |
| Active Play and Informal Activity | 51.40%        | 69.30%  |          | 58.10%  | 74.70%  |
| Active Travel                     | 32.50%        | 41.50%  |          | 60.60%  | 66.20%  |
| Cycling                           | 24.20%        | 24.70%  |          | 33.20%  | 31.70%  |
| Dance                             | 22.90%        | 42.00%  |          | 35.20%  | 22.70%  |
| Fitness                           | 19.40%        | 13.00%  |          | 32.90%  | 0.00%   |
| Riding a scooter                  | 7.20%         | 15.30%  |          | 19.00%  | 23.30%  |
| Sporting activities               | 82.50%        | 92.60%  |          | 72.50%  | 84.40%  |
| Walking                           | 33.40%        | 43.50%  |          | 68.60%  | 63.40%  |

Source: Active Lives Survey (Children and Young People)

\*No data for 2019-20 due to COVID-19

**Chart 2: Percentage of Children and Young People from Cheshire West and Chester taking part in a range of activities over time**



Source: Active Lives Survey (Children and Young People)

\*No data for 2019-20 due to COVID-19

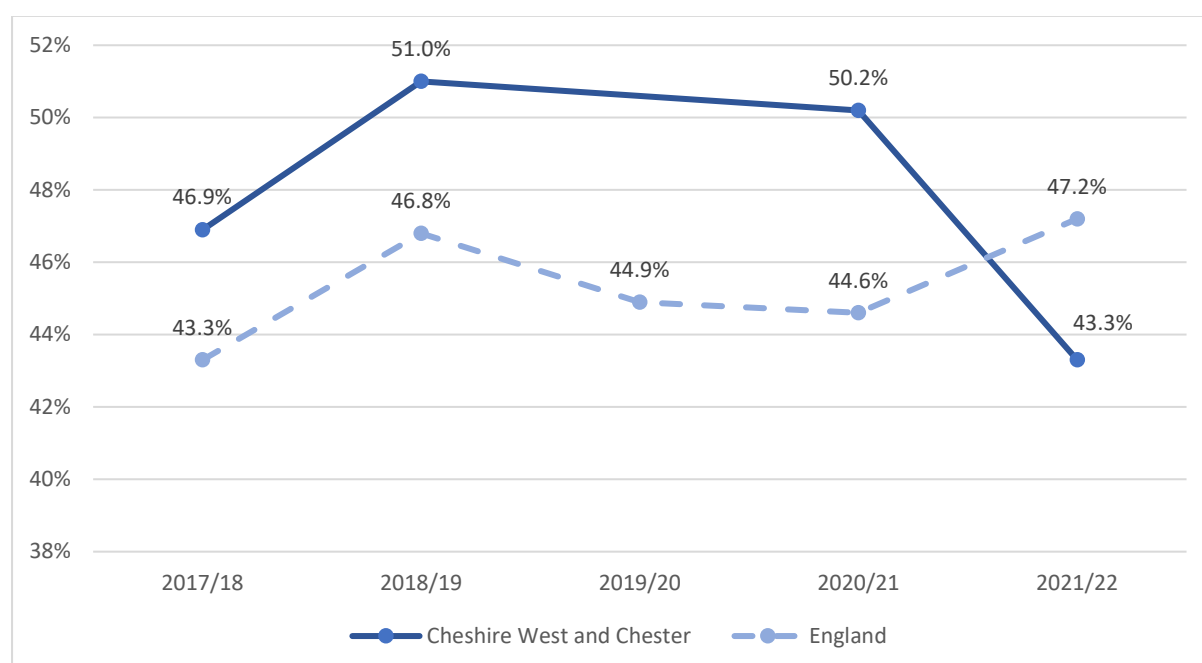
### 3.2.2 Active-6 project: The new normal for physical activity

The Active-6 project led by researchers at the University of Bristol's Centre for Exercise, Nutrition, and Health Sciences has been exploring how Year 6's physical activity and screen-viewing in 2017/18 compares to children in 2021 and 2022. Although children's activity levels have returned, the pandemic has changed the way children are active, which has been coined the "new normal" for children's physical activity. Researchers found that children's activity is now dependent on more structured activities, such as active clubs, and less dependent on unstructured activities, such as playing with friends after school. This change stems from habits formed under long periods of COVID-19 lockdowns and restrictions, including more screen-viewing at home and less spontaneous trips outside the house. A legacy of poorer mental health and an interruption to emotional, physical, and social skills also made meeting activity guidelines more difficult for many children<sup>xi</sup>.

### 3.2.3 How Cheshire West and Chester compares to England

For the time periods where data has been published for Cheshire West and Chester, the borough has performed better than the England average for all years apart from 2021-22, although the differences between Cheshire West and Chester and England have never been statistically significant. Chart 3 shows the physical activity levels of children and young people in Cheshire West and Chester over time, note there is a missing data point for 2019/20 for Cheshire West and Chester due to the Covid-19 Pandemic.

**Chart 3: Percentage of active children and young people (meet CMO guidelines) in Cheshire West and Chester compared to the England average**



Source: OHID Fingertips

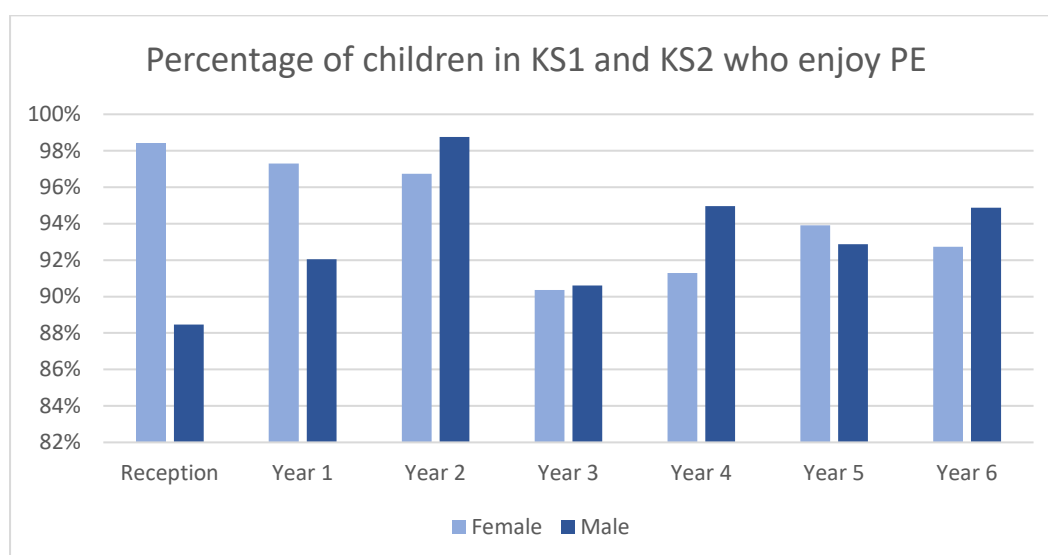
### 3.2.4 Koboca survey

With thanks to Active Cheshire and our three School Sports Partnerships, school children across the borough are surveyed annually to find out about how much physical activity they do, as well as what they do and do not enjoy in terms of sport and leisure. 18 schools across the borough took part in the survey during the school year 2022-23, and teams worked hard to ensure an equitable spread across the borough with two high schools and 16 primary schools included.

### 3.2.5 Primary School

The first chart (chart 4) in this section related to both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 children (Reception to Year 6; ages 4-11) and is split by males and females. The average for each sex across all year groups show that more than 88% of children enjoy PE. In Reception and Year 1, considerably more females than males reported enjoying PE, with similar figures for Year 2 onwards for both sexes, dipping considerably for both sexes in Year 3 then gradually increasing again.

**Chart 4: The percentage of children who enjoy PE at school split by sex and year group**



Source: Koboca Survey (local data)

#### 3.2.5.1 Key Stage 1

When Key Stage 1 children asked if they take part in sports outside of school, 74.8% (N=516) respondents answered yes, with 25.2% (N=174) saying they do not take part in any sport outside of school. The percentage of males taking part in sport outside of school was slightly higher than females (75.7% and 73.97% respectively).

When the children were asked when they take part in sport outside of PE, the majority of respondents played sport at lunchtime (62.8%), closely followed by after school (59.3%). Only 15.9% of respondents played sport before school. Note children could pick more than one option, so percentages will not add up to 100%.

