

Doncaster LDP Evaluation

September 2020 Process Learning Report

CFE Research



For more information about this report please contact
Sarah Leonardi:

CFE Research, Phoenix Yard, Upper Brown Street, Leicester,
LE1 5TE

0116 229 3300 Sarah.Leonardi@cfe.org.uk
www.cfe.org.uk

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AUTHORS

The authors of this report are Sarah Leonardi, Hayley Lamb, Rachael Archer and Alex Stutz.

The wider CFE research team who supported the data collection, analysis and case study write ups are: Dr Rebecca Steer, Chris Milner and Arifa Choudhoury.

01. INTRODUCTION

This section outlines the purpose of this report.

This report is submitted to Doncaster Council (the Council) by CFE Research. It summarises the process learning emerging from the implementation of the Local Delivery Pilot (LDP) throughout the period April to September 2020. It is designed to meet the process learning requirements of Sport England and deliver wider insights for the Council to inform delivery. The report particularly focuses on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on progress with activities and the realisation of system and population outcomes. It also considers key process learning not highlighted in previous reports. It is supported by two case studies which collectively exemplify themes emerging in this report. Our concluding comments distil the key learning emerging from the last six months and implications for the future delivery of the LDP within both the short and long-term future.

It is informed by reflective learning activity led by CFE with both the LDP and Get Doncaster Moving (GDM) Core Teams (including representatives of Sport England). The report involves analysis of process learning proformas completed individually for the period April to June 2020; these are disseminated by CFE and designed to encourage individuals to reflect on the progress, challenges and solutions encountered both overall and in relation to specific strands of activity in the intervening period. In total, 13 proformas were submitted. A series of bespoke individual and group interviews (nine in total) with identified sub-teams of up to two hours in duration were then undertaken during July, August and September to further explore the findings emerging from the proformas alongside over-arching key themes. This was supported by reflective activity instigated by the Council, including an After Action Review focussed on the GDM printed resources, in addition to attendance at facilitated Deep Dives in relation to the Active Communities Grant and the Children and Young People strands.

A note on terminology:

Throughout this report we refer to the LDP and GDM Core Teams. Over the last two years, the LDP have connected the actions of the GDM Strategy, GDM Programme and LDP to maximise resource and influence across the whole system to deliver their strategic vision. The nature of their core capacity has changed and the size has increased, whilst maintaining modest, to react to the scale and pace of our pilot. The LDP Core Team comprises four Sport England-funded roles (2 full-time and 2 part-time); these being the LDP Programme Manager and Data Analyst roles, with additional support from the Contracts & Finance Officer and Communications Partner roles. In addition, two Doncaster Council funded Business Change Managers continue to support the LDP outcomes working as part of the Core Team. The Well Doncaster Strategic Lead funded by Doncaster Council oversees the community engagement approach supported by four Well Doncaster Officers and form part of the GDM Core Team along with further capacity embedded both in the immediate Public Health Team and across Doncaster Council more broadly.

02. IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON THE DONCASTER LDP

This section summarises the key impacts of COVID-19 on the LDP.

Doncaster was still in recovery from the flooding in November 2019 when the COVID-19 pandemic engulfed the world. In mid-March the Council announced it was facing a business continuity critical incident and the emergency response began. The Director of Public Health described how the floods had helped prepare them to respond to this major event:

“But it did help prepare us – the fact we had faced such an event meant we had had recent experience of responding to an emergency on a large scale, using and testing the processes and protocols and simply having some of those personal relationships in place that can make all the difference.”

— Rupert Suckling¹

The Public Health Team played a critical role in this emergency response. The Team was restructured and three different cells were created to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic: crisis response, community response and horizon scanning. Most members of the LDP Core Team were redeployed into these cells which influenced the nature of their work. Whilst not working specifically on the LDP planned work, they were able to harness these opportunities to influence the pilot outcomes. A key feature of the LDP Core Team throughout this period has been an adaptable and agile approach that has involved responding to requirements as they have arisen to maintain momentum against the LDP objectives whilst also accommodating the presenting needs brought about by the pandemic (to be described later in this report). In May-June members of the LDP Core Team also provided the Public Health input into the Hatfield Moor Fire which was one of the largest moorland fires on a site of scientific interest further reducing capacity.

