



BEDFORD
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Sport and Leisure Strategy 2024 – 2034

Foreword

As we look towards the next decade, the importance of promoting active, healthy and connected communities in the UK has never been more apparent. Our Local Authority Sport and Leisure Strategy 2024-2034 reflects our commitment to fostering environments that enhance the well-being of all residents, irrespective of age, ability, or background.

This strategy is guided by the principles of inclusivity, sustainability, and community collaboration and is led by the Council's Corporate Plan. With public health challenges such as increasing obesity, mental health concerns, and the widening gap in physical activity levels, local leisure services play a pivotal role in addressing these issues head-on. By creating welcoming, accessible spaces where residents can enjoy sports, recreation, and cultural activities, we aim to support healthier lifestyles and contribute to a thriving, resilient society.

We also recognise the role that leisure services play in environmental stewardship and the development of sustainable communities. Our focus on "active environments" goes beyond physical health - it encourages the use of natural spaces, promotes walking and cycling, and integrates leisure facilities into the broader network of community venues, parks, and open spaces.

This high-level Sport and Leisure Strategy outlines the development of high-quality, multi-functional leisure facilities that cater to the diverse needs of our communities. Whether through enhanced partnerships with healthcare providers, education institutions, or sports clubs, we are committed to creating spaces that serve as hubs for community connection, personal growth and wellness.

As we embark on this journey, we invite collaboration from residents, volunteers, local organisations, and charities. Together, we will ensure that leisure services continue to evolve and play a crucial role in improving the health, well-being, and happiness of our communities.

We are excited by the potential of this Sport and Leisure Strategy to transform lives and deliver lasting positive impacts over the next decade.

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Statement from our Portfolio Holder

Through this Sport and Leisure Strategy, the Council has an opportunity in its continuing commitment to overcoming increasing inequalities and providing opportunities for local people. It also has an opportunity to consider its current leisure portfolio, provision of built leisure facilities and its strategic alignment with the future corporate direction of travel and other key local outcomes.

The Sport and Leisure Strategy supports the wider national strategies of Sport England – Uniting the Movement and the priorities for Public Health England Strategy 2020-25 - to promote a healthier nation along with our Active Partnership - Be Active.

The Sport and Leisure Strategy brings together the themes from several key Council strategies to underpin the local desire for affordable physical activity opportunities and access to new and improved facilities.



Councillor Sarah-Jayne Gallagher
Portfolio Holder for Customer Experience
(including Leisure, Recreation and Culture)

Where are we now?

Bedford Borough is at a pivotal point in shaping its leisure and physical activity landscape. While we benefit from a range of leisure facilities, parks, and sports provisions, we face significant challenges in health inequalities, as evidenced by a stark gap in life expectancy between the most and least deprived areas of up to 9 years.

The Government’s sports strategy “Get Active: a strategy for the future of sport and physical activity” sets targets to get 2.5 million more adults and one million more children active (nationally) by 2030. This includes specific targets for the least active groups. With activity levels returning to pre-covid levels with the exception of people living in deprived areas there is a clear requirement to support people to create equity in the access of physical activity and sport.

In 2019, the Chief Medical Officers released guidelines on how much and what kind of physical activity people should do to stay healthy. The report emphasises the importance of regular activity for people of all ages, and for the first time presents additional guidance on being active during pregnancy, and after giving birth, and for disabled adults.

Figure 1: Bedford Borough participation in physical activity across the whole population (16+). Sport England Active Lives survey data for Bedford Borough.

	Nov 20/21	Nov 21/22	Nov 22/23	Nov 23/24
Inactive (less than 30 mins a week)	25.6%	24.0%	16.1%	27.3%
Fairly Active (30-149 mins a week)	10.4%	12.3%	11.0%	13.6%
Active (150+ mins a week)	64.1%	63.6%	72.8%	59.1%

Although Bedford’s population showed increased physical activity in 2022-2023, overall activity levels returned to alignment with national averages in 2023-2024. This data comparison is based on Sport England’s Active Lives survey, which uses random postcode sampling to collect data. It is important to note that if the selected sample falls within a certain area then this can influence the overall responses. Bedford does remain within the national average, and the sharp increase observed last year was an outlier compared to national trends. While monitoring population-wide activity levels remains essential, significant disparities persist throughout despite any general or specific area improvements. Lower-income communities, ethnic minorities, children and young people, and individuals with disabilities continue to face barriers to regular physical activity participation.

These inequalities contribute to higher rates of inactivity, which in turn exacerbate health and wellbeing challenges. Addressing these gaps requires targeted interventions and inclusive sport and leisure strategic objectives that ensure access to opportunities for all, fostering healthier and more active lifestyles across every segment of society.

How do we know this?

The local disparities described can be seen in the local data and help us to better understand these priority areas:

- Areas of Deprivation
- Gender
- Disability / Long Term Health Conditions
- Children and Young People

