



A physical activity and movement strategy  
for Suffolk 2024-2029

# FOREWORD

**In the words of the Chief Medical Officer, 'There is no situation, there is no age and no condition where exercise is not a good thing'.**

Although it is fundamental to keeping people fit and well, many people don't realise that physical activity has significant benefits for both their physical and their mental health. Being active can lift our mood, improve sleep and make us feel more connected, as well as help reduce the risk of, and manage, over 20 chronic conditions and diseases, including some cancers, heart disease, type 2 diabetes and depression.

Here at Suffolk County Council's Public Health and Communities directorate we recognise the importance of physical activity in aiding our aspirations to support healthier people, healthier places and healthier futures, and to reduce inequalities. We are a proud partner in the Feel Good Suffolk Service which supports people in the county to improve their health and wellbeing.

I am pleased, therefore, to endorse the Suffolk Physical Activity and Movement Strategy and I encourage all organisations with an interest in creating a healthier, happier and more prosperous county to implement this strategy and, in doing so, create meaningful and lasting change.

**Stuart Keeble**

Director of Public Health for Suffolk

**I am delighted to be co-writing an introduction to Move More to Feel Better, a Physical Activity and Movement strategy for Suffolk.**

Are we moving enough? The simple answer is no, however the problem of why we are not moving enough is complex. Active Lives Survey data informs us that over 35% of adults are not meeting the Chief Medical Officer's recommendation to maintain good health and with the lens on children, this figure increases to 50%.

Looking forward, we must begin to address this problem. I've already mentioned the problem is complex and includes and involves a multitude of factors. A system-wide strategy, informed through collaboration across the many stakeholders in the county with either a direct or indirect link to physical activity and movement is a really positive and powerful step forward.

Within this strategy you will see that the themes centre around people, place and partnerships. Underpinned by eight priorities and a series of recommendations they outline the clear and collective ambition to support the people of Suffolk to lead healthy and active lives.

I call upon all organisations within the system to unite behind 'our' strategy and support Suffolk to Move More to Feel Better.

**Dr Ed Garratt OBE**

Chief Executive, NHS Suffolk and North East Essex Integrated Care Board

**I wholeheartedly endorse Move More to Feel Better. The strategy was created by all the local organisations that are involved in helping people to be more active and it provides us with a common set of eight priorities we can all work towards achieving with Suffolk residents.**

We know that there is much to do. As a population we all need to move more in order to lead happier, healthier and more fulfilling lives.

This important new strategy will enable us to have a much greater impact than we currently are. By being better connected and getting behind the collective priorities, we can have a greater focus on what needs to be achieved to bring about positive change to people's lives.

I call upon all organisations within the system to help the county Move More to Feel Better. Please do read and endorse the strategy, but most importantly, take positive action and make informed decisions that will support local people to move and feel better.