At the outset redeployed LDP Core Team members maintained a “*watching brief*” on the LDP and contributed to weekly meetings when priorities allowed. This had implications for the LDP and the various strands of work by reducing the capacity available to take actions forward. In recent months members of the LDP Core Team have slowly returned to working on the LDP strands – although this has been highly dependent on COVID-19 and the local response required. There have been fluctuations throughout the period with most still retaining some wider responsibilities related to pandemic. For example, the announcement of the St Ledger Horserace as a potential crowd pilot scheme for sporting events required a significant level of resource from the Business Change Manager (Leisure). The implications of the recent increase in the COVID-19 infection rate for both the LDP and GDM Core Teams is currently unknown and it is likely that they will continue to experience fluctuations in capacity with no advance warning. The continued implementation of the ‘sprint’ approach – an agile methodology that involves focussing exclusively on specified tasks or activities for a set time period whilst others are paused – will be critical in this context to help manage pace and progress. Although a feature of the LDP since the outset, it has become increasingly prominent as a tool within the last six months.

The LDP Programme Manager and the LDP Contracts and Procurement Officer were deployed in the horizon planning cell. This focused on planning for the future and thus enabled them to be retained at 100% to continue the work on the LDP whilst also supporting the local response to COVID-19. The LDP Programme Manager took on wider responsibilities within the LDP including leading the marketing and communications work to ensure this strand of work progressed in

¹ <https://local.gov.uk/winter-floods-helped-prepare-us-COVID-19-19-pandemic>

preparation for recovery. She also took on more of the decision making and strategic direction of the LDP with the support of Sport England. It follows that the role of the LDP Programme Manager has evolved throughout the last six months as she has assumed responsibility for varying functions in line with the Council's adaptable and agile approach to implementation. Within the Active Communities strand of work a similar scenario unfolded with different members of the Well Doncaster Team taking on more of the strategic direction and coordination of the work.

Throughout this period the GMD Core Team have adapted to new ways of working with homeworking becoming the new 'normal'. This has been a steep learning curve for everyone involved; however, there is general consensus that it is now working well and possibly better than expected. LDP weekly meetings and Deep Dives continued throughout COVID-19 to ensure there was a continued focus on the LDP, momentum maintained and quick decisions made.

Sport England via their Relationship Manager and Strategic Lead continued to provide support and mentoring to the LDP Core Team throughout COVID-19, especially to the Programme Manager. The Relationship Manager was relatively new to the LDP Team as COVID-19 began but was able to play an important and valued hands-on operational role supporting the Programme Manager. This was important given other members of the team had reduced capacity, especially whilst the Council was submitting its Phase 4 Investment Plan and Stage 5 Capacity and Evaluation Funding Request.

"[The Relationship Manager] has been invaluable in helping us go through all the processes on our side and her side to get that sorted, so it definitely feels like part of the team rather than as an outsider looking in."

Those sub-contracted to work on elements of the LDP have also been flexible and adaptable which has been important in both enabling work to continue and meeting the objectives of the LDP.

Progress of the LDP

There is widespread agreement that COVID-19 has significantly impeded the work of the LDP over the last six months. It has delayed or altered the work of existing strands alongside postponing the start of the new elements of the LDP. During COVID-19 the Council submitted their Phase 4 Investment proposal to Sport England to secure further funding for the LDP over 2020-2025. This was identified as a strategic priority for the opportunity it presented to assist the recovery phase of COVID-19 for the benefit of residents by securing the resource required to support Active Travel, Parks and Active Communities. It represents a significant milestone for the LDP both overall and within the last six months in particular. The proposal was submitted on time but understandably the decision making process was delayed due to Sport England's emergency funding processes to support the sector. This led to some internal challenges as timescales did not align with the Council's decision making processes which further postponed the start of the work. Aspects of this have now progressed with structures put in place to deliver the newer elements of the LDP.