Figure 2: National Child Measurement Programme - Year 6 Excess Weight, 2021-22

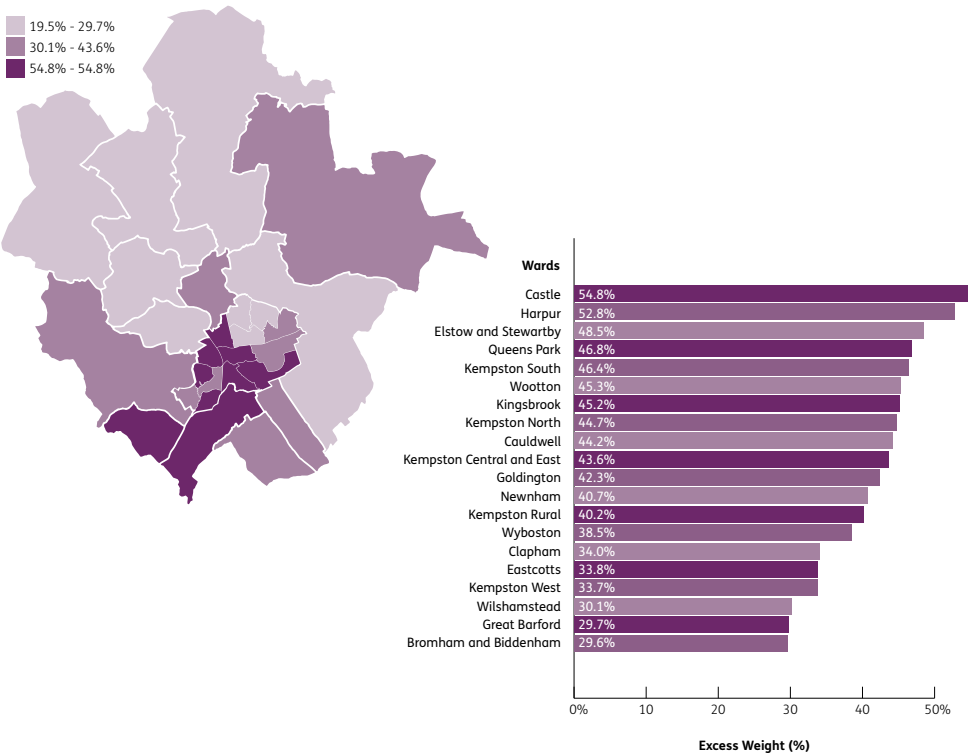


Figure 3: Levels of Activity (Main - 3 Categories) - Inactive less than 30 minutes a week, Local Authority and County Council - Disability, Nov 23-24

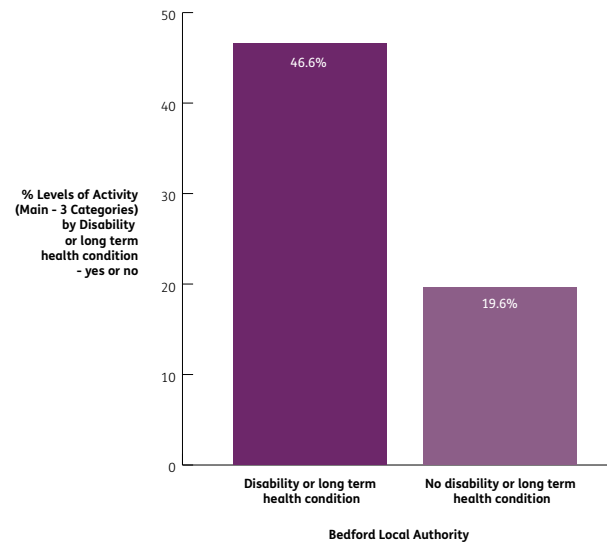


Figure 4: Inactivity and Deprivation, 2020-21

22/23	
Whole Population	16.1%
Most Deprived Areas (decile 1)	37.8%

Figure 5: Inactivity and Gender, 2023-24

23/24	
Males	22.8%
Females	30.5%

Sources: JSNA Bedford Borough, July 2024 & Sport England Active Lives Survey 23-24

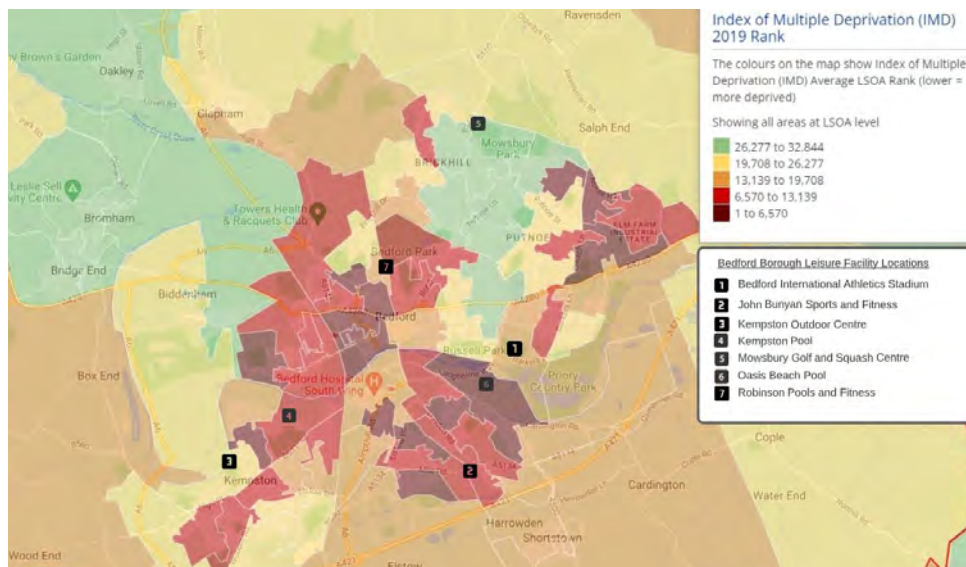
Why do these inequalities matter?

The Bedford Borough Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2024-2027 highlights and explains why these inequalities matter.

People living in poorer parts of Bedford Borough live shorter lives than people living in more affluent areas. The difference in life expectancy between people living in the most and least deprived areas is on average 8 years for women and 9 years for men. These differences are amongst the largest of any local authority in the East of England.

The reason why some communities and people living in less affluent areas of Bedford Borough are dying years earlier than they should, is because they do not have all the things they need to live healthy lives.

Figure 6: Bedford Leisure site locations and the IMD areas of Bedford*



We know the transformative power of sport and physical activity, and this strategy represents a commitment to increasing its availability for those who will benefit most, serving as a catalyst for change.

There is a wide variety of accessible sports and activity sessions aimed at adults and older people as referenced in the recent Care Quality Commission assessment report.

What does this mean for Leisure Facilities?

