

# FOREWORD

In developing this guidance, we have tried to recognise and articulate the journey and challenges faced by local authorities in determining local priorities and outcomes and in making effective investment into provision – both facilities and services.

The model describes the stages and approach needed to ensure investment best meets local strategic outcomes and the needs of the community, but importantly recognises the challenges faced in terms of resourcing. We are keen to support local authorities through this journey and to help you make better and more impactful investments.

The commitment from local authorities to the provision of physical activity and sport opportunities for local communities is essential and an important contributor to the active environment which millions of people access for health, social and sporting benefits.

Local authorities are under increasing pressure to meet the growing needs of their communities with limited resources and using new approaches to commissioning services. The role that sport and physical activity has to play in providing opportunities and creating places where people can live healthy, fulfilling, productive, meaningful and happy lives is interwoven into the fabric of community life.

With further pressure on budgets, changing demographics and increasing demands on services such as health, mental health, adult social care and education, sport and physical activity is increasingly seen as a co-producer of local outcomes.

Ensuring service delivery and the physical environment contribute most effectively to local strategic priorities and outcomes is essential to achieving the best return on the use of limited resources, and to ensuring political support at a local level.

We have long supported local authorities through the provision of tools and guidance, as well as National Lottery funds for programme and capital investment. However, we are seeing an increasing need from local authorities for assistance at an earlier stage – from developing a vision, through community engagement, identifying and addressing barriers to participation and into the implementation phase.

We are keen to support local authorities where needed and to collaboratively develop the strategic approach to sport and physical activity, to ensure that any local investment made is as effective as possible and is sustainable in the long term.

What we have learnt through working with a number of local authorities is that this cannot be a ‘one size fits all’ approach. There are some key principles to approaching this work and this high-level guidance is designed to recognise the journey. It will help create a planned approach prior to implementation and will assist local authorities in identifying areas where further work or assistance is needed and where to go for this support. We have drawn on a number of case studies from recent work with local authorities, who



have already started to prepare for and, in some cases, undertaken a journey using this strategic approach. This has resulted in better outcomes, value for money and return on investment in both financial and social value terms and also supports our national strategy, Towards an Active Nation.

We are happy to explore where support is most needed and, where possible, assist local authorities to make the most effective investment decisions to achieve the local strategic outcomes which benefit the communities served.

We hope you will find the guidance helpful in your work to improve local strategic health, social and wellbeing outcomes in your communities.

**Kevin Mills**

Director of Capital Investment  
Sport England