Whilst the LDP has not progressed to the extent that was forecast in March, the LDP Core Team recognise that progress has still been made overall towards outcomes and impacts with COVID-19 in some instances actually creating opportunities to expedite the pace of change. The LDP Core Team recognise that they cannot do everything, but by mobilising their skills, experience, insight, resources and relationships they can advance the objectives of the LDP by harnessing the opportunities presented to influence the system and make change happen. In this context, the roles in which the LDP Core Team have been deployed allowed them to look for the opportunities to trial new things to achieve ambitions that have been tricky or appear long-term. Responsiveness is at the heart of this approach and a willingness to accept that the future has unknowns.

"It is probably more the case that expected 'outputs' have not been delivered, however, the type of output has changed to what we think will be a positive effect on LDP"

objectives and outcomes within the context of COVID-19... I think in some cases, we are further ahead on our broader objectives – due to strengthened relationships, positive disruptions that we have been able to make, and the wider work that we have been able to influence.”

— LDP Core Team member

The impact of COVID-19 on the various LDP strands of work are summarised by strand:

<p>System change</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Our April 2020 process learning report highlighted the importance of engaging new stakeholders within the physical activity system, ensuring there is a clear ‘ask’ of partners in order to facilitate distributed leadership. Limited work has been undertaken so far to address this due to the capacity issues identified although it remains a priority moving forwards. This will be underpinned by the work of the marketing campaign which has been delayed (see next chapter). – Opportunities for system change through informal conversations with wider colleagues have been limited due to virtual working. This has been exacerbated by the capacity issues discussed. The importance of “gentle nudging” alongside succinct clear emails has been identified as important to overcome this and facilitate the ongoing development of relationships critical to the LDP’s work. – Whilst COVID-19 has hindered the LDP’s ability to make a conscious choice to stimulate system change, it has also brought different opportunities for progress against this objective. COVID-19 has encouraged stakeholders to work together for the shared purpose of supporting residents through the emergency. Different teams/stakeholders embraced a reciprocal relationship approach whereby they supported others to achieve objectives and then draw in assistance to help resolve their own challenges. This is a new way of working for some but a fundamental principle of the LDP which they hope will continue to provide a supportive, collaborative way of working in the future. – The partnership with Doncaster Culture and Leisure Trust is an example of one which has been significantly strengthened throughout the crisis. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>“...the way they reacted and what they did and how they worked with us to do that, even though it was very pressured, has strengthened their position as a partner. We’re now talking to them as a partner, rather than just somebody who was out there.”</i> – Other partners proactively approached the LDP Team for support in encouraging physical activity among children, young people and families highlighting the importance of the relationships they have previously established in driving forward action to address physical inactivity.
<p>Active Communities</p> <p>Well Doncaster Officers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The work of Well Doncaster Officers (WDOs) has been significantly affected by COVID-19. A central feature of the role is being physically embedded within the community in which they work to develop relationships with partners and residents alike. A round of Appreciative Inquiry was planned for spring 2020 to support residents to make changes in their areas. This was delayed, commencing in September 2020 through a modified approach. This utilised limited face-to-face socially distanced activity supported by an online methodology. – Whilst WDOs have been unable to progress their planned work they remain a tangible asset and valued resource through the opportunities they present to support communities, even from a distance. Knowing that it has not always been possible to discuss physical activity at this point in time is acceptable in the knowledge that community connection (tackling loneliness and vulnerability) and support to communities is critical and of value longer-term, and will ultimately lead to the development of relationships and trust in the area. – WDOs have provided key emergency relief across their communities working closely with community groups to ensure that residents have been able to access the required support. This has included engaging with local food banks, distribution of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and assistance with funding applications for emergency resources. – WDOs have raised their profile with local partners through the work they have undertaken to respond proactively to meet the needs of residents affected by COVID-19. As with system change at the borough level, it is thought this will support their work at the local level in the future. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>“...they’ve proven themselves by working really hard and tirelessly with their community organisations and with their partners to support them, and I think that’s got the attention and</i>



helped to build their respect and for people to see their values...The organisations know they can come and talk to them about things and ask for help."

- Providing emergency relief created a different dynamic and provided a platform on which to establish an initial relationship – one which felt much easier than ‘forcing a relationship’. Once new relationships were established it was easier to maintain these by offering practical support.