Slightly more females (17.3%) than males (14.5%) reported playing sport before school. With slightly more males than females playing sport during lunchtime (64.6% and 61.1% respectively) and after school 60.9% and 57.8% respectively).



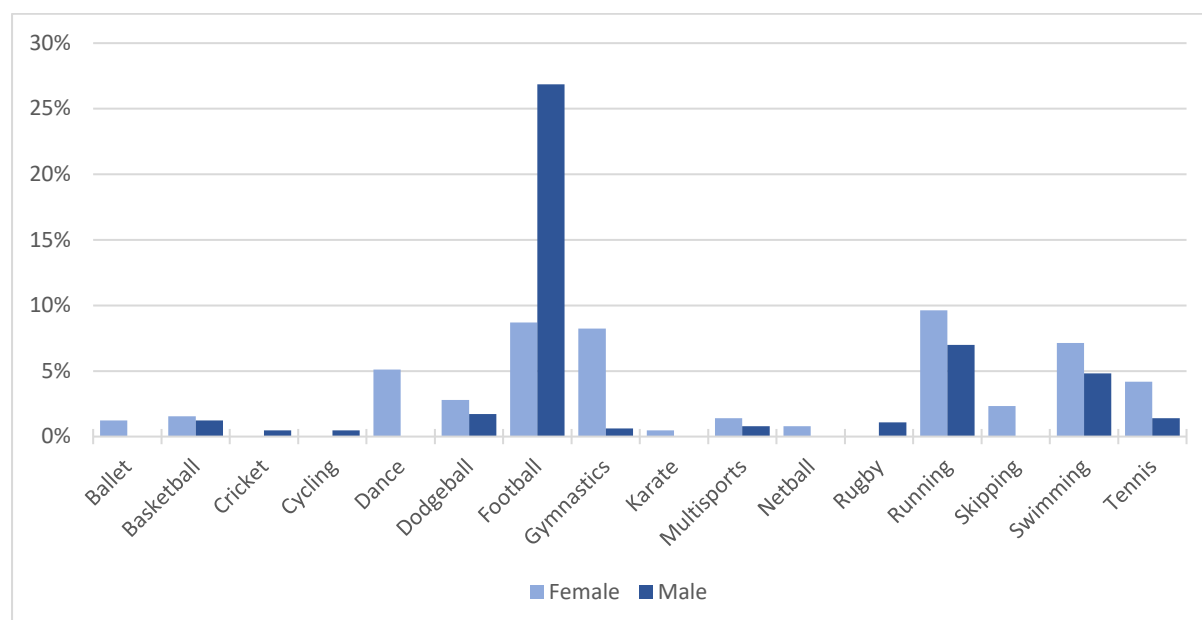
**Table 2: Key Stage 1 children who take part in sport outside of PE**

|                      | Female | Male  | Total |
|----------------------|--------|-------|-------|
| <b>Before School</b> | 17.3%  | 14.5% | 15.9% |
| <b>At Lunch Time</b> | 61.1%  | 64.6% | 62.8% |
| <b>After School</b>  | 57.8%  | 60.9% | 59.3% |

Source: Koboca Survey (local data)

When the Key Stage 1 children were asked which sports they took part in, the vast majority responded football (35.5%), followed by running (16.59%), swimming (11.94%) and gymnastics (8.84%). When split by sex as shown in Chart 5, the majority of males reported taking part in football, running and swimming, whereas girls reported taking part in football, running, swimming, gymnastics, tennis and dance.

**Chart 5: Key Stage 1 sport participation split by sex**



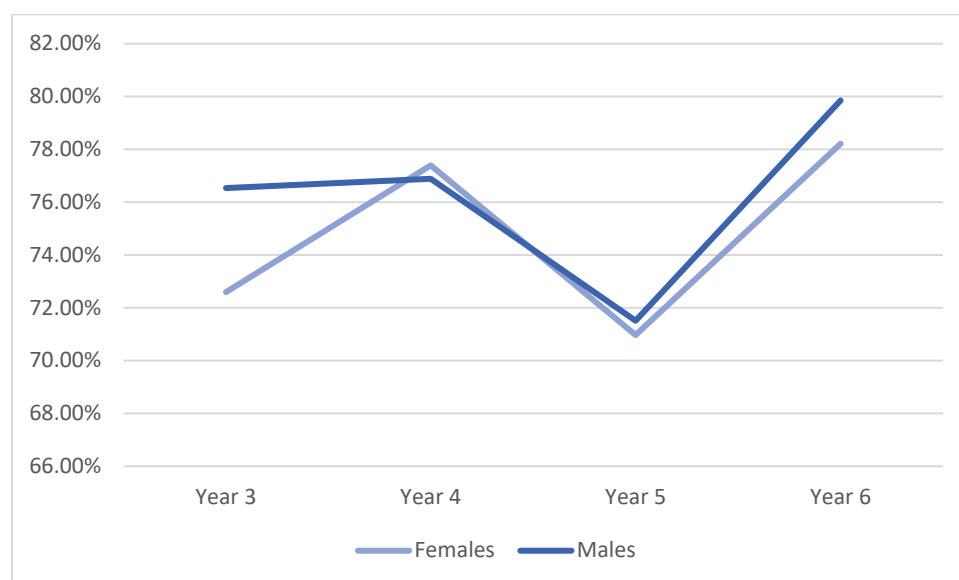
Source: Koboca Survey (local data)

### 3.2.5.2 Key Stage 2

Data for Key Stage 2 was analysed separately to Key Stage 1 to identify any changes in activity levels and types of activities children engage in.

When asked if they regularly participate in sports outside of school in a typical week, 75.9% of respondents stated yes. Chart 6 shows how this figure differed for each of the year groups split by sex. For both sexes a clear dip in in Year 4 is evident, with a rise again in Year 6.

**Chart 6: Percentage of Key Stage 2 children who take part in sport outside of school split by year group and sex**



*Source: Koboca Survey (local data)*

The children were asked how they feel when they take part in PE, physical activity and/or sport. The response options were 'good', 'bad' or 'unsure'. Across the whole of Key Stage 2, 83.7% of children said they felt good, 1.5% said they felt bad, the remaining 14.5% were unsure.

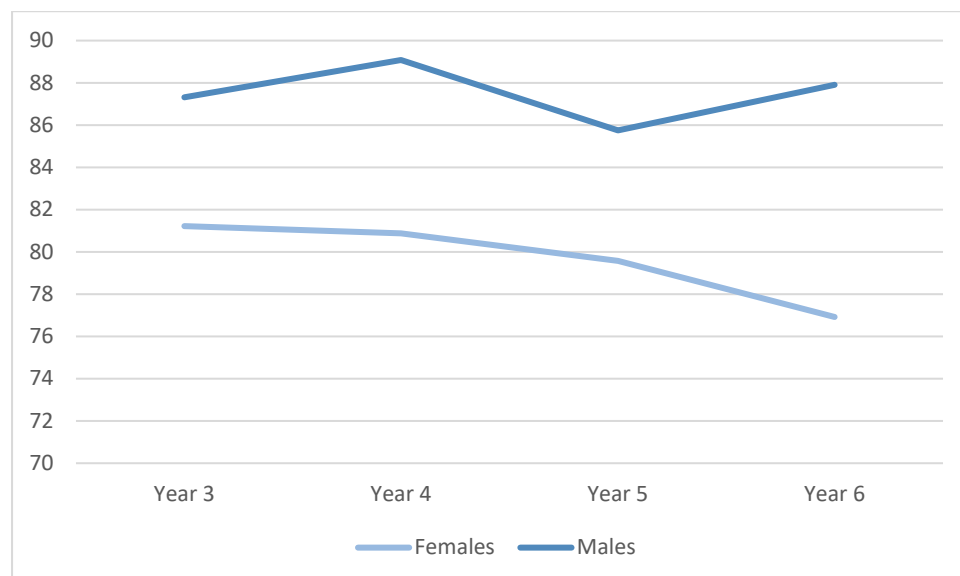
**Table 3: Percentage of Key Stage 2 children who feel good, bad or unsure when they take part in PE, physical activity or sport, split by sex**

|               | Female | Male  | Total |
|---------------|--------|-------|-------|
| <b>Bad</b>    | 1.2%   | 1.9%  | 1.5%  |
| <b>Good</b>   | 79.6%  | 87.4% | 83.7% |
| <b>Unsure</b> | 18.9%  | 10.6% | 14.5% |

*Source: Koboca Survey (local data)*

When comparing the children who 'felt good' when taking part in PE, physical activity and/or sport across the year groups and split by sex, more males said they felt good than females for all year groups, as shown in chart 7.