We are fortunate to have leisure facilities in and around key areas of Bedford, however a number of these need short, medium and long-term investment. A strategic review of the Council's leisure facilities has therefore been completed.

This Sports Facilities Strategic Review was important as several of the facilities are aging and there was an urgent need to understand and plan future maintenance priorities for the Council's leisure estate, and to plan what enhancements can realistically be undertaken over the next 10 years within the budgetary challenges facing the Council.

The challenges outlined in the Review and in this Strategy, whether that is planning the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy or trying to meet the leisure needs of all our communities (both existing and planned), mean that we need a Leisure Strategy to help with future decision-making.

* The Indices of Deprivation 2019 are a relative measure of deprivation for small areas (Lower-layer Super Output Areas) across England. The overall Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019 combines together indicators under seven different domains of deprivation: Income Deprivation; Employment Deprivation; Education Skills and Training Deprivation; Health Deprivation and Disability; Crime; Barriers to Housing and Services and Living Environment Deprivation. Data shows Average LSOA Rank, a lower rank indicates that an area is experiencing high levels of deprivation. Date: 2019 Source: Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2019>)

The Sport and Leisure Strategy and the Sports Facilities Strategic Review help ensure that the Council has the evidence base and strategic framework to make these decisions, through a better understanding of the sport and leisure needs of its communities. They help the Council be clear on its improvement and investment programme for leisure facilities, and what savings can be achieved in relation to asset provision.

The Facilities Review has informed the Council's capital programme for 2025-35, which includes the following for leisure sites (subject to individual business cases where relevant):

- Replacement of the running track and related improvements at Bedford International Athletic Stadium.
- Provision of Padel tennis facilities at Mowsbury Golf & Squash Complex.
- Refurbishment and upgrade of Kempston Pool & Fitness and Robinson Pools & Fitness.
- Incorporating free to use outdoor leisure facilities at Cardington Road Leisure Park.
- Maintaining leisure provision on the site of Oasis Beach Pool.
- Essential maintenance works across the leisure estate.

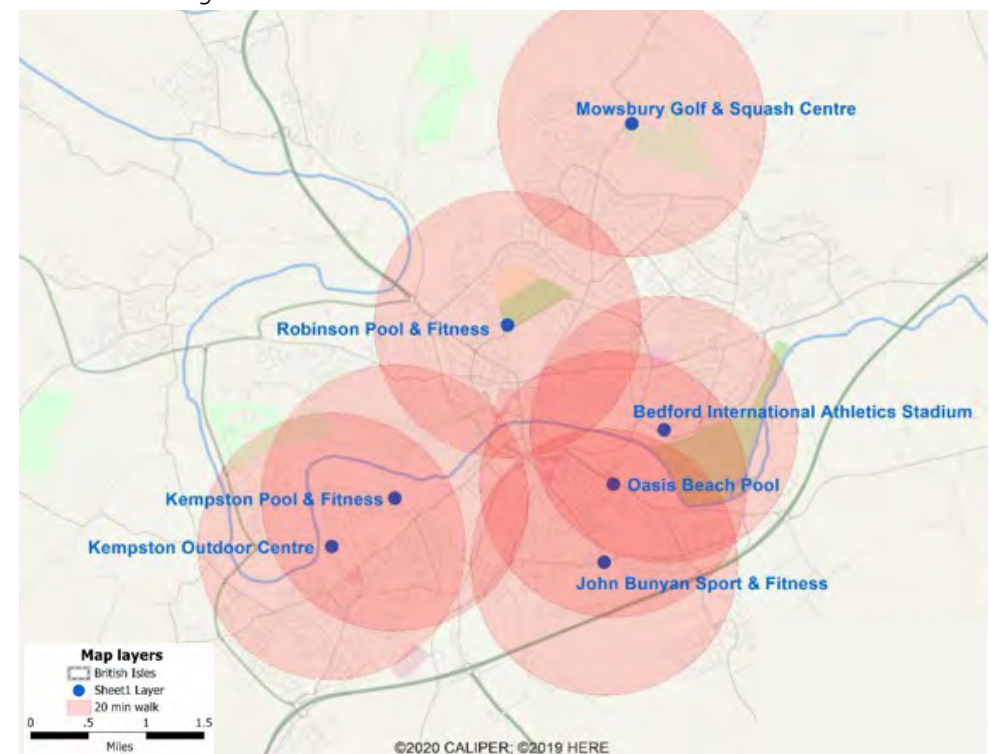
In addition, reviews of alternative arrangements are being completed for Kempston Outdoor Centre and White & Blue Peris Mountain Centre in North Wales.

These plans have been developed following an initial review with key National Governing Bodies (NGBs) and stakeholders, as well as a wider public consultation exercise.

The Sport and Leisure Strategy has also taken into account the role of the education, private and voluntary sectors in maintaining and enhancing service provision.

Maintaining robust education and private sector facilities is crucial to a successful leisure strategy, as it fosters community engagement, lifelong learning and accessible recreational opportunities, thereby enhancing overall quality of life.

Figure 7: Bedford Borough Council (BBC) Leisure site locations with a 20 minute walking catchment area



Social Value of Sport

The benefits of physical activity can create tangible monetary impact. In 2017/18, Sport England commissioned research to understand the social impact of sport and physical activity.

Nationally, for every £1.00 invested in community sport and physical activity, a return on investment of £3.91 of social value is generated across health and wellbeing, stronger communities, and the economy.

For Local Authorities, Sport England calculated the social value of community sport and physical activity by multiplying the rates of active adults (those completing at least 150 minutes of physical activity a week) by the value per person for all health outcomes.

The October 2024 Sport England Report “The Social Value of Sport and Physical Activity in England” provisionally estimates the annual social cost of inequalities in adult physical activity levels to be £15.6 billion across the country.