"[I had to come up with] unnecessary reasons just to make sure that I kept in conversation with them before. But in actual fact something that I've learnt is that if they need the help they'll come"

"The fact that we've been to support them at a time of need and high demand. It's been a bit of an uncertain time. I think being able to be a constant through that and show the groups that we're working... we will be there to support you during this time as well has been really important"

- Partnerships established with larger organisations at the outset have remained and continue to be an effective way in which WDOs engage with communities and residents throughout COVID-19. These partnerships, in both the statutory and community sectors, are perceived to have greater capacity to engage notwithstanding challenges relating to the furloughing of staff and lack of face-to-face contact.
- WDOs have continued to face challenges engaging with the hardest to reach groups, particularly older people – an issue that under current restrictions is difficult to address. These groups are often considered to lack access to, or understanding of, social media and virtual communication. Prior to COVID-19 WDOs were able to engage with some of these groups face-to-face; this has been severely curtailed and relationships have suffered as a result.

Active Communities Grant

- COVID-19 has influenced the number of applications received and has stalled the work that was planned through some Grants which had already been awarded. However, it has encouraged the LDP Team to reflect on the Active Communities Grant process enabling them to improve it in order to increase the number of grants that will be awarded in the future (see accompanying case study). This provides an exemplar of how the LDP Core Team have learned by doing. They have embraced an iterative approach and understand that not everything will be a success.

Community Connectors

- Work on Community Connectors has also paused due to the voluntary sector organisations involved in the work lacking capacity.
- More recently the Community Connector role has been adapted to reflect the current context and allow the work to continue. There is a feeling that previously it had been difficult to drive forward this work; however, due to strengthened relationships as a result of COVID-19, the voluntary organisations are fully engaged and advancing the proposal themselves.

Locality model

- COVID-19 was the catalyst for the locality model being rolled out sooner than planned by bringing all the partners together around the table with a common purpose to respond to a crisis.
- Engagement through the localities model has enabled the Well Doncaster Team to engage a broader range of partners and has raised the profile of their work leading to increased buy-in. This has contributed to the expansion of the network and system change objectives of the LDP.
- The challenge is to maintain their engagement moving forward when the imperative to work collaboratively in response to the COVID-19 pandemic is removed.

PAGs/Support Groups

- Participant Advisory Groups (PAGs) had been established in two localities, and in both instances activity has been suspended since lock down.
- Peer support group meetings were moved to an online method of delivery. Local support groups were merged to form one online group for each long-term condition and recorded allowing residents to view the session at a time convenient to them. However, overall uptake was low. There was a perception that using MS Teams as the method of delivery led to a drop in participation although participation levels remained low following the switch to Zoom. Residents value the opportunities for social interaction that face-to-face meetings offer, with interaction between participants via Zoom being more limited. Further, sessions are seen to be more ‘to the participants’ rather than ‘with the participants’ which could be limiting the uptake.