**Tracey Bleakley**

Chief Executive, NHS Norfolk and Waveney Integrated Care Board





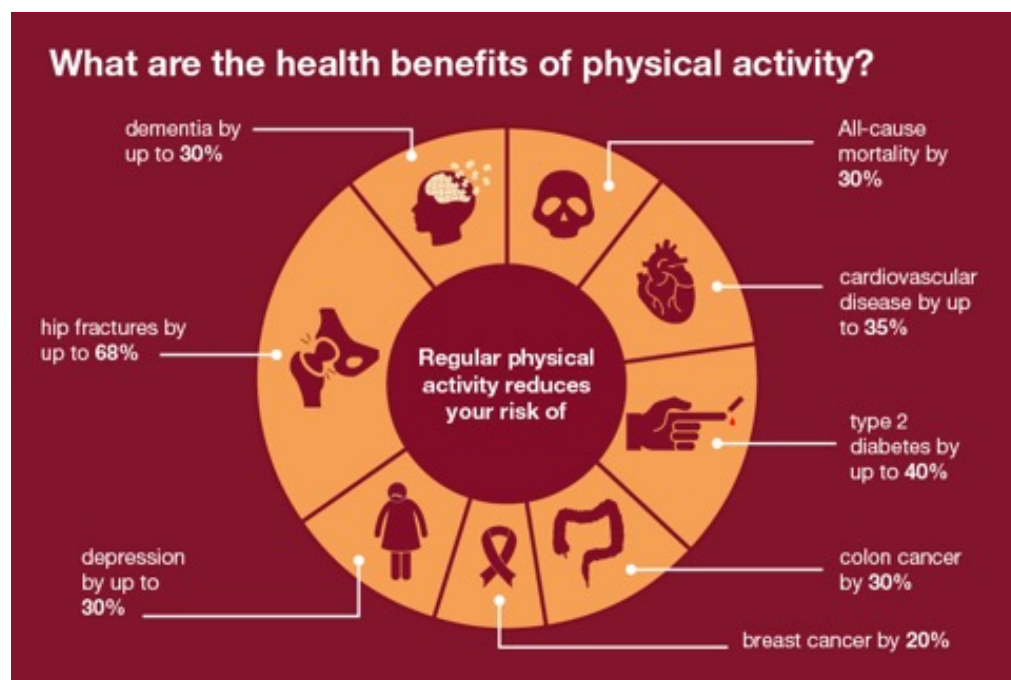
# INTRODUCTION

“Move More to Feel Better” is a system-wide strategy informed by and developed in collaboration with Suffolk’s physical activity and movement system. While this document has been intentionally condensed for succinctness, substantial work has been invested in its creation.

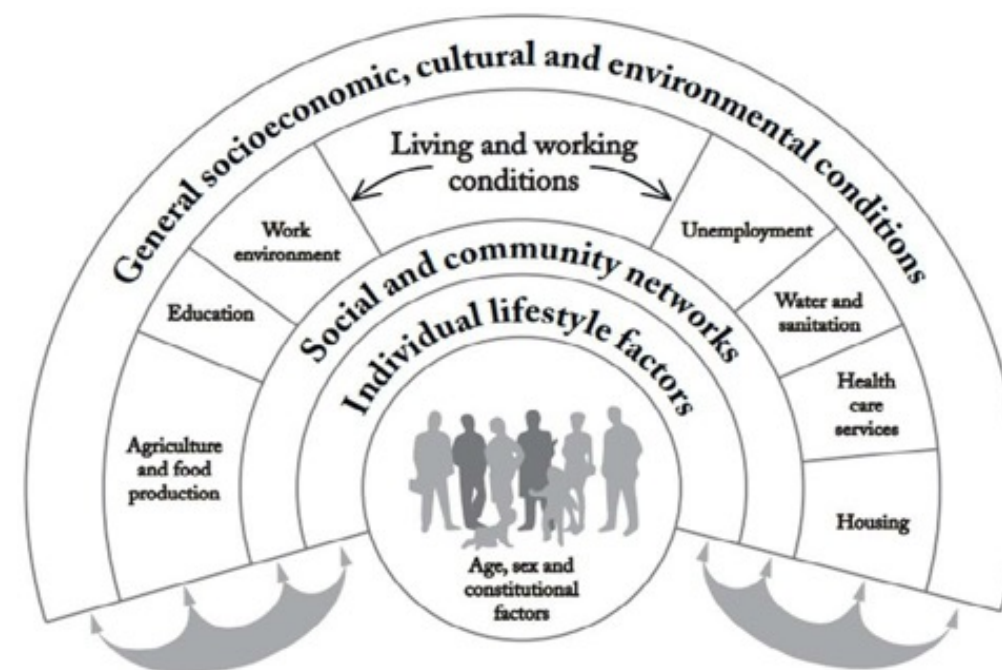
## Background

Physical inactivity is associated with 1 in 6 deaths in the United Kingdom, and Suffolk continues to report high levels of inactivity amongst its residents. The Active Lives Survey data for 2022-23 for Suffolk informs that 25% (159,500) of adults are classed as inactive\*, whilst 30% (27,600) of children are classed as less active\*\*.

Additionally, 11.5% (73,300) of adults and 20% (18,400) of children are engaged in activity but are not meeting the Chief Medical Officer’s recommendations to maintain good health.



Source: www.gov.uk



Source: www.gov.uk



The continued high levels of inactivity, against a backdrop of deepening inequalities that have been exacerbated by events such as the Covid-19 pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis, are and will continue to provide an ever-increasing challenge to core services across the county that respond to the physical and mental effects of inactivity.