Not only is this a huge amount of unrealised social value for society, but it also demonstrates the potential that can be unlocked if we are able to better confront the deep inequalities in participation that are still experienced by too many people in our society.

Our publicly-owned leisure facilities where concession access is available are shown (at figure 7) with a 20 minute walking radius. Their proximity to areas of deprivation is critical as most people who have no transportation will need to walk to an affordable facility to seek physical activity opportunities.

In order to see the impact of the social value of sport and physical activity we know that we need to create inclusive and accessible spaces for all residents of the Borough. It is not one size fits all and to ensure there is equity of accessibility it will be key to utilise the Sport England Accessible and Inclusive Sports Facilities (AISF) guidance, which will help ensure that our facilities are safe, welcoming and inclusive for our communities.

Sports clubs, groups and providers across all sectors form the backbone of sport’s social value within a mixed economy, each contributing unique strengths that collectively maximise community benefit. Voluntary clubs foster grassroots participation and social cohesion through local networks and volunteer engagement, while commercial providers drive innovation and accessibility through professional services and facilities.

Public sector organisations ensure equitable access and strategic coordination, particularly for under served communities. This diverse ecosystem creates multiple pathways for participation, from elite performance to recreational activity, while addressing broader social outcomes including health improvement, community integration, and economic development.

The Mixed Economy of Sport and Leisure

Over the next ten years, our Sport and Leisure Strategy will focus on fostering a mixed economy that blends public, private, voluntary, and community sector contributions to create a sustainable and inclusive sporting landscape. By leveraging the expertise and resources of local businesses, sports clubs, charities, schools, and volunteers, we aim to offer a wide range of accessible opportunities for all residents, regardless of age, background, or ability.



This collaborative approach will help ensure that everyone, from grassroots participants to elite athletes, has the chance to engage in sport and physical activity. Recognising the distinct role each sector plays, we will work to strengthen partnerships that support the development of facilities, coaching and participation pathways across our communities.

Bedford Borough is fortunate to have an incredible range of sports available and local clubs, voluntary groups and community leaders support in ensuring these opportunities are accessible for all.



At the heart of this Sport and Leisure Strategy is the belief in the social value of sport. Sport and physical activity are key drivers of social cohesion, mental and physical wellbeing, and community pride. We are committed to maximising the impact of sport beyond the playing field by fostering inclusivity, reducing inequality, and offering opportunities for social interaction and personal growth.

We will actively support local clubs and volunteers who create welcoming environments, offer structured programmes for young people, and provide vital leadership in our communities. By investing in the power of sport to inspire and unite, we will ensure that the social benefits of physical activity extend across all corners of our local authority, helping to build healthier, more resilient communities for generations to come.

Working in Partnership

Bedford Borough operates within a comprehensive physical activity ecosystem, comprising sports clubs, qualified coaches, health and wellbeing professionals, educational institutions, community organisations, and numerous system partners who collectively contribute to the strategic delivery of sport and leisure provision.

The strategy's success depends entirely on strong partnership working between all key stakeholders.

Be Active, as the Active Partnership, will provide coordination and strategic oversight, whilst the Council delivers infrastructure and policy frameworks.

The NHS contributes health expertise and access to target populations, and sports clubs offer grassroots delivery and community networks.

Without active engagement from all partners, the strategy's objectives cannot be achieved - success requires shared ownership, coordinated resources and integrated delivery that leverages each organisation's unique strengths.

This collaborative approach is essential, as increasing physical activity participation demands a unified, multi-sector response that no single organisation can deliver alone.