<p>Marketing campaign</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – This strand of work had already been impeded by the floods in Doncaster, with COVID-19 delaying this further. This was not only due to the capacity of the LDP Team but the appropriateness of the message ‘nobody should be stopped’ at that current time. – The campaign should have launched with both the local community and physical activity network during the GDM Annual Summit in summer 2020. The LDP Team have utilised this time to test the concepts which are central to the campaign with residents in Doncaster. – COVID-19 has necessitated change to the design of the campaign with the creative messaging having to be reviewed. The imagery and physical activity solutions needed to be compliant with social distancing guidelines and avoid recommendations such as ‘joining a club’. The team have encouraged the contractor to consider how the campaign should be amended to make it suitable whilst also not focusing the messaging on COVID-19 ensuring it is future proofed.
<p>Major events</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The major events strand of work has been suspended due to large scale events not taking place. – They are utilising the time to develop a good practice guide to share with practitioners.
<p>Children and Young People</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Progress with the Children and Young People (CYP) strand of work was delayed due to the challenges of remote working and the implications of COVID-19 on capacity for developmental change across the CYP system. – This time has allowed the LDP team to re-consider the CYP system leadership approach to ensure a more sustainable model of delivery rather than contracting aspects of the work out. – The LDP Core Team is considering how it can best engage with and influence the existing governance groups responsible for delivering outcomes for CYP. This could involve the creation of a new group with representation from both the LDP Core Team and the CYP governance groups to enable coordinated strategic planning. The ways in which the views of parents and CYP can be incorporated into this strand of activity are also being reviewed.
<p>Active Travel</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Active travel is the one strand of work which has been expedited in response to COVID-19 as action is implemented to increase this in order to limit the spread of the virus. Members of the LDP Core Team have been involved in implementing active travel plans including drawing down investment from Sheffield City Region to accelerate changes to infrastructure and programmes. – Active travel has been promoted nationally by the Government to reduce reliance upon public transport. This has provided an impetus and helped to promote active travel faster than the Council envisaged. Alongside this Government schemes, such as cycle repair and emergency funding, have provided additional leverage to the Sport England investment. – The national importance placed on active travel has resulted in leaders and elected members providing backing to proposals put forward in areas quicker and easier. It has influenced the Council's own transport team to move the agenda forward e.g. the Bennetthorpe cycle track (cycle lane from the racecourse to Bennetthorpe) which had been in the pipeline for a while and subsequently completed in a few weeks; town centre pedestrian zones; and pedestrianisation outside the racecourse.
<p>Parks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Work on the park strand has centred upon putting the foundations in place in preparation for the recruitment of the Parks Programme Manager. – At a national level utilising green space has increased in importance. Local leaders and elected members have recognised the importance of the parks and open spaces in Doncaster as COVID-19 safe spaces to take part in physical activity. This has made it easier for the LDP Core Team to drive through decisions in the Council and attract investment which will support the future work. <p><i>"Parks and green spaces have suddenly raised their profile exponentially because of COVID-19... [It is also] because our Chief Executive is really into the environment and green infrastructure."</i></p>

Test and Learn funding

- The LDP Core Team had been working with Clinical Commissioning Groups to identify developments that could be supported through their 'Test and Learn' funding. This was already proving to be a challenging process with COVID-19 exacerbating this further.
- The 'Test and Learn' funding was utilised to encourage physical activity during COVID-19 amongst target audiences. Two physical activity resources were developed to support those who are digitally excluded and/or shielding to undertake physical activity whilst at home (please see accompanying case study for full details).

Importance of the LDP Core Team

The role of key individuals in the LDP Core Team has been critical to the continued implementation of the LDP throughout COVID-19. There is a consensus that the pace of work has been maintained and, in some cases, increased as a result of the opportunities that this has brought. This is attributed to four main factors:

- The LDP Core Team worked an increased number of hours to ensure priorities were met. This is not a long-term strategy but highlights the commitment of the team to the LDP.
- As highlighted in previous reports many of the LDP Core Team have worked for, or with, the Council for many years. This stability has meant they have highly developed and trusted relationships and connections with key stakeholders which they are able to draw upon and influence, and well established in the system.

"Everything is about relationships at the end of the day. If [team members] had only been working for the authority for, say, the last twelve, 24 months, we would have struggled to do what we've done."

- Two of the LDP Core Team members are Business Change Managers within the Public Health Team. Key to the continued success of the LDP (and the wider response to COVID-19 in Doncaster) is their level of experience and ability and willingness to make difficult decisions when more senior colleagues have not had the capacity to do so. These individuals have been given 'permission' to prioritise addressing physical inactivity by testing new ways of working. The LDP Programme Manager has stepped up and taken on new responsibilities to maintain momentum, whilst the Director of Public Health has been given 'agency' to act at different levels as part of a more reaching role and remit to make change happen:

"Looking from the outside in, you [Business Change Manager] set those systems up, you told people and you control them in a very good way, that you made sure they did it...[LDP Programme Manager] stepped up to the mark and she took on the whole management of the LDP and just took that under her wing and actually worked with those partners and actually, very cleverly, where we've been asking them to change for a long time, they actually realised they need our support to change... I just went into my normal mode...you have to make a decision with all the knowledge you have... that will always be my philosophy when you throw me in the deep end, is use the evidence, ask the experts around you and then, make the call. And, that's what a lot of people are not willing to do."

The LDP Core Team are held in the highest esteem; they are trusted, valued and have a reputation for getting the job done. This has further increased the profile of the Public Health Team more broadly alongside the Director of Public Health who supports the work they do. They are viewed as a collaborative team who can also support others to achieve their objectives.