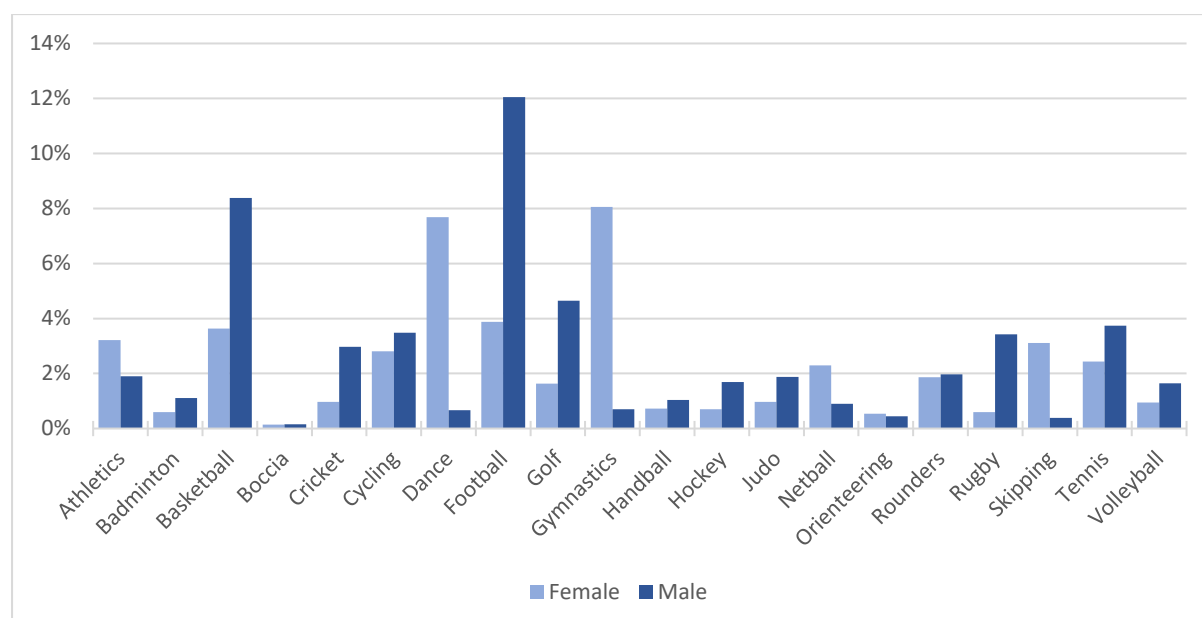
**Chart 7: Percentage of Key Stage 2 children who feel good when they take part in PE, physical activity and/or sport, split by sex and year group**



*Source: Koboca Survey (local data)*

When the Key Stage 2 children were asked which sports they took part in, the majority responded football (16%), followed by basketball (12%), gymnastics (9%) and dance (8%). When split by sex as shown in Chart 8, football remains the most popular sport for males, followed by basketball and cricket. For females gymnastics was the most popular sport followed by dance, then football.

**Chart 8: Key Stage 2 sport participation split by sex**



*Source: Koboca Survey (local data)*



### 3.2.6 Secondary School

#### 3.2.6.1 Key stage 3

When asked if they enjoy PE, there was an additional response option of 'sometimes' for the Key Stage 3 children. The below table includes responses from Year 7 to Year 11. 56.4% of respondents answered yes and 37.0% answered sometimes. 6.36% answered no.

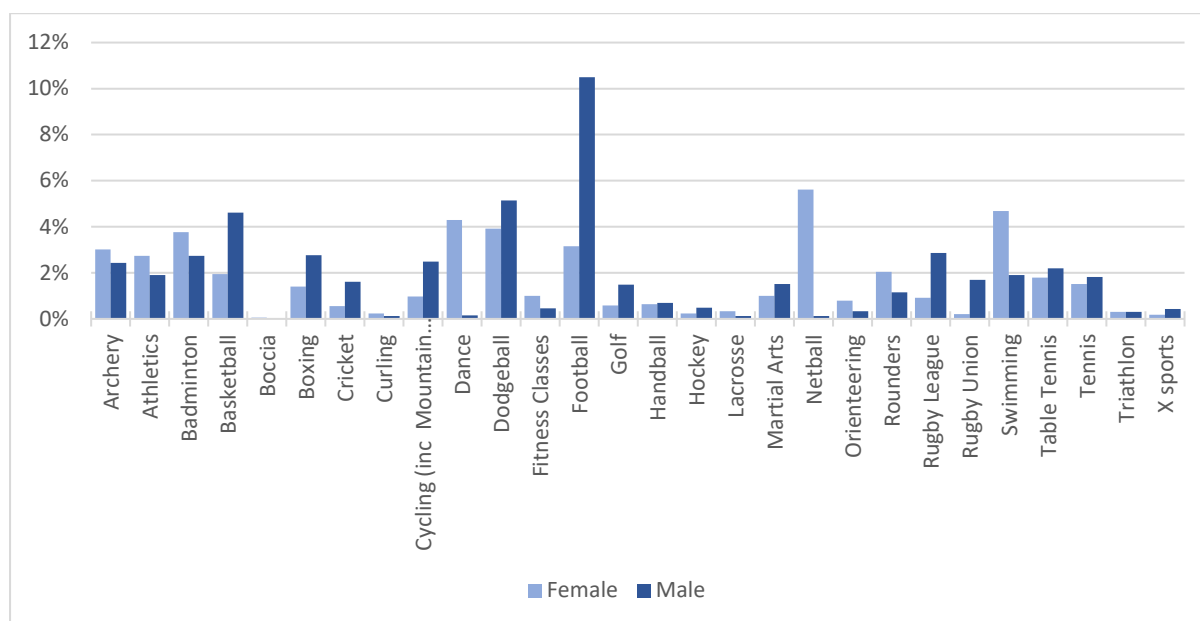
**Table 4: Percentage of Key Stage 3 children and young people who enjoy PE**

|                  | Female | Male  | Total |
|------------------|--------|-------|-------|
| <b>Yes</b>       | 43.6%  | 68.2% | 56.4% |
| <b>Sometimes</b> | 46.5%  | 28.2% | 37.0% |
| <b>No</b>        | 9.6%   | 1.5%  | 63.6% |

Source: Koboca Survey (local data)

When Key Stage 3 pupils were asked which activity they would most like to take part in, the majority of respondents answered 'football'. When split by sex football remained the most popular answer for males with netball the most popular for females. Respondents could choose more than one answer, with the majority choosing three. This is shown in table 9.

**Chart 9: Key Stage 3 sport participation split by sex**

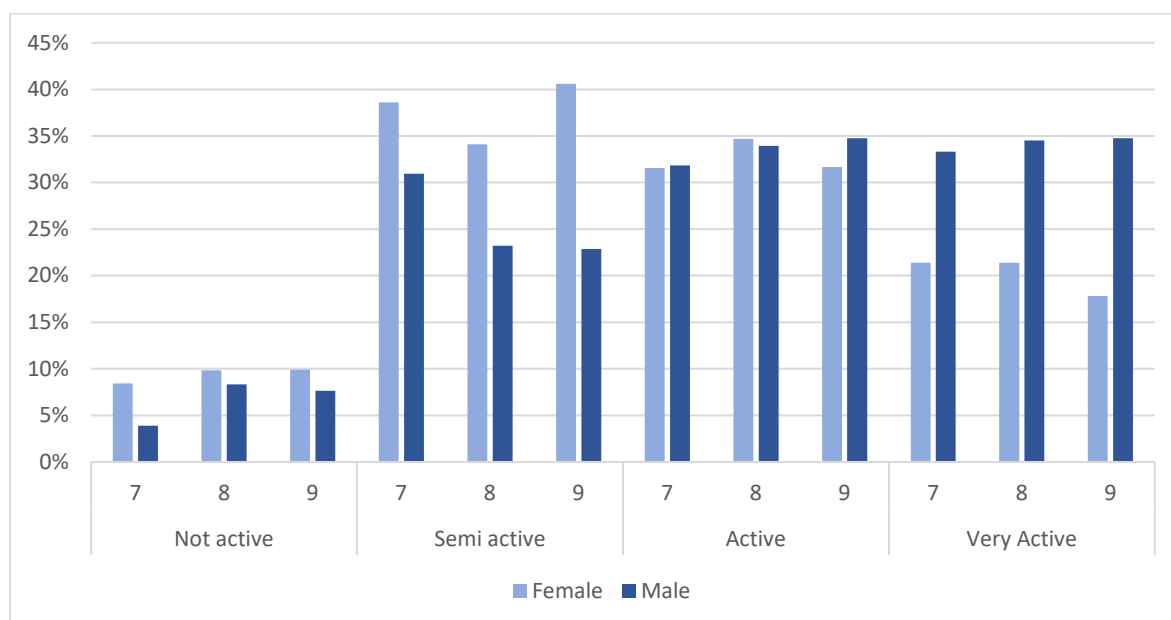


Source: Koboca Survey (local data)

As the majority of the responses recorded for Key Stage 3 Children were for Year groups 7-9 (1180; 95%), the following charts and tables refer to responses from these year groups, with the small number of responses from years 10,11 and 13 omitted from the data so as not to skew the results.