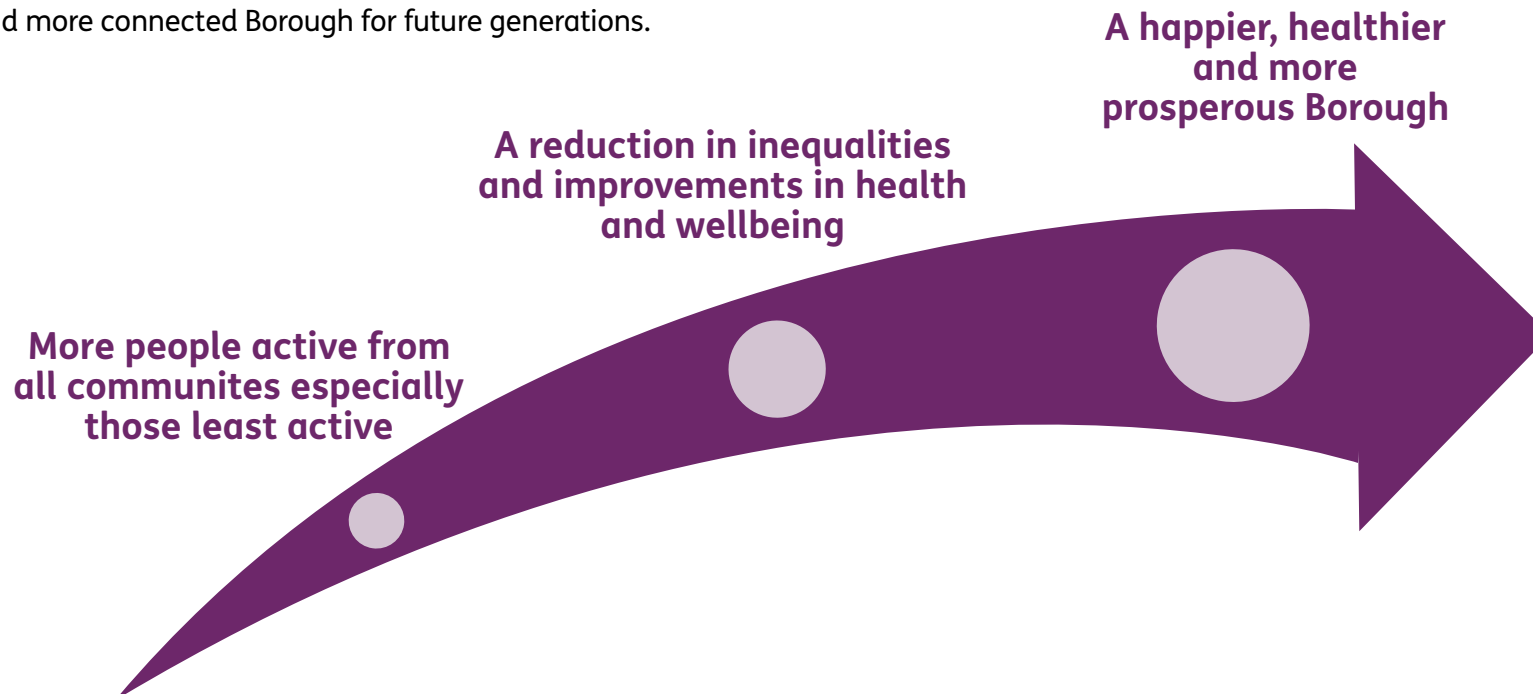
Long Term Vision

Our long-term vision for physical activity and sport is to create an active and healthy Borough where every resident has access to opportunities that promote physical well-being.

Guided by key supporting documents - The Physical Activity Vision, Playing Pitch Strategy, and Sports Facilities Strategic Review - we are committed to delivering inclusive, sustainable, and fit-for-purpose leisure facilities.

These strategies will ensure that we meet the diverse needs of our community, offering high-quality spaces and programmes that encourage lifelong participation in sport and physical activity, while fostering a healthier and more connected Borough for future generations.

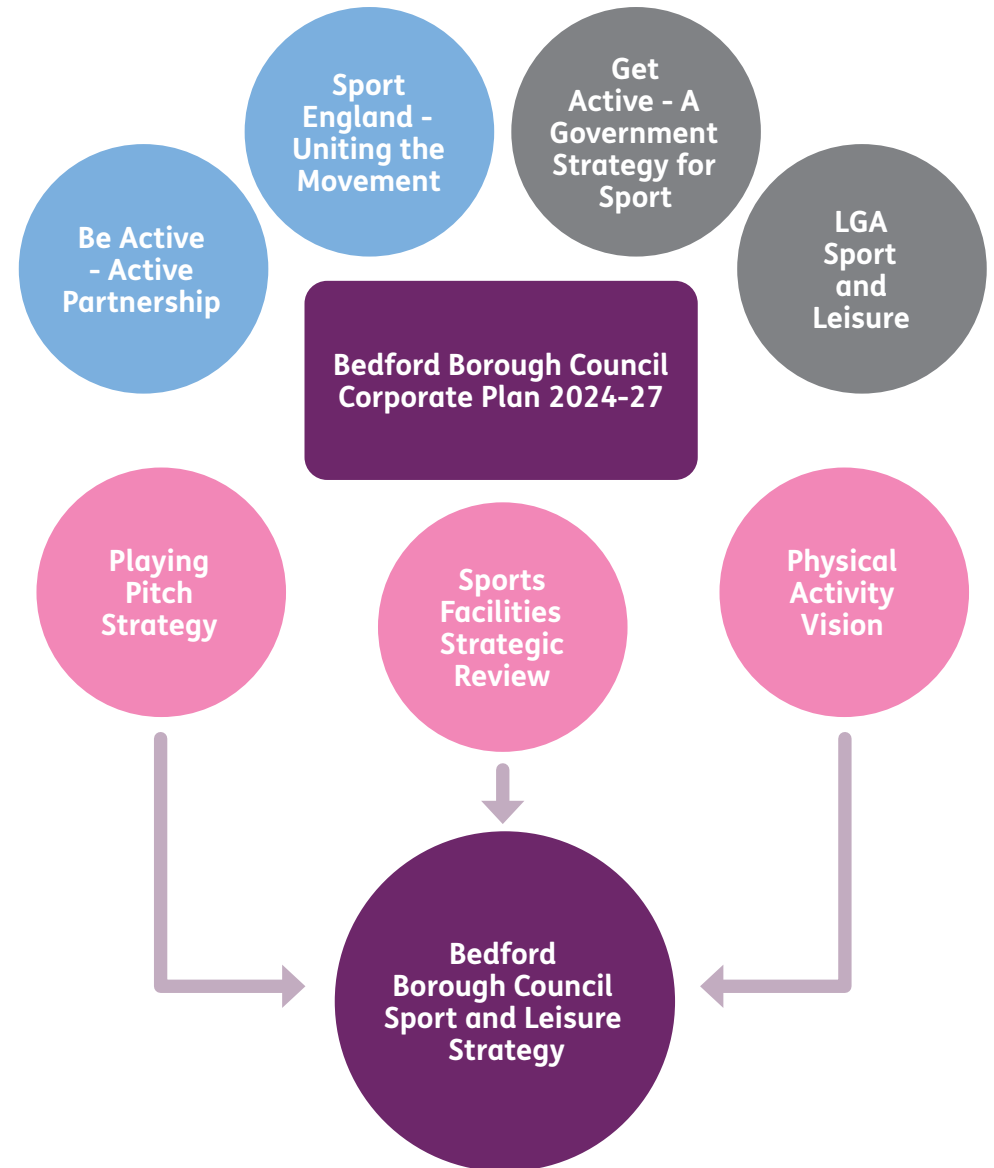
The long-term delivery will work in tandem with other key implementation / working groups (for example those delivering the Health & Wellbeing Strategy), to ensure synergy and maximise impact across complementary initiatives. This coordinated approach will prevent duplication of effort, align resources effectively and create integrated pathways that reinforce shared outcomes across health, wellbeing and physical activity agendas.