**33.8%** of adults living within the most disadvantaged communities of Suffolk (Index of Multiple Deprivation 1-3) are classed as inactive. **11.3%** of Suffolk's geographical locations (Lower Super Output Areas) are identified as being within the **20%** most deprived in England.

Efforts to tackle inactivity in the past have tended to provide further opportunities for those who are already active to continue being so, with the unintended consequence of leaving those that are inactive further away from accessing activity and/or the chance to move more.

- \* Less than 30 minutes activity per week.
- \*\* Less than an average of 30 minutes activity per day.

Key organisations working in Suffolk that link either directly or indirectly to physical activity or movement make up 'the ecosystem'. Change within this ecosystem is necessary to ensure that we are creating the conditions for all Suffolk's residents to live in an environment where daily physical activity and movement is both accessible and considered a societal norm. It is crucial that factors like age, ethnicity, gender, financial status, or postcode do not impact on their health.

# CONSULTATION AND RESEARCH

In creating “More Move to Feel Better”, a large amount of data, research, insight and other relevant and/or connecting strategies have been considered, a full library of which can be found by clicking the following link; [Active Suffolk – Move More to Feel Better Insight](#). In addition to following a data and insight led approach, many organisations and individuals that are placed within Suffolk’s health and wellbeing system have provided their own perspective and opinions on this strategy through informal meetings and via interactive workshops.

A stakeholder survey was conducted between 13th October and 29th October 2023, and received 191 responses from individuals representing organisations from health, education, local authority, economic development, VCFSE and commercial sectors across the county. Key Survey Findings:

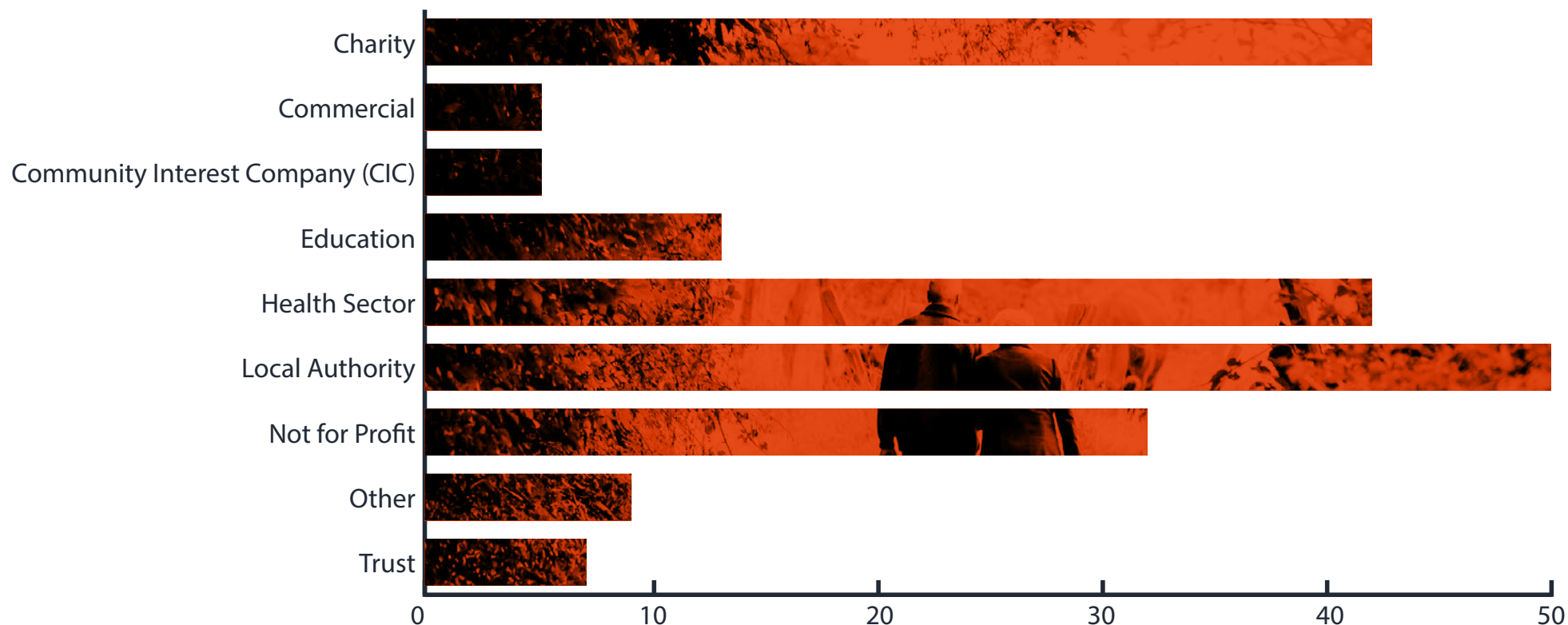
- 92% of respondents agree that an individual’s ability to access physical activity in Suffolk is negatively impacted by their socio-economic status.
- 89% of respondents agree that an individual’s ability to access physical activity in Suffolk is negatively impacted by a long-term health condition, illness or impairment.
- 42% of respondents disagree that Suffolk has a population that is well-informed on the recommended levels of physical activity and the associated benefits to physical and mental health.
- Working towards early intervention for people at risk of health inequalities, having an increased provision of accessible, diverse and inclusive activities and having a positive impact on the least active were considered the most critical areas of focus.