Chart 10 shows similar figures for males and females for the 'not active' and 'active' categories. With more females reporting being 'semi-active' across the three year groups, and more males reporting being 'very active' across the three year groups.

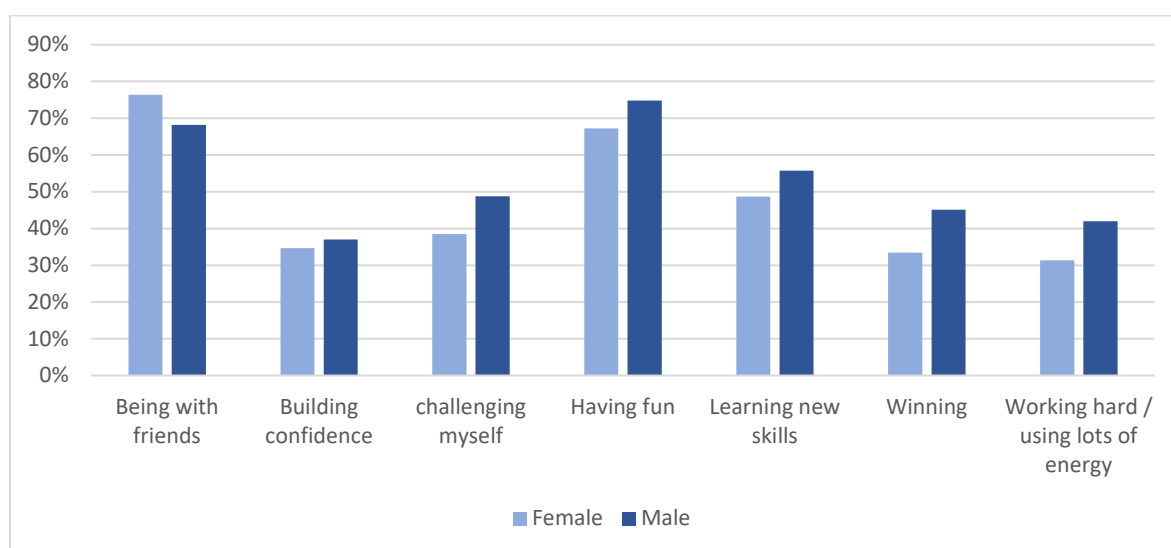
**Chart 10: Activity levels for Key Stage 3 (year groups 7-9 children) split by sex**



Source: Koboca Survey (local data)

When children in year groups 7-9 were asked 'When you take part in PE what do you enjoy the most?', the most common responses were 'being with friends' and 'having fun' for both males and females, with the females placing 'being with friends' as what they enjoyed the most, whilst males responded that 'having fun' was the most important factor for them. The results are shown in chart 11.

**Chart 11: Reasons provided for why Key Stage 3 children enjoy PE, split by sex**



Source: Koboca Survey (local data)

Whilst a snapshot of the attitudes and behaviours of children and young people in Cheshire West and Chester school at a specific time, the Koboca survey provides insight into the types of physical activity which children take part in across their school careers. The data provides interesting comparisons between males and females, and across age groups.

### 3.3 Community and leisure activities which encourage physical activity (ALL age)

Brio Leisure have seven leisure centres across the borough with junior membership figures of 3000 plus, with the majority falling into the 12-17 years age group. Over 5400 children and young people are currently learning to swim with the Brio Learn 2 Swim Scheme and this is planning to increase to 6500 during 2024. During Summer 2023, 1568 Summer swim passes were sold, being used on average 6 times (this compares to 422 swim passes sold in 2021).

### 3.4 Active travel and being active at home (5-19; <25 SEND)

As part of the Koboca survey administered by the three School Sports Partnerships in Cheshire West and Chester for the school year 2022-23, Key Stage 1 children were asked how they travelled to school. The table below shows that 49% of children reported travelling by car, 38% walked, 7% travelled by bike, 5% by scooter.

**Table 5: The percentage of Key Stage 1 children who travel to school by car, food, bike or scooter, split by sex**

|                | Female | Male  | Total |
|----------------|--------|-------|-------|
| <b>Car</b>     | 50.1%  | 48.3% | 49.3% |
| <b>Walk</b>    | 38.1%  | 37.2% | 37.7% |
| <b>Bike</b>    | 5.8%   | 7.4%  | 6.5%  |
| <b>Scooter</b> | 4.7%   | 5.2%  | 4.9%  |

*Source: Koboca Survey (local data)*

Further data is collected via Modeshift Stars, a scheme which recognises schools and other educational establishments that have shown excellence in supporting cycling, walking and other forms of sustainable and active travel.

In a survey carried out during the 2022-23 school year, primary age pupils were asked how they would like to travel to and from school. 65% of primary aged pupils from a sample of 7617 said they would like to walk, cycle or scoot to school. This increased to 74% when including all methods of active transport (including buses and trains).

Currently only 42% of the primary age pupils surveyed walk, scoot or cycle. This increased to 51% when including all active travel methods (including park and stride). Meaning that at that time 49% were being driven to the school gates.

## 4. Evidence of what works

### 4.1 Movement and play during the early years (from conception), in settings, at home and in leisure, community and open spaces (conception - 4)

#### 4.1.1 Healthy Movers

The Healthy Movers programme is designed to support two to five-year olds physical literacy, development and wellbeing, helping them gain a better start in life. The programme is delivered through resources and training to practitioners in early years setting and families to continue the activities at home. The Healthy Movers approach has been effective at increasing children's physical, emotional and social development as a foundation for improving language, communication and literacy<sup>xii</sup>.

### 4.2 Organised sport and physical activity in educational settings and other settings in which children and young people spend time (5-19; <25 SEND)

#### 4.2.1 Public Health England: What works in schools and colleges to increase physical activity'

In 2022, Public Health England updated the guidance on 'What works in schools and colleges to increase physical activity'<sup>xiii</sup>. The key principles are:

1. Develop and deliver multi-component interventions
2. Ensure skilled workforce
3. Engage student voice
4. Create active
5. Offer choice and variety
6. Embed in curriculum, teaching and learning
7. Promote active travel
8. Embed monitoring and evaluation

#### 4.2.2 Youth Sports Trust

Youth Sport Trust is a charity set up to improve every young person's education and development through sport and play. They offer a set of core programmes specifically designed to improve the relationship between young people and physical activity. There is a strong focus on inclusivity. These programmes can be accessed by a school at any time and include:

- Healthy Movers – for early years (as detailed previously)
- My Personal best
- PE Life Skills Award

The Youth Sports Trust also work in partnership with Sport England to deliver the School Games and The FA to deliver the Girls' Football in Schools programme. Both of these programmes can be accessed for free by any primary or secondary school in England.

### 4.2.3 Community and leisure activities which encourage physical activity (ALL age)

Opportunities in the community to be active are important in supporting residents to be active. Best practice is highlighted in the Local Government Association's report 'Sport and leisure: promoting health and wellbeing through public services'.

Top tips from the report include:

- Public sport and leisure services can play a vital strategic, coordination and delivery role in the provision of health and wellbeing services.
- You have to do things differently to reach different people.
- Create a joint vision. This can open doors to additional opportunities and sources of funding.
- Councils and public sport and leisure services are one of the largest employers in a local area.
- Identify and promote opportunities to encourage communities to take the lead for being more active.
- Invest in the workforce. Having the right people with the right skills delivering activities at the right time is crucial.
- Use different methods to inform service improvements, rationalisation and investment.
- Concentrate efforts. Trying to do everything for everyone and having programmes that serve everyone is not realistic.
- Play 'the long game'! It takes years to see the benefits from investment in preventative approaches. Being able to articulate the benefits to health and wider partners backed with strong evidence on the ROI will be key to getting their buy in.