Underpinning Principles

This Sport and Leisure Strategy is closely aligned to the Council’s Corporate Plan 2024/25 to 2027/28, the Physical Activity Vision 2023, Sports Facilities Strategic Review 2024 and the Playing Pitch Strategy 2021.

These existing detailed strategies provide the foundations and evidence base for this high-level Sport and Leisure Strategy. Bringing together the conclusions of these evidence-based documents has shaped the plan for the future of leisure in Bedford which will help ensure that all residents of Bedford have the best start in life and the same opportunities to live happy and healthy lives.



How have the Themes of the Strategy been developed?

There are common themes that run throughout the key national and local strategies which inform the themes of this high-level Sport and Leisure Strategy. The themes of the Council's Corporate Plan align with the national objectives of the Sport England Uniting the Movement strategy. The actions will aim to create positive change locally but will also support the objectives of the national Sport England Strategy.

Strategy	Key Themes				
Bedford Borough Council (BBC) Corporate Plan 2024/5-2027/8	Supporting individuals and families	Protecting the environment	Stimulating economic growth	Promoting health and wellbeing	
Sport England - Uniting the Movement 2021-2031	Positive experiences for children and young people	Active environments	Recover and reinvent	Connecting health and wellbeing	Connecting communities
Bedford Borough Council (BBC) Physical Activity Vision 2023-2030	Positive experiences for children and young people	Active environments		Connecting health and wellbeing	Connecting communities
Bedford Borough Council (BBC) Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2024-2027	Best start in life	Sustainable built and natural environment	Inclusive employment, lifelong education and workplace health	Healthy homes	Creating strong communities
Be Active 2021-2026	People driven	Places	New audiences	Sustainable communities	



Strategy	Key Themes				
Bedford Borough Council (BBC) Sport and Leisure Strategy 2024-2034	Positive experiences for children and young people	Enhancing and sustaining Bedford's sport and physical activity sector	Active environment	Connecting health and wellbeing	Connecting communities

Implementation of the Themes

The five themes of the draft strategy received strong support through the consultation process and have been consolidated to enhance delivery effectiveness. This consolidation recognises that key partners typically contribute across multiple thematic areas, thereby improving coordination and strategic implementation.

Draft Strategic Themes	Focus	Linked Themes	Final Strategy Themes
1. Connected Communities, and 2. Positive Experiences for Children and Young People	Building stronger, more connected, and inclusive communities by encouraging active lifestyles for all ages, with a particular focus on children, families, and those from underrepresented or disadvantaged backgrounds.	Both themes emphasise the social and inclusive power of physical activity - connecting people, nurturing talent, supporting wellbeing, and creating safe, fun, and equitable experiences. They also both rely heavily on partnerships, especially with education and community groups.	1. Active & Thriving Communities
3. Connecting Health and Wellbeing	Using sport and physical activity as a vehicle to improve physical and mental health, reduce health inequalities, and integrate leisure with health and care pathways - especially for inactive or at-risk groups.	It is uniquely health-focused, with direct links to social prescribing, NHS collaboration, and targeted health interventions. This group can act as the bridge between the leisure and health sectors.	2. Improving Health, Inclusion & Wellbeing
4. Active Environments, and 5. Enhancing and Sustaining Bedford's Sport and Physical Activity Sector	Creating inclusive, sustainable and accessible places and systems where physical activity can thrive - this includes facilities, governance, environmental targets, active design, and club support.	Both themes prioritise infrastructure, sustainability, long-term investment, and sector-wide collaboration. They are about building the physical and organisational foundations of a successful leisure ecosystem.	3. Sustainable Places & Stronger Sector

Strategic Themes

1. Active & Thriving Communities



Our Aims are:

- To focus on reducing inequalities by bringing communities together and utilising sport and physical activity opportunities to connect communities.
- To support all young people to be active throughout childhood as they move into adulthood.
- To ensure there is a diverse physical activity offer to welcome people from all backgrounds.



Our Objectives are:

- To ensure the Council provides value for money across the leisure service.
- To work with the education sector to develop broader access to leisure facilities, community use of school facilities and pathways into the sector.
- To create strong partnerships to connect communities: Council – Education Sector – Private Sector – Voluntary Sector. Supporting access and maintaining robust education and private sector facilities is crucial to a successful leisure strategy, as it fosters community engagement, lifelong learning, and accessible recreational opportunities, thereby enhancing overall quality of life.
- To promote inclusive access to sports and physical activity at leisure sites and in green spaces by ensuring promotion of services and events in diverse communities and in a range of language formats and for those with sensory needs.
- To work with less active young people and their families, including those with SEND and from deprived backgrounds to improve their access to physical activity.
- To increase physical activity levels amongst children and young people living in the least active and deprived areas of the Borough.
- To recognise that the whole family is an important part of a child's participation physical activity.



Bedford Borough residents told us...

*The leisure centres
are our community*

*Family swimming
is important*

*There needs to be
more options for
12-18 year olds*

*There is so much value to seeing
people you know at the gym
or the pool, these spaces need
to be community hubs*

2. Improving Health, Inclusion & Wellbeing



Our Aims are:

- To focus on collaborations with health partners to enable people to maintain an active and healthy lifestyle throughout life.

Our Objectives are:

- To increase physical activity levels amongst groups of people where inactivity inequalities are the greatest.
- To continue to integrate physical activity into social prescribing and recognise the importance that local facilities can have in supporting physical and mental health.
- To encourage leisure providers and facilities to commit to healthy food standards and sustainable environment objectives.
- To support NHS programmes and health interventions such as strength and balance, long term health conditions and mental health pathways.
- To support and enhance the wide variety of accessible sports and activity sessions aimed at adults and older people as referenced in the recent Care Quality Commission assessment report 2025.

Bedford Borough residents told us...