In visualising Suffolk as an active county, survey respondents see:

- Vibrant communities where residents of all ages have opportunities to embrace a healthy and active lifestyle.
- Our green and blue spaces can thrive as hubs of social engagement that promote physical and mental wellbeing, as well as creating cohesion and a sense of unity.
- There is a robust and appropriate infrastructure supporting cycling and pedestrian pathways that encourage sustainable ways of travelling.
- All schools and workplaces champion the benefits of positive wellbeing and inspire their own culture of movement.
- A place where visitors chose to come so they can experience and enjoy physical activity and movement opportunities.

The graph below demonstrates the breadth of responses from organisations across the sector.





# SUFFOLK'S SYSTEM-MAP

The challenges to accessing physical activity and opportunities to move more are complicated and are interlinked. We explored this complexity by creating a systems-map to explain what determines physical activity participation across Suffolk. This allows stakeholders to understand what is best to target, to help people be more active.

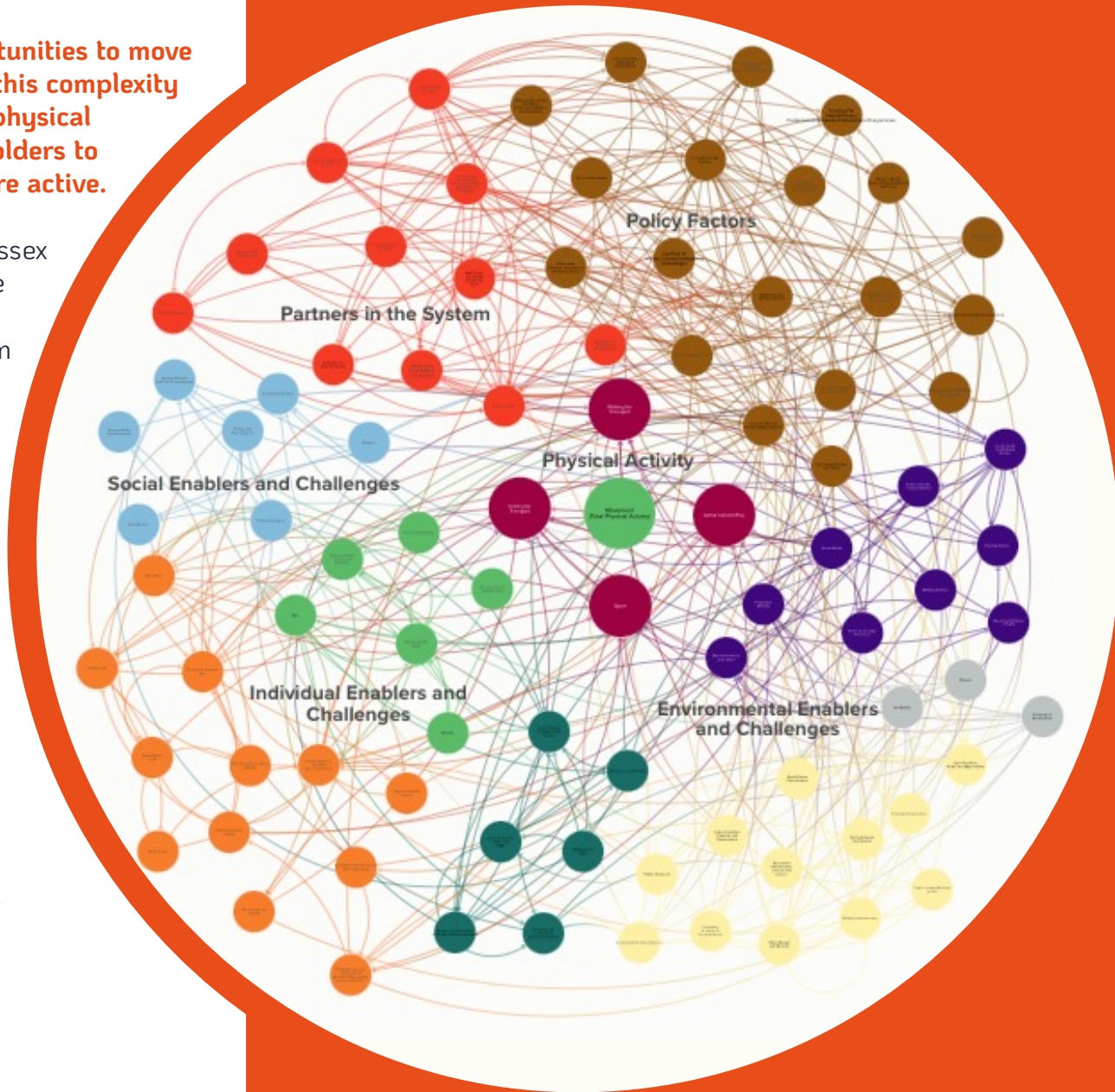
During 2023, the University of Suffolk and University of Essex led a piece of research that mapped the things that enable and the things that challenge access to physical activity and movement. They did this by using insight created from talking to stakeholders and residents in workshops, focus groups, and interviews. Following this they combined this with data from the Active Lives survey.