#### 4.2.4 Active travel and being active at home (5-19; <25 SEND)

Active travel is an important part of a wider plan to achieve increased physical activity for everyone. Making more of everyday journeys by active means such as walking, cycling, scooting or wheeling is a particularly good way of incorporating physical activity into busy lives. This could be by cycling the whole way rather than driving, or by walking to and from the train station or bus stop.

#### 4.2.5 Modeshift Stars

Modeshift STARS is the Centre of Excellence for the delivery of Effective Travel Plans in Education, Business and Community settings. The STARS Education scheme recognises schools and other educational establishments that have shown excellence in supporting cycling, walking and other forms of sustainable and active travel. Launched in 2008, the STARS Education scheme is supported by the Department for Transport and has seen over 1,400 schools in England achieve accreditation since its inception.

The Modeshift STARS online Travel Plan Toolkit provides a comprehensive Travel Plan tool that assists in:

- Creating, developing, and implementing Travel Plans
- Monitoring and evaluating Travel Plans and the initiatives contained within them.
- Recognising and rewarding excellence in the promotion of sustainable and active travel.

Modeshift STARS offers National Accreditation for sites that have demonstrated best practice in the implementation of their Travel Plan. Sites are awarded Green, Bronze, Silver, Gold and Platinum accreditation. Silver and Gold recognise sites that achieve a reduction in single-occupancy car journeys to/from their site and Platinum recognises sites that achieved an increase in active travel modes.

Schools can use Modeshift STARS to record active travel initiatives, including 'hands up' surveys to record travel to school.

#### 4.2.6 Play and access to greenspace

Play helps promote active lifestyles and can therefore help to meet national health objectives set by government for physical exercise and recreation.

##### 4.2.6.1 Public Health England - health equity briefing: Local action on health inequalities: Improving access to green spaces.

###### Summary of key points

- There is significant and growing evidence on the health benefits of access to good quality green spaces. The benefits include better self-rated health; lower body mass, overweight and obesity levels; improved mental health and wellbeing; increased longevity.
- There is unequal access to green space across England. People living in the most deprived areas are less likely to live near green spaces and will therefore have fewer opportunities to experience the health benefits of green space compared with people living in less deprived areas.
- Increasing the use of good quality green space for all social groups is likely to improve health outcomes and reduce health inequalities. It can also bring other benefits such as greater community cohesion and reduced social isolation.
- Local authorities play a vital role in protecting, maintaining and improving local green spaces and can create new areas of green space to improve access for all communities. Such efforts require joint work across different parts of the local authority and beyond, particularly public health, planning, transport, and parks and leisure.

##### 4.2.6.2 Making Space for Girls

Making Space for Girls have a number of resources to support the development of inclusive spaces, the work focusses on what research and data can tell us about teenage girls and parks: how much do they use them, or not; what impact does this have on their health, wellbeing and human rights, and how people can do things better.

#### 4.2.7 Appropriate advice and guidance to support physical activity

##### 4.2.7.1 MECC for physical activity

The Making Every Contact Count for Physical Activity programme supports the health and social care workforce in Cheshire & Merseyside. Its goal is to enhance their knowledge and confidence in initiating behaviour change conversations with physically inactive individuals and directing them towards appropriate services.

Making Every Contact Count (MECC) serves as a behaviour change framework that leverages day-to-day interactions to facilitate positive changes in physical and mental health and wellbeing. This method enables the consistent and concise delivery of physical activity information opportunistically, allowing individuals to engage in health conversations on a broad scale across organisations and populations.

MECC recognises that staff across health and care organisations, along with their local authority and voluntary partners, have numerous daily contacts with individuals. This places them ideally to promote health and healthy lifestyles effectively.

## 5. Opportunities in Cheshire West and Chester for children and young people to be physically active

There are many opportunities for residents of Cheshire West and Chester to be active both in informal and formal settings. The below outlines just some of these opportunities that residents are able to access.

### 5.1 Movement and play during the early years (from conception), in settings, at home and in leisure, community and open spaces (conception - 4)

The evidence suggests that time spent in early years settings is important for the physical and cognitive development of children. Also, as children may spend a lot of their time in childcare settings it is important to ensure that adequate movement and physical activity takes place during this time.

#### 5.1.1 MOVERS Programme

During August/September 2022, the Early Years Team at the local authority carried out an audit, 'The Movers', aimed to support the team in determining specifically what the key challenges were for childcare providers in Cheshire West and Chester. The MOVERS were carried out in the 2022 academic year - September 22-July 23. MOVERS is part of an internationally recognised environment audit that has impacted on longitudinal studies that demonstrate high quality provision makes a difference to children's life-long experiences, opportunities and achievements. In response to the findings of the MOVERS audit, the Early Years Team are inviting targeted settings to be part of the Play In Action Project, which supports providers with developmental play. The findings can be found in the appendix.

#### 5.1.2 0-19 Service Play Sessions

Let's Play are weekly drop-in sessions within Children's Centres that are led by Early Years Graduates. The objective of Let's Play is modelling play, (including movement and physical activity), and interaction, and providing home learning ideas, peer support for parents, school readiness and socialisation, promotion of the wider Starting Well service offer and early identification of family need/signposting.

The sessions are free and open to all families and mostly accessed by families with children two and under – before children begin childcare funded places. Children's Centres are located in areas of high deprivation and attendance from residents living in these areas is high.

Due to reduced staffing the Let's Play sessions have reduced. However, across the year 429 Let's Play sessions remain available for families to attend.

### 5.2 Organised sport and physical activity in educational settings and other settings in which children and young people spend time (5-19; <25 SEND)

With evidence from the Active6 Project suggesting that physical activity for Year 6 children has moved from informal play to structured and organised sport and recreation, ensuring there is appropriate provision in school and other settings is key.

#### 5.2.1 School Sport and Physical Activity

It is a legal requirement for schools to deliver the national curriculum of which PE is part. This also includes swimming within Key Stages 1 and/or 2. The DfE encourages schools to provide 2 hours of PE each week but also has an ambition for children to take part in sport



and physical activity for an average of 60 minutes or more every day/20 minutes every day for children with a disability.

The Physical Education and Sport Premium supports primary schools to make sustainable improvements to the physical education (PE) and sport they offer. It is focussed on improving teacher's skills and knowledge, the range of opportunities available to children, the amount of competition open to pupils, increasing engagement in 60 (or 20) active minutes every day and raising the profile of PE and sport as a way to meet whole school priorities. Each primary school with over 17 pupils receives £16,000 + £10 per pupil per annum.

### 5.2.2 School sports partnerships / School games

School Sport Partnerships are established by schools themselves to create networks to support the delivery of professional development, events and competitions, programmes which develop leadership skills in young people and other opportunities which will inspire greater engagement. They deliver the Youth Sports Trust School Games Mark along with further activities based in schools who engage with the partnerships. There are three School Sports Partnerships in Cheshire West and Chester.

### 5.2.3 Smile for a mile

Smile for a mile was an initiative first launched in 2018 supporting primary schools to incorporate a daily walk, run, skip into each school day. At the last count (November 2021), 59 Primary schools in Cheshire West and Chester now run a mile a day initiative, and five more had expressed an interest. The programme focusses on schools-based activity and work is being planned to expand the intervention to include community-based physical activity.

## 5.3 Community and leisure activities which encourage physical activity (ALL age)

### 5.3.1 Leisure

Brio Leisure CIC, the council-owned leisure provider, is the largest provider of physical activity and wellbeing services across the borough, who have a vision to make leisure accessible, affordable and attractive to the people of Cheshire West and Chester.

Brio's funding and key work is prioritised to where they can make the biggest impact on the borough's health and wellbeing and this is being led by a Hub and Spoke delivery model.

Only 14.3% of the borough's population visited a Brio leisure site (Hub) in 2022 and there are large numbers of people and specific groups with protected characteristics who are unlikely to visit a leisure centre. Each has their own unique barriers and challenges. These could be those who are less active, have a long-term physical and/or mental health condition or disability or those who are in a lower socio-economic group. There is also a sharp decline in our reach and attendance with age. For a 20 year old, our reach is 27%. For over 55's it is 9.6% and for over 75's it is 3%. Deprived and rural wards within the Borough also have the lowest reach with less than 9% of residents attending a Brio site.