Exercise keeps me well. It is the one thing that keeps my physical and mental health well

Nothing is more important than health and wellbeing

Good idea, for people with health issues it is important to understand what they physically can and can't do and how to avoid getting injured

We need more partnerships between healthcare providers and leisure services

3. Sustainable Places & Stronger Sector



Our Aims are:

- To prioritise the design of safe and environmentally sustainable neighbourhoods. We will support the most deprived areas to have equitable access to sport and leisure and ensure that active travel can be a part of everyday lives.
- To invest available resources in high quality indoor and outdoor sport and leisure facilities, prioritising access for those with the least resources and reflecting the desire to minimise any impact on the environment.
- To encourage clubs and community groups to prioritise environmental sustainability, enhance their knowledge of its importance and equip them with practices for ongoing improvement. This collective effort supports the Borough in reaching its net zero target by 2030.



Our Objectives are:

- To support the development of safe cycling and walking routes and better access to green, blue and grey spaces.
- To support the development of a range of sports across the Borough including golf, tennis, squash, badminton, padel, pickleball, table tennis, football, netball, rugby, hockey, cricket, athletics, gymnastics, swimming, basketball, squash, volleyball, watersports, martial arts, bowls, cycling, BMX, dodgeball, handball and more.
- To agree the long-term contract for the built leisure facilities management and develop third party partnerships, ensuring health services and schools are included and healthy eating options are considered.
- To consider proposals and opportunities to develop sustainable facilities following active design principles that serve the Borough and residents over the next 25 years. These could include renovations to existing facilities along with the introduction of new activities to the Borough.
- To continue to support the playing pitch strategy (PPS) and its future reviews along with the implementation of the new Sports Facilities Strategic Review.
- To show a strong desire to embed the Sport England and Office for Health Improvements and Disparities developed Active Design Guidance in the design and development of urban and rural developments and regeneration schemes, supporting residents and the wider community to be more physically active in the places where they live, work and go about their daily business, reducing vehicle usage, thereby reducing carbon emissions, contributing towards the Borough's net zero targets.
- To support clubs and community groups to provide safe and inclusive environments that embrace safeguarding, welfare, equality, diversity and inclusion through their policies and practices.
- To support the development of coaching pathways and opportunities via our Active Partnership, CIMPSA (Chartered Institute for the Management of Sport and Physical Activity) and our sport specific NGBs.



3. Sustainable Places & Stronger Sector *continued*

Our Objectives are:



- To assist clubs and community groups in strengthening their governance activities, processes, and structures to meet the requirements of Tier 1 in Sport England's Code for Sports Governance.
- To support clubs and community groups to access the support services of Be Active (our County Sport Partnership) to prepare funding bids for funding that becomes available nationally, regionally or locally or to access support for strategic development from Sport England and or the Council.

Bedford Borough residents told us...

I want to invest in myself as I get older!

Walking is the most underrated activity

As a town with a river we must have swimming pools and lessons available for young people and ensure learning to swim is available for all

Access to sport, especially for children is vital to their physical and mental development and wellbeing. Connections made through sport promote inclusion

Support for prioritising investments where impact could be the greatest

Provide the facilities for all and then all the communities can use them and integrate

We live in a multi-cultural town, it is important that sports activities are available for everyone and people feel comfortable using them

Support, Funding and Guidance for Sport Clubs, Organisations and Individuals

The Council recognises that access to funding is critical to the survival, growth and long-term sustainability of local sports clubs, community organisations and individuals. These groups play a vital role in delivering inclusive opportunities for sport and physical activity, particularly for those in our communities who need it most.

A wide range of local and national providers offer expert support in preparing funding bids and accessing vital resources. Through this strategy and its cross-cutting themes, we aim to strengthen those efforts by providing a clear strategic direction that aligns with local priorities and embeds sport and physical activity within wider policy frameworks.

This coordinated approach will not only enhance the quality of funding applications but also ensure that investment is targeted where it can have the greatest impact on health, wellbeing and community cohesion. Sports clubs can access funding through a diverse range of sources, including grants from national and local organisations, corporate sponsorship, crowdfunding initiatives, and community-based fundraising.



Grants - National Funding Bodies

Sport England:

Offers a range of funding opportunities to support grassroots sport, physical activity and community wellbeing, including small grants and match funding for larger projects. The Code for Sports Governance sets out the levels of transparency, diversity and inclusion, accountability and integrity that are required from those organisations who seek – and are in receipt of – UK Government and National Lottery funding from Sport England and/or UK Sport.

The National Lottery - Community Fund:

Awards money raised by National Lottery players to fund great ideas that help communities to thrive.

National Governing Bodies (NGBs):

In addition to financial assistance, NGBs frequently provide guidance on governance, safeguarding, and long-term club development. By aligning with their sport's NGB, clubs not only benefit from funding opportunities but also gain access to expert advice and networks that can strengthen their operations and strategic planning.

Crowdfunding

Crowdfunding is a way of raising money from a large number of people, typically via the internet, each contributing a small amount to support a project, product, or cause.

Crowdfunder and Sport England have teamed up to make extra funding available to help get more people active, reduce the number of inactive people and tackle inequalities.

Corporate Sponsorship

Corporate sponsorship can provide sports clubs with vital funding, resources and exposure, helping them improve facilities, support athletes and grow their community engagement.

Local Guidance and Funding

CVS Bedfordshire (Community Voluntary Service):

Offers free workshops and one-to-one support to help organisations prepare grant applications, including essential governance and documentation preparation.

Active Partnership - Be Active:

Supports sports clubs by providing a toolkit that includes advice on financial planning, identifying local funding streams, and guidance on applying for them – ensuring clubs understand and can pursue appropriate funding. Their website includes a database of live funding opportunities and information from funding partners.

Support for Individuals

Sports Aid:

Helping young British sportsmen and women aspiring to be the country's next Olympic, Paralympic, Commonwealth and world champions. Sports Aid aims to support the right athletes, at the right time, with the right support. The financial challenge of trying to reach the top of their sport is one of their greatest barriers to success.