Whilst members of the LDP Core Team have not worked solely on the LDP in recent months, they have continued to embrace and promote the ethos of the LDP within their role, and actively sought

to advance its objectives by widening its reach through the work they undertook. Physical activity was one of the Council's five ways to wellbeing during the COVID-19 outbreak² and thus reinforced the strategic priority afforded to this in their work. In July the Mayor released the Restart, Recovery and Renewal Plan for Doncaster to highlight how collaboratively with stakeholders they will support families and businesses to recover from COVID-19. This made specific reference to physical activity: Indicator 12 (part of the Recovery Phase of the Plan) is "*Continue to encourage more people to be physically active.*" The LDP Core Team were involved in reviewing the plans and proactively engaged the Heads of Service within the Performance Improvement Change Team who were responsible for its development.

Whilst physical activity 'may' have made its way into the plan further to the emphasis currently afforded to this nationally, there is general consensus that it remains a local strategic priority because of the positive impact of the pilot to date. There will be working groups to ensure objectives are met and the LDP Core Team plan to reference it when working with other departments in the Council or stakeholders to highlight its importance and gain buy-in.

National promotion of physical activity

The national promotion of physical activity presents an opportunity for the LDP by increasing the priority afforded to it by both stakeholders and residents. The LDP team recognise the opportunities this may bring and want to use this national impetus to promote it in Doncaster.

In Doncaster a high proportion of residents decreased their physical activity levels during lockdown (see impact of COVID-19 on residents in Doncaster report). This is reflective of what is happening nationally and signals the continued impact of COVID-19 in terms of physical activity behaviours and attitudes. WDOs do not yet have a clear picture of how levels of physical activity have changed within their specific localities. However, there is a growing sense that face-to-face physical activity previously supported through programmes has largely halted with limited evidence of groups changing delivery methods to sustain activity levels (for example, through a virtual or online methods).

The good weather has enabled some residents to take advantage of outside spaces to engage in physical activity. The impact of a potential second lockdown or tightening of restrictions over the winter could have a much greater impact by removing opportunities for outdoor activity.

"The weather's played its part. It's played its part a lot longer than it should have done, it played its part in the spring and it's played its part now. But, it's going to break at some point and then, that's when the hard work really starts, because everybody is going to be stuck inside, everybody is going to be demotivated, all those sorts of things. I keep telling everybody, if you think it's been hard so far, it's going to get harder."

² <https://www.doncaster.gov.uk/services/health-wellbeing/ideas-to-stay-well-5-ways-to-wellbeing>

03. KEY LEARNING ON SYSTEM CHANGE

This section highlights key learning identified throughout the last six months in relation to system change.

Engaging new stakeholders

As highlighted members of the LDP Core Team have not worked solely on the LDP in recent months. Change to the physical activity system is currently highly dependent on the LDP Core Team driving the agenda which naturally limits the work which can be achieved due to capacity and reach. It was always envisaged that the marketing campaign would play a role in engaging partners through the GDM Annual Summit by encouraging those who are already part of the system to work collaboratively; however, its potential to engage those who are not already part of the system is widely acknowledged to be more limited. Work is now underway to ensure there is a clear plan to engage new stakeholders – particularly those previously identified as significantly under-represented – through a mapping exercise led by the communications contractor. This will underpin work to be undertaken to engage stakeholders through targeted activity.

Communicating the ambitions of the LDP to lever engagement continues to present a challenge to the GDM Core Team. Systems change is a difficult concept to explain in a manner accessible to a variety of audiences. The LDP are currently working through this, reflecting on what to share and how to share it with stakeholders as part of the mapping exercise:

"The idea of systems change and the idea of that devolution of power and control is fantastic, but not always easy for people to understand and be on the receiving end of if they haven't been in the process to understand the theories... there's a bit of a challenge there, from a communication's perspective, of selling it in the right way... Lots has been done to date, that's unquestionable, but to distil that into how people use and receive and are understanding projects and information, it's quite difficult to explain."