So, Brio knows if some people are unlikely to visit our leisure centres they will have to try and go to them. This is Brio's spoke model - developing community outreach services and delivering a Brio offer in the heart of local communities.

Brio's hub and spoke model is helping to reduce health inequalities across the borough and making better use of our resources whilst providing a sustainable platform for Brio to deliver services in communities at a very local level across Cheshire West and Chester. We know that gaps in service delivery, (for health and physical activity), disproportionately affect those with the greatest needs and the poorest outcomes. So, Brio are aiming to increase the number of these residents' accessing services that help to improve their health and wellbeing and actively engage them in the heart of their communities through 'spoke' delivery.

Brio Leisure offer a range of activities for children, young people and families which can be found in Appendix 2.

### 5.3.2 Holiday Activity and Food Programme

The Holiday Activity and Food Programme (HAF) provides children and young people who are entitled to benefits-related free school meals to holiday club provision over the Easter, summer and Christmas holidays. The HAF criteria states that a range of opportunities for physical activity must be offered throughout the programme, with a range of activities from football and swimming to indoor climbing and golf.

### 5.3.3 Sports clubs and teams

There are a wide range of sports clubs and teams across the borough, however for the timescales needed for this document, detailed information gathering was unable to take place. This is recommended for the future to ensure a good level of understanding of the sporting opportunities of children and young people in Cheshire West and Chester.

Chester Football Club for example run a range of activities for all ages, with baby/ toddler play sessions (age 0-5), mini-kickers (age 3-7) and both fun and competitive football sessions for both males and females.

### 5.3.4 Health Rangers supporting Families, Children and Young People to be physically active

Families, children and young people are getting outdoors and active with activities delivered and coordinated by the local authority Health Rangers. Interacting with nature and outdoor spaces has well-recognised benefits for children and young people, over and above helping to increase their physical activity levels. We also know there is evidence that children's activity levels are affected by the activity levels of their parents<sup>xiv</sup>

The range of activities offered to children, young people and families can be found in the appendices.

## 5.4 Active travel and being active at home (5-19; <25 SEND)

Active travel is an important part of a wider plan to achieve increased daily physical activity for everyone. Making more of everyday journeys by active means such as walking, cycling, scooting or wheeling is a particularly good way of incorporating physical activity into busy lives. This could be by cycling the whole way rather than driving, or by walking to and from the train station or bus stop or using 'park and stride'.

### 5.4.1 Active Travel – walking, wheeling and cycling

Cheshire West and Chester adopted its Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (2020-2030) in 2020. This 10-year plan aims to develop a new culture for promoting active travel in the Borough and to encourage increased levels of walking and cycling, and that these

become the first choice in travel especially when making shorter journeys. LCWIP activities focus on locations that offer the greatest potential to increase walking and cycling. These are Chester, Ellesmere Port and Neston, Northwich, Winsford, and Frodsham and Helsby. It was also agreed that the LCWIP should give highest priority for potential schemes that improved access to employment and training opportunities, together with those that support our ambition to tackle the climate emergency and be a carbon neutral Borough. Key trip generators were identified as part of the network development, including:

- Major employment sites;
- Sizeable residential areas;
- Transport interchanges;
- Hospitals and health centres; and
- Schools and colleges.

To achieve this, the council will work to improve and extend our network of pavements, footpaths and cycle routes. The Plan provides a strategic basis for funding applications and investment.

All new cycling infrastructure must be designed to follow Department of Transport Local Transport Note 1/20 Cycling Infrastructure Design, which sets out requirements for the creation of coherent, direct, safe, comfortable, and attractive routes. Infrastructure must be accessible to all, and the needs of vulnerable pedestrians and local people must be considered early in the process to ensure schemes are supported locally in the long term.

#### 5.4.2 Modeshift stars

Cheshire West and Chester Council encourages schools across the borough to utilise the membership opportunity to engage with the Modeshift Stars platform. To date 34 schools across the borough have used the programme to support active travel to and from school, as well as other active initiatives. Work is ongoing to support more schools to engage with the platform.

#### 5.4.3 Parks

The Parks and Open Spaces Strategy (2020) aims to support the provision of high-quality parks and green spaces to meet the needs and aspirations of the people and biodiversity of the Cheshire West and Chester. Ensuring provision is planned and managed with the active involvement and engagement of the community, with parks and green spaces provided where needed and ensuring they are accessible for all.

The Play Strategy (2020 – 2024) recognises that outdoor play has a key role in improving the health and well-being of children and young people through the promotion of active and healthy lifestyles. Strategy partners will work towards ensuring that all play provision is fully inclusive and accessible. The Strategy recognises the role that play and youth facilities have in enriching the lives of young people, in offering them stimulating and rewarding alternatives to anti-social behaviour.

Children, young people, their families and the wider community will be positively engaged in the planning of play spaces and youth facilities through appropriate consultation and active involvement. They will be an important element of the co-production approach.

The Wildflower and Grassland Strategy (2020) provides a framework for improving the biodiversity, abundance and connectivity of wildflower and grassland habitat within the Borough Council's managed land, for the benefit of both people and wildlife, and in particular, pollinators. It also provides advice on gardening for wildlife and pollinators.

## 6. Lived experience

Lived experience has been captured through surveys with parents and carers.

### 6.1 Holiday Activity and Food Programme Survey 2023

In a survey of 135 parents and carers of school age children, 44% said it was 'very easy' to ensure their children are active. Out of the remaining 56%, 25% said it was 'easy', 29% said it was 'neither easy nor not easy', 2% responded 'not very easy' and no respondents selected 'not at all easy'.

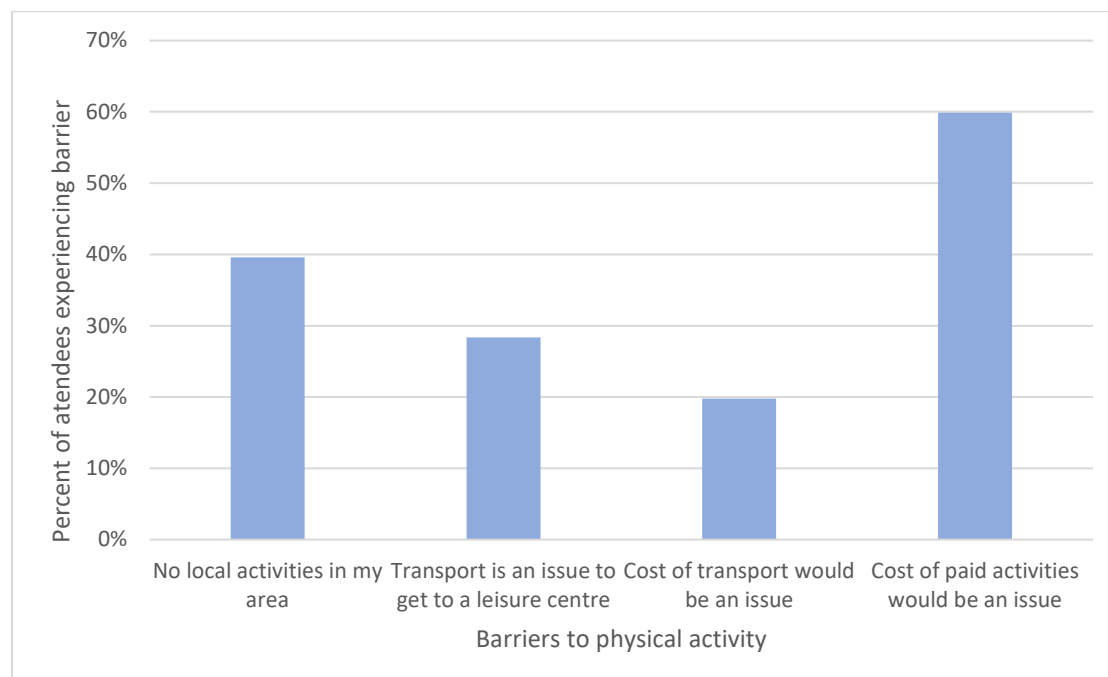
Those who responded that it was 'very easy' and 'quite easy' to ensure their children get enough exercise tended to talk about using school or sports clubs to keep children active but noted the cost of this. Other respondents mentioned the responsibility that parents and carers have in keeping children active and promoting physical activity with positive role modelling and doing activities as a family. A number of respondents mentioned making use of parks and open spaces. Some respondents commented that their children are naturally very active and love to take part in different activities. The parents and carers who responded that it was 'neither easy nor not easy' to ensure their children are physically active mentioned issues such as the cost of clubs and activities, parent disability and illness, children's disability, work commitments, children preferring screen time, and having to rely on parks and local open spaces which limits opportunities.