The systems-map (right) illustrates what is happening in Suffolk. It shows that the system is constantly evolving in response to the changing world and the actions of everyone involved in it.

A workshop with 21 policymakers, stakeholders and deliverers used our systems-map to develop 'actions' that could contribute to improving physical activity participation across the county, these have been integrated into "More Move to Feel Better's approach.



To see an interactive and animated version of Suffolk's system-map, please scan the QR code.





## *HEADLINE GOAL*

Supporting people to lead healthy active lives.

## *THE VISION*

Suffolk to be a beacon for physical activity and movement where every resident is able to lead an active and healthier life.

## *THE MISSION*

Work together to ensure everybody, especially those in greatest need, have the opportunity to move more.

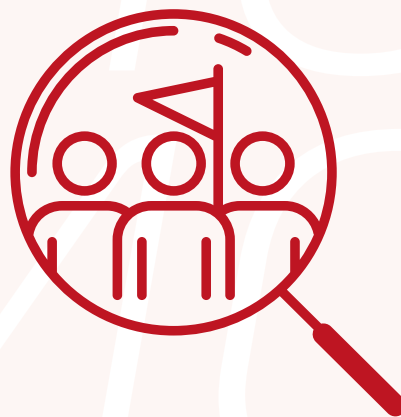


# KEY PRINCIPLES



## Connect

Work collaboratively across the system to create the conditions for change that will support a reduction in physical inactivity levels in Suffolk and, in doing so, provide health, economic and societal benefits.



## Focus

Focus on the people and communities that experience the deepest inequalities and would receive the greatest benefit from being active.



## Empower

Help people and communities to inform, design and create their own solutions to empower them to be more active.






# PRIORITIES

Eight key priorities have been identified. These sit within three themes: **People, Place and Partnerships**.

<b>THEMES</b>	<b>ACTIVE PEOPLE</b>	1	Increase the number of people who are active within communities that experience the greatest health inequalities.
		2	Create sustainable opportunities to move more across the life course.
	<b>ACTIVE PLACES</b>	3	Ensure that all sport, leisure and physical activity facilities are accessible to all people.
		4	Ensure green, blue and open spaces support formal and informal opportunities to be active every day.
		5	Apply the principles of <b>Active Design</b> (May 2023) to both built and natural environments.
	<b>ACTIVE PARTNERSHIPS</b>	6	Support the ecosystem of organisations and partnerships to ensure that it is strong, sustainable and strategically aligned to tackling physical inactivity.
		7	Ensure that the workforce and volunteer base across the entire system is able to advocate, signpost and support people to move more and lead active lives.
		8	Provide cohesive, system-wide messaging on the importance and benefits of physical activity and movement in supporting a healthy lifestyle.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## THEME - ACTIVE PEOPLE (PRIORITIES 1,2)