Further, the GDM Core Team are considering how the research undertaken through the evaluation can also support this strand of work and thus inform the ongoing implementation of the LDP:

"...it's not just a case of building evidence for the purpose of evaluation, we're actually using those conversations to influence from the starting point."

Driving change from within

Members of the LDP Core Team and the Director of Public Health are regularly referred to as championing physical activity within the Council. They regularly identify and work with departments to look for opportunities to share information and try and influence change. The LDP Core Team regularly join meetings to talk about their work and drive physical activity onto the agenda:

"I could be working on a completely different project to do with young people's mental health, and then I'm sent agendas and minutes from other things that might support my work in a completely different area. I'll see [Jodie and Clare], they've popped up on the agenda, or they've managed to assign actions around the area of encouraging physical activity in young people. So it makes me smile when I see how they are embedding themselves within the organisation and forcing change from within."

Distributed leadership

Distributed leadership is critical to ensure a sustainable approach to system change. Currently, it is being driven by the LDP Core Team creating the risk that the momentum of the LDP would slow and significant experience be lost should they leave their positions. The LDP Core Team are making a deliberate effort to distribute leadership within the LDP and the departments they work with to ensure a sustainable approach by continually challenging themselves to modify the way they work.

"...around distributing leadership across the [LDP] Core Team, across our wider family of teams within public health and the council and then, also, into community and across team Doncaster as well. So, while that has taken time, it feels like we're making a conscious effort to challenge ourselves on doing that."

This change in approach was reiterated by other members of the LDP Team who described how the weekly meetings have evolved and now generate a series of actions across a range of individuals. This is widely acknowledged to represent the first steps towards distributed leadership.

The next priority as they work towards system change is distributing leadership across stakeholders in the system. Due to COVID-19 there have been few opportunities to start the work they planned with the GDM Advisory Board. This will involve working collaboratively with members to champion changes in the physical activity system and thus drive forward the LDP's objectives.

"...at the Advisory Board, we asked them to think about any leadership facilitation that they think as a board and board members that they need. And, again, we're thinking about not just the [LDP] Core Team doing all of the influencing, collaboration, driving forward the LDP, we'd hope that the board members might identify some support to do some of that to then go forward."

Alignment with GDM

Over the last year, work to promote the LDP as a separate activity or entity has been deprioritised and incorporated into GDM to avoid confusion. Initially both had separate Advisory Boards but with similar membership and aims. However, the demarcation led to stakeholders interpreting them differently. Over the last few months this change has been noticed:

"I think people are a bit more relaxed about 'Well it doesn't really matter whether it's LDP or GDM now because we're trying to do the same thing.'"

This change has also simplified how the LDP communicate their work with stakeholders and removed the requirement to explain the difference. The Phase 4 Investment Plan has supported this by bringing the activities of the GDM and LDP closer together. The weekly LDP meetings are now weekly GDM meetings with a slightly broader scope in order to seek to further break down the barriers and ensure information and resources are shared. Whilst this is already impacting positively on the exchange of information, more work may need to be done to break down the separation as not all members of the GDM are part of the weekly meetings:

"Some people in the Get Doncaster Moving Team aren't in the LDP weekly meetings, and that's possibly an issue. If we're looking at trying to share learning, share findings, share resources, I think that's maybe something we need to consider going forward."

Work to link the LDP strands with sports clubs (which are seen as a more discrete part of GDM) has been identified as an area for future development through the opportunities presented for collaboration with the Well Doncaster/Active Communities work:

"We've got an opportunity to integrate clubs as a community asset...can we do some work to really kind of keep connecting and reconnecting the Well Doncaster approach to the work with clubs and the wider connectivity to the voluntary sector?"

Changing a local system in a national context

In the previous process learning report we highlighted how siloed government funding streams create challenges to achieving system change at the local level. This has further been identified in relation to the national sport sector. The Council are working to secure funding through various teams within Sport England (one of which is the LDP Team); however, due to the size of the organisation these conversations are sometimes duplicated with some funding operating in a more 'traditional' way which requires extensive paperwork for even small budget requests.

Working with National Governing Bodies (NGBs) is also challenging. There is a perception that they want to 'land products' in Doncaster with little tailoring or flexibility to the specificities of the local context which is contrary to the ethos of the LDP. The LDP Core Team have pushed back and actively seeking to nurture and encourage this new way of working which so far has resulted in limited success. This is an area that Sport England may be able to support or influence as part of their role as funder.