### 6.2 Holiday Activity and Food Survey 2021

A survey completed by 204 parents and carers of children who attended the Holiday Activity and Food Programme in summer 2021 looked specifically at barriers to children's participation in physical activity outside of school.

70% of parents responded that they would be interested in attending regular activity sessions together at a local leisure facility, but many reasons were given as to why they don't currently which included: 'no local activities in my area' (40%), 'transport an issue to get to a centre' (28%), 'cost of transport an issue' (20%), 'cost of paid activities an issue' (60%).

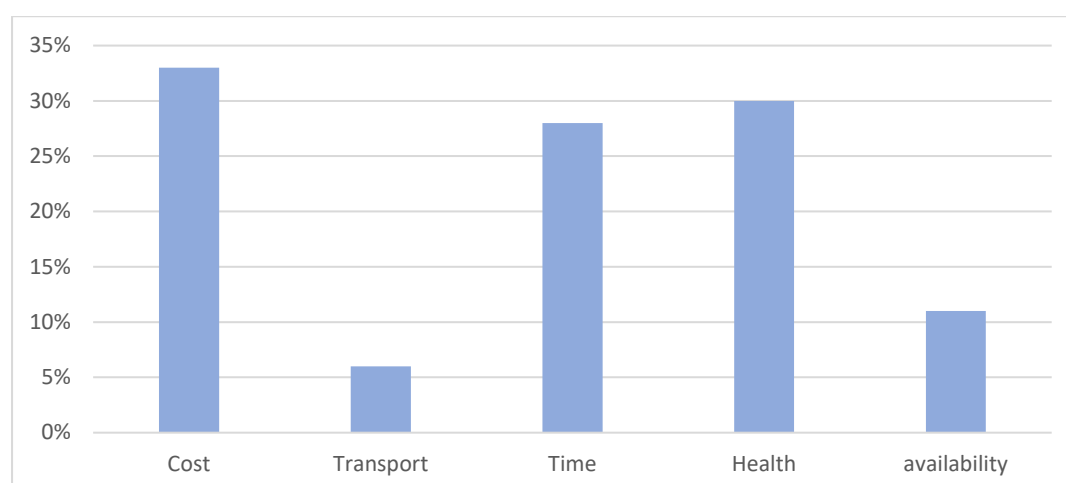
**Chart 12: Parents were asked “why do you not attend a leisure facility for physical activity?”**



*Source: Holiday Activity and Food Survey 2021*

Parents and carers were asked whether they would be ‘interested in the whole family being active and attending regular activity sessions together at the local leisure facility. Of those who answered the question, (N=179), 72% responded yes, they would be interested in the whole family being active and attending regular activity sessions together at the local leisure facility. When asked what prevents them from doing this currently, the main reason cited was cost, closely followed by health and time (see chart 13).

**Chart 13: Parents were asked “what currently prevents the whole family being active”?**



*Source: Holiday Activity and Food Survey 2021*

## 7. Identifying needs and gaps

Whilst latest physical activity levels for children and young people in England have made a return to pre-pandemic levels, with 47% of children in England doing an average of 60 minutes of physical activity a day in the 2021/22 academic year, the majority of children and young people are not meeting these guidelines. In Cheshire West and Chester, the slightly lower figure of 43.3% means that 56.7% of children and young people are not physically active enough to meet the 60 minutes per day recommended by the Chief Medical Officer.

### 7.1 Movement and play during the early years (from conception), in settings, at home and in leisure, community and open spaces (conception - 4)

The ActiveCHILD study provides insight into both activity levels of children and young people in the early years, plus the actions parents and carers take to support their child's activity levels. The research findings which relate to parents' actions are interesting. Of particular interest, some parents and carers chose for the family to stay at home rather than go out, impacting on the level of activity the child is able to take part in. It would be useful to explore this further, locally as understanding the barriers families face in going to places where children can be active will help to inform the services, support, and opportunities for families to increase the level of physical activity their child takes part in.

During the ActiveCHILD Cheshire West workshop (January 2023) an action was identified to increase education about the importance of physical activity antenatally, embedding messages about the importance of physical activity from a very young age. Whilst the majority of parents surveyed as part of an oral health survey in children's centres did not identify that they would like advice on how to support their child to be more active, ensuring the physical activity messages are consistent from pregnancy onwards will help to encourage and empower parents and carers.

When asked, half of parents and carers said they would like information on places they can take their child to play. A directory or series of directories at local level could support parents and carers to make informed choices on where and when to take their child to places where they can play (e.g. play centres, organised classes, parks). Further to this, it is important to make the best use of communication channels with parents to highlight the services and support available.

### 7.2 Organised sport and physical activity in educational settings and other settings in which children and young people spend time (5-19; <25 SEND)

Reported by researchers as part of the Active 6 Project, it was found that children's activity is now dependent on more structured activities, such as active clubs, and less dependent on unstructured activities, such as playing with friends after school. This is important for schools and other settings to understand and consider when organising school-based and extra-curricular activities.

The data gathered by the Koboca survey provides good insight into the activities that children and young people take part in and want to take part in, including the reasons for wanting to take part. Understanding this at school or IMD level could help schools and local leisure and community organisations to understand the types of activities children and young people would want to take part in. Future iterations of the survey should also look at the barriers to physical activity, both in and outside of school, helping to support the development of interventions to increase participation, particularly for the groups which see

a lower participation rate, for example girls, children and young people with disabilities and children and young people from certain minority ethnic backgrounds.

### 7.3 Community and leisure activities which encourage physical activity (ALL age)

#### 7.3.1 Inclusive leisure

Being a large geography, it is not possible for all residents to be able to access a leisure facility easily. As part of their development model, Brio Leisure are launching a hub and spoke offer, taking activities to communities who are less well served by the leisure facilities (due to distance, transport etc.). Ensuring that children and young people are considered within the offer and taking a family approach to activities where possible.

#### 7.3.2 Mapping community opportunities to be active

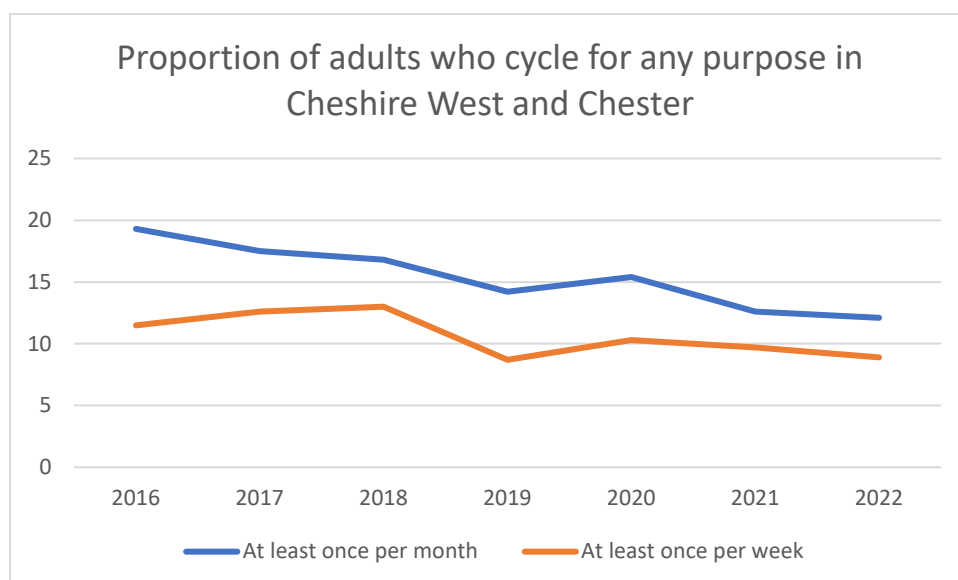
The council lacks a clear understanding of the opportunities across the borough to be physically active. A mapping exercise to get a picture of the opportunities for children and young people to engage in different types of activities would support the ambition to increase the level of physical activity across the borough.

### 7.4 Active travel and being active at home (5-19; <25 SEND)

#### 7.4.1 Active travel

The council lacks consistent data on levels of active travel trip rates for all ages across the borough. The Department of Transport publishes data for cycling and walking trips made by adults, which shows a drop in the proportion of adults making active travel trips in Cheshire West between 2016-2022. This drop is also seen across the North West and England.