-  Use data to identify places with the highest physical inactivity levels, deepest inequalities and those with the greatest need for support.
-  Empower the workforce to be visible in identified places to better understand localised issues and barriers, and to make relationships and connections with people.
-  Understand what matters to and motivates local people and communities to create a culture of moving more.
-  Work with communities to make sustainable changes to behaviour.
-  Help people understand and appreciate how physical activity can help them live happier, healthier lives.

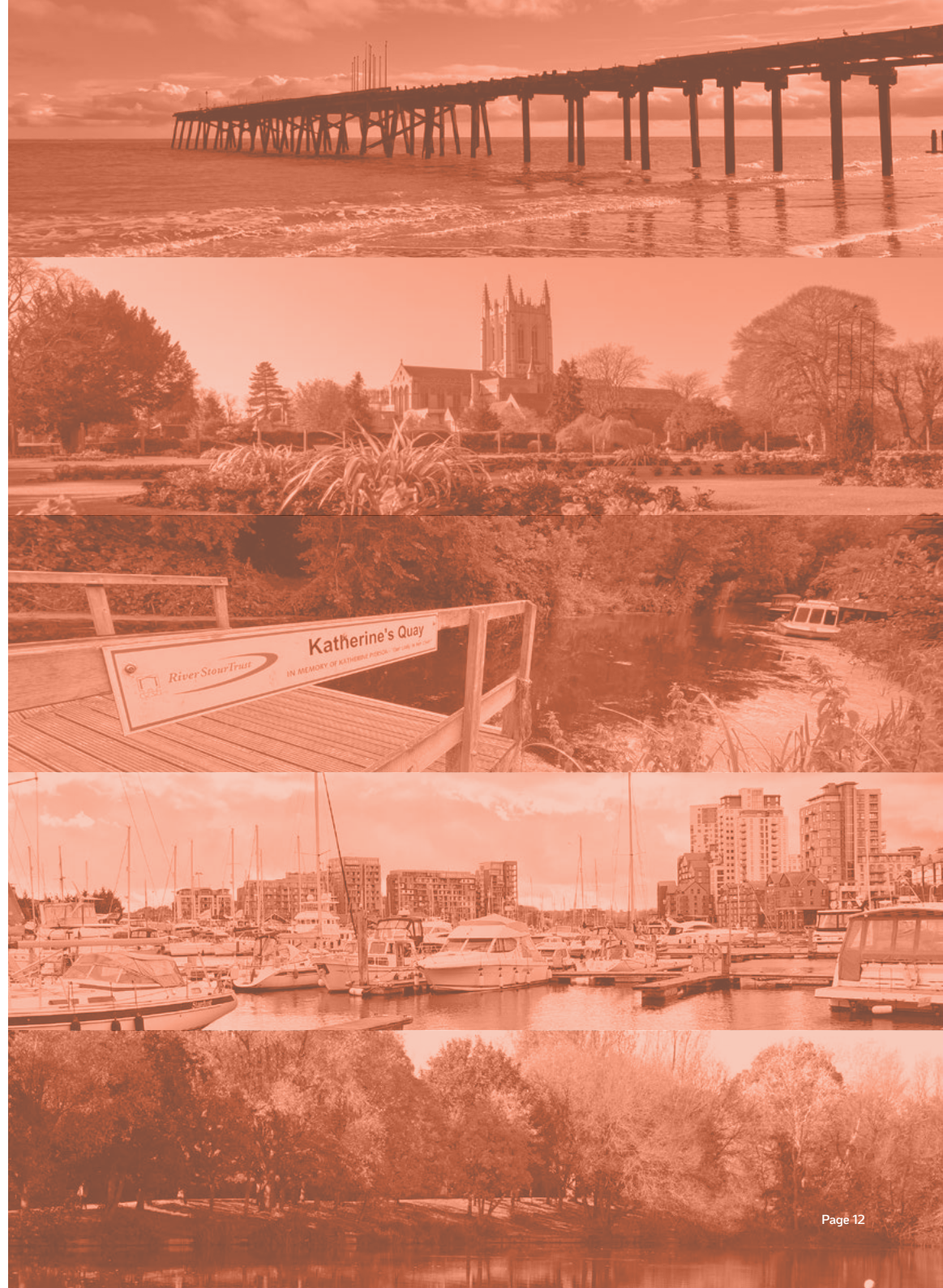




# RECOMMENDATIONS

## THEME - ACTIVE PLACES (PRIORITIES 3,4,5)

- Enable all facilities that support people to be active to be accessible and inclusive.
- Open more community buildings, e.g., schools and community halls, to support people to be active.
- Work collaboratively with partners to unblock the barriers around access to green, blue and open spaces.
- Support communities to understand and remove the barriers to being active e.g. where a park feels unsafe.
- Understand, advocate and support the use of shared spaces, places and facilities.
- Design and create active environments that encourage people to be active through their everyday lives and provide opportunities for travel actively.
- Take and apply learning from other 'Active Places'.



# RECOMMENDATIONS

## THEME - ACTIVE PARTNERSHIPS (PRIORITIES 6,7,8)

- ♥ All “Move More to Feel Better” partners to endorse the strategy and unite behind the common priorities identified.
- ♥ Encourage all organisations with an interest to collaborate and develop cross-sector relationships to take action on physical inactivity.
- ♥ Enable the workforce to understand the benefits of physical activity and movement.
- ♥ Develop the healthcare workforce to be equipped and confident to discuss how physical activity and movement can be used to support wider health outcomes.
- ♥ Use key leverage points identified within the system mapping research to enact change that will create significant and positive outcomes.
- ♥ Engage, challenge and work with the integrated care system (NHS) to build greater advocacy and action for physical activity and movement.
- ♥ Adopt a data informed and needs-led approach to the creation of projects and interventions to ensure they are not increasing inequalities.





# ENDORISING “MOVE MORE TO FEEL BETTER”

As guardians of health and wellbeing, our active and collaborative participation in driving the physical activity and movement agenda is critical to create a system that gives every person in Suffolk the platform to Move More to Feel Better. Our support of the principles and priorities of this strategy is pivotal in shaping the future for our communities.

Your organisation’s endorsement of the key strategic principles and priorities of “Move More to Feel Better” is crucial in uniting the system to a common purpose.

Your endorsement means we will:

1. Work together to ensure every individual in Suffolk has access to the opportunities they require without barriers.
2. Empower people with knowledge, resources and support to actively participate and make informed decisions about their own wellbeing.
3. Work as a system to collaborate among institutions, healthcare providers and community organisations to create a continuum of opportunities that addresses individual need.
4. Understand and use available technology to enhance the delivery of health and wellbeing, making it more efficient, effective and person-centred.
5. Unite in our commitment to reduce disparities in access and outcomes to ensure an equitable distribution of opportunities for all members of our community.

Sign here to endorse “**Move More to Feel Better**”.





# SUMMARY

The importance of living an active and healthy life cannot be underestimated. For too long, a large number of people, for many reasons, have neglected to or been unable to achieve the recommended levels of physical activity and movement. The health of the residents of Suffolk is now suffering as a consequence. Regardless of age, there's strong scientific evidence that being physically active and moving more, can help people to lead healthier and happier lives.

Active Suffolk, an independent non-profit organisation, is the lead organisation for physical activity and movement in the county. As a funded system partner of Sport England, their vision and aims are aligned with their Uniting the Movement strategy.

Following the publication of "Move More to Feel Better" in May 2024, a system-informed action plan will be developed collaboratively with partners. As well as detailing specific actions that will contribute towards the strategy's priorities, the plan will identify and outline short, medium and long term milestones that will measure progress against these priorities.

Active Suffolk will provide the over-arching leadership across the physical activity and movement system. In response to this strategy, there is a collective responsibility for stakeholders to take action and to proactively drive system-change across the county. Active Suffolk will, where required, facilitate conversations, encourage and support system-wide collaboration.

Together, we can build a healthier and more resilient Suffolk. We must act today to create a system that prioritises the wellbeing of every individual and creates a culture of care and collaboration that strives for excellence.

**Let's join together in enabling Suffolk to Move More to Feel Better.**