04. KEY LEARNING ON VARIOUS STRANDS OF THE LDP

This section highlights key learning identified throughout the last six months in relation to the various strands of the LDP.

Active Communities

The role of WDOs

So far the opportunities for WDOs to influence the physical activity behaviour of residents has been limited during COVID-19 with the exception of managing or promoting the Active Communities Grant. WDOs do, however, recognise the role they play in encouraging residents to be active.

“Definitely our role diversified a bit more and there's definitely been times in the initial COVID-19 response where we have just been working with community groups on public health guidance. I do think there's been a period where physical activity has not been the main part of our role when we've been, at times, working with the community but I do think it's always there and tangible”

This is similarly reflected amongst those leading the Well Doncaster Team who perceive supporting residents to be active as a key priority. They strongly recognise the contribution they make to the realisation of the LDP's objectives and articulate how their own priorities are aligned:

“[Our priorities are] getting people out and about, getting people into employment, and supporting people to have the best opportunities in life and reducing health inequalities”

It is acknowledged by senior colleagues that WDOs may not always talk about physical activity explicitly but actively promote it on an ongoing basis as an integral part of their work by encouraging residents to 'get out' more by 'walking to the shops' or 'walking to the park'. Whilst WDOs clearly understand the role they play in promoting physical activity, it is less clear whether they understand how their specific actions contribute to and align with the objectives of the LDP. They often refer to specific activities such as the Active Communities Grant or Community Explorers when referring to the LDP rather than the wider objectives, and articulate it as an 'extra' part of their role. It is evident that they do not always recognise how the work that they are undertaking to promote physical activity contributes to the achievement of strategic objectives.

“For me personally I haven't had much to do with the LDP side and the physical activity side... I think that is probably one of the main things I've still not got to grips with because I've not had the need to yet.”

That said, the importance of this is unclear as WDOs are fulfilling their function despite this. Those leading the Well Doncaster Team clearly understand the links and are able to steer WDOs in a manner that ensures they meet the objectives of both the LDP and Well Doncaster:

“I think at [the WDOs'] core and when they're delivering, it's all the same and we're all linked up and we all see how it all fits together. I don't think the officers would say they're GDM officers or LDP officers or Well Doncaster officers but they are delivering on what they're saying. I think it's alright for them not to realise because that means it's all seamlessly together.”

Supporting each other

Lock down restrictions have had a positive impact on the way WDOs work together. WDOs have met more regularly (typically twice a week) in order to allow them to more effectively meet the needs of their communities using video conference facilities. This has been welcomed as it has led

to an increased sense of connectedness. Despite sharing an office, they described having infrequent contact with each other previously due to the ways in which they operated. This increased frequency of meetings has allowed timelier peer support with actions taken quicker.

"If there's anything I'm finding is coming up in my area, then I can say, [WDO name] is this happening to you? And then we can have that conversation rather than waiting two weeks and then it's already passed or escalated"

Locality model

The locality model has placed WDOs within a wider multidisciplinary team to help promote the value of the asset based approach with partners and encourage community solutions. This forms part of their strategy to encourage 'bottom up' systems change by empowering residents to identify responses to presenting issues rather than simply signposting them to large organisations or Council services. WDOs are able to clearly articulate this approach and understand the value.

"It could be, somebody who comes in and feels a bit lonely and instead of going from, 'oh, you need this,' we come in with an angle, say, 'well, wouldn't it be best if they joined this group or if they belong to this community group?"

However, the wider geographical catchment area of each locality means that WDOs are operating in new areas and trying to establish new relationships remotely. This has been difficult with COVID-19 as identifying and developing new relationships virtually is challenging. So far most relationships that have been established are with organisations that have required support through COVID-19.

The locality model is currently in its infancy and the extent to which WDOs perceive that they are able to contribute is mixed. The Local Solutions Group meeting structure is designed to ensure a coordinated response to challenges through one single meeting; however, WDOs have felt that their chance to contribute so far has been limited. This is considered to be due to the current COVID-19 focus which