**Chart 14: Proportion of adults who cycle for any purpose in Cheshire West and Chester**



Source: DfT Active Travel Statistics

Annually, the Council encourages schools to conduct 'hands up' surveys with their students to be added to Modeshift STARS. This system enables year on year data to be compared. Using Active Travel England funding, the council commissioned Sustrans to deliver an active

travel project with Helsby High School and the surrounding 8 primary schools during 2022-23 academic year. Outcomes are not yet ready to share.

The Road Safety Education Team deliver and support initiatives to increase active travel trips to schools, including:

- Bikeability training – Level 2 provides on road training and is offered free to all primary schools for Years 5 and 6 pupils.
- Pedestrian training – training volunteers to deliver this within schools.
- School streets – two pilot schemes began in 2023.

#### 7.4.2 Appropriate advice and guidance to support physical activity

There is an inconsistent approach to advice and guidance to support physical activity.

### 8. Conclusion

Whilst there appears to be many opportunities for children and young people to be physically active, it is important to understand the specific activities, motivation and barriers which children and young people face. As shown with the data, the interests and participation levels of children and young people change over time and it is essential to ensure they offer is adapted to meet the changing need. Specific work to support parental knowledge and motivation, as well as supporting those who are not active to become so is important. Also, reducing the drop-off participation rate particularly for girls needs to be a focus. Making it easier to be active is key and it will require a joined-up system-wide approach to make it happen.

### 9. Recommendations

9.1 Take a whole-systems approach to physical activity, encouraging and supporting physical activity in all settings as appropriate.

- Better understand the challenges, barriers and opportunities that sports clubs (grassroot, academy, amateur and professional) and community organisations face to increase participation.
- Work with council departments and partners to ensure open and greenspaces are welcoming, safe and inclusive.
- Map the physical activity opportunities across Cheshire West and Chester; Consider developing a directory or series of directories to detail places parents and carers can take their child to be physically active.
- Support the health and social care workforce to be able to promote the importance of physical activity through the Making Every Contact Count for Physical Activity programme.

9.2 Support schools to increase the opportunities for their pupils to be physically active

- Encourage schools to review the curriculum and whether it is meeting the needs of the young people. Signposting to relevant Youth Sport Trust resources to make improvements.



- Consider how active children are in lessons and encourage schools to increase this where needed.
- Encourage schools to Increase activity outside lessons including break times, movement around the school, travel to and from school. Make schools aware of opportunities for training, e.g. play activities or working with parents to create a walking bus could be considered as effective ways to add activity.
- Explore how to use pupil voice to shape the physical activity offer, for example talk to the pupils who don't enjoy physical activity as much as their peers to understand why they don't engage as strongly and what they'd like to do.
- Encourage schools to work with their School Sport Partnership to ensure they access all the opportunities which will help you become a more active school.
- Work with schools to encourage and promote active travel to school, providing opportunities to incorporate walking, wheeling and cycling into daily routines, as well as improving road safety and air quality at the school gate.
- Consider how we can support sixth forms, colleges, universities to increase the opportunities for their pupils to be physically active.

9.3 Take a family approach, supporting physical activity across the life course, for health and wellbeing benefits, positive role modelling and active ageing.

- Develop resources for use from pregnancy onwards to ensure a clear and consistent message on the importance of physical activity during the early years and beyond.
- Share consistent evidence-based guidance, resources and training to practitioners working with children and families to encourage physical activity.

9.4 Use the data available to understand how best families, schools, GPs and communities can help their children and young people to be physically active.

- Use data to understand the physical activity levels of our children and young people, including barriers and opportunities which exist. Do this by:
  - I. Increasing the number of children and young people who take part in the Active Lives survey to improve the data quality.
  - II. Commission and inform the Koboca survey to understand why physical activity is important for our children and young people, the challenges for different cohorts (age/sex/geography) and opportunities to increase engagement.
  - III. Consider how we can gather insight into the physical activity needs of our 16-19 population.
- Progress work to support women and girls to be more physically active, understanding the particular barriers females face across the life course.

- Increase and improve access to physical education, school sport and physical activity for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).
- Use findings from ActiveCHILD research to support work with children during the early years; use this research to inform and continually evolve the workplan for children during the early years.

## 10. Appendices

### 10.1 Appendix 1: MOVERS

During August/ September 2022, following research completed by the Department for Education (DfE) and Ofsted which outlined the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on physical development, the Early Years team within the council identified early years providers with more than 10 two-year funded children and school nurseries taking 2 year olds, and rolled out the MOVERS audit. The MOVERS audit has a focus on physical development leading to cognitive and language development. The audit aimed to support the team in determining specifically what the key challenges were for childcare providers in Cheshire West and Chester.

MOVERS is part of the internationally recognised audit tool – Early Childhood Environment Rating Scales (ECERS) that informed the longitudinal study called Effective Practice for Preschool Education (EPPE).

On completion of MOVERS with a cross section of settings and schools that take 2-year funded children, the main findings were as follows:

- Overall average score of 4 (out of 7, 5 is 'good')

Lowest average scores:

- Encouraging sustained shared thinking through physical activity (2.4)
- Planning for physical development (3.4)

Highest average scores:

- Body movement to support fine motor skills (5.5)
- Staff engaging with movement indoors and outdoors (5.3)

As a result of this research, the Cheshire West & Chester Early Years Team are now implementing a project called Play In Action (PIA) with targeted providers that will provide training to support professional development and understanding as well as support from a member of the Early years Team with implementation of changes that need to be made to practice.

### 10.2 Appendix 2: Brio Leisure activities for children, young people and families

Learn 2 Swim:

The Learn 2 Swim programme supports all ages to gain water confidence, supports stroke development, water-based sports and personal survival. Each child in swimming lessons with Brio Leisure receives a free-swimming card. This gives children the opportunity to swim for free outside of lesson time to encourage plenty of extra practice. The card is valid as long as the child is enrolled in the Learn 2 Swim programme. The card entitles the child to free entry to any Casual Swim session.

Swim-a-Song:

Swim-a-Song sessions are a great place to introduce young children to the world of swimming. These adult and child drop-in sessions involve parents and guardians joining in as

the youngsters work their way through action categories based on songs adopted from well-known nursery rhymes!

#### Canoeing Lessons:

Northgate Arena, Chester teach all the basics before moving onto the advanced techniques used in this exciting sport.

#### Junior gym membership:

The Junior Gym initiative allows anyone aged 12-17 years to access any of the supervised gyms by themselves till 6.00 pm Monday – Friday and 4 pm Saturday and Sunday.

Juniors can still workout outside supervised hours. If accompanied by an adult aged 18 years or over. Juniors aged 14 years and over are also welcome to join in with any of Brio's fitness classes.

#### Topsy Tumbles:

Indoor playground fun for the under 5's. This indoor playground offers a softer alternative to the local park. Operating all year round with plenty of toys, bikes, push-a-rounds and slides, as well as the ever-popular bouncy castle! Topsy Tumbles sessions are open to all preschool children accompanied by an adult.

#### Summer Splash Pass:

Swim everyday throughout the summer holidays at 6 different Brio swimming pools for only £20 (under 18's only)

### 10.3 Appendix 3: Health Rangers supporting children, young people and families to be physically active

**Forest School** – delivering Forest School sessions in primary schools, developing school grounds and supporting school staff to use their outdoor spaces more with their students.

Forest School sessions get children outdoors and active without that being the obvious main focus of the session. Through guided, self-guided and free play activities, children might be walking and running around, climbing, digging, lifting, using tools and much more, developing fine and gross motor skills. By delivering the sessions, developing the grounds into a safe space and supporting the staff to use the natural spaces more confidently, children are more likely to access these activities in school time and perpetuate it outside of school.

**Conservation groups** –delivering outdoor conservation activities open to adults and their families.

These groups get people outdoors in nature doing conservation tasks such as hedge laying, shrub clearance, tree planting, pruning, weeding, litter picking and woodwork. Adults will

often bring their children or grandchildren to take part or gain skills to use with them at home, perpetuating the benefits gained in the sessions.

**Wellbeing Walks** – delivering and coordinating a network of walks open to adults and their families.

These walks bring people together to go for a short walk on a regular basis. There are over 25 walks taking place weekly throughout the borough with around half a dozen to a dozen people attending regularly to each walk with one walk often attracting over 50 participants. The walks are open to all, including families with the shorter walks being child-friendly, with parents and grandparents often bringing their children and grandchildren along.

## 11. References

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