Our Theory of Change

Theory of Change can be a method used to describe projects that are intended to have a positive impact on society. The process involves outlining the thought processes behind a given project, using several factors. Bedford Borough Council has leisure as part of health and wellbeing as a high priority even though it is not a statutory obligation; it becomes a valuable asset for reducing inequalities.

Situation:

There is a need for a clear policy position through a long-term Sport and Leisure Strategy.

Aim:

To develop a Sport and Leisure Strategy, underpinned by the Sports Facilities Strategic Review and local population data.

Inputs:

These are the specific inputs and activities that bring about the outcomes...

- Access to resources.
- Collaboration with internal and external partners.
- Background data.
- Existing short, medium and long-term recommendations.
- Bedford Borough Council Policies and strategic plans.

Outputs:

Outputs are the activities undertaken that allow us to achieve the outcomes...

- An evidence-led understanding of facility need and mix for the future.
- A position statement that articulates the facility mix and need.
- A clear indication of any further evidence that is required.
- A clear outline of the further consultation processes and audiences required to inform the decision-making process.



Change Mechanism:

The actions and processes that will win hearts and minds, facilitate great decision making and introduce processes and mechanisms that deliver the Council's Corporate Plan outcomes...

- Community engagement work.
- Strong governance processes.
- Bedford Borough Council internal departments.
- Bedford Borough Council external partners.
- A mechanism for identifying and articulating need.

Outcomes:

The precondition for the impact... A change that you expect to observe as a result of your work...

- We will establish an affordable leisure estate that meets the needs of all residents and reduces health inequalities.
- We will deliver a strong leisure contract.
- We will see increased levels of customer satisfaction with leisure services and facilities.
- We will deliver increased physical activity participation rates.
- We will provide environmentally sustainable solutions.

Impact:

What are the impacts and how do they fit with departmental and governmental priorities...

- We will increase the number of quality-of-life years and life expectancy lived by the whole population of Bedford Borough and reduce the gaps that exist between the least and the most affluent.
- We will establish a Council owned leisure and sport facility stock that is positively contributing towards the carbon emission targets and aspirations of the Council.
- We will enhance levels of pride in place.
- We will increase prosperity, opportunity and retention within the sport and leisure sectors workforce.

Delivering the Strategy

A public consultation was completed which involved consulting on the draft version of the Sport and Leisure Strategy and the priorities identified. The consultation ran for eight weeks, receiving 1139 responses.

The aims and objectives of the draft strategy's five themes were supported by the respondents to the survey and they have been maintained as the strategy has been consolidated into three overarching themes for delivery due to their close relationships and the likely stakeholder overlap. This will enable a more sustainable and powerful implementation.

To achieve the goals outlined in the Sport and Leisure Strategy, we will establish a dedicated Strategic Implementation Group and Working Groups responsible for driving forward key actions across the three themes.

These groups will work collaboratively and in partnership with other implementation groups (for example those established to deliver the Health and Wellbeing Strategy) to ensure that each element of the strategy complements other existing work streams and is implemented effectively and sustainably.

This structure ensures clear accountability, continuous monitoring, and the ability to adapt our approach where necessary, ensuring we deliver a healthier, more active Borough for all.

- Your feedback has been included in the strategy and will be utilised in its implementation.
- The finalised Sport Facilities Strategic Review is informed by the Sport and Leisure Strategy.
- A number of new Working Groups will be established to achieve the objectives. These groups will include community and voluntary sector organisations, offering them a significant role in guiding the strategy's future direction.
- Detailed action plans will be produced which will be managed and owned by each Working Group.



Governance Structure

This proposed governance structure is designed to promote collaboration, accountability and effective delivery of the Sport and Leisure Strategy, ensuring all stakeholders are engaged and working towards common objectives. This sets out the recommended format and the functions of each layer.



Key Functions of Each Layer

- **Strategic Board:**
 - *Function: Scrutiny and Accountability*
 - *This layer is responsible for overseeing the entire strategy, ensuring that all actions align with the overarching goals and objectives. It holds the implementation group accountable for their performance and outcomes.*
- **Strategic Implementation Group:**
 - *Function: Strategic and Action Planning*
 - *This group focuses on developing actionable plans and strategies to achieve the goals set by the Strategic Board. It coordinates the efforts of the subgroups and ensures alignment with the overall vision.*
- **Working Groups:**
 - *Function: Delivery and Innovation*
 - *Each subgroup is dedicated to a specific theme, focusing on the practical delivery of initiatives and innovative solutions within their respective areas. They are responsible for executing the plans developed by the Strategic Implementation Group and reporting back on progress.*

We will ensure stakeholder representation at the appropriate layer in the structure from the Active Partnership, National Governing Bodies, Health and Wellbeing partners, the Education sector, community groups and voluntary sector organisations.

* The Playing Pitch Strategy working group will operate as a subgroup and form its own action plans from the Playing Pitch Strategy however it will feed into and align with the Sustainable Places and Stronger Sector group.

Active Partnership

Bedford Borough Council are committed to working closely with our Active Partnership “Be Active”, who have supported the development of this Strategy.

Be Active will continue to work closely with the Council to promote a whole system place-based approach that enables the right conditions to create longer term change. They will actively participate at the strategic board level providing independent oversight, working directly with the board to deliver guidance and maintain accountability, while supporting and collaborating with local groups and community partners as the Strategy is delivered.

Be Active is Bedfordshire’s Active Partnership. As one of 42 Active Partnerships across England, they collaborate with community organisations, governing bodies, coaches, clubs, and volunteers to support, develop, and promote physical activity.



Finding out more

If you would like further copies, a large-print copy or information about us and our services, please telephone or write to us at our address below.

Për Informacion

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Per Informazione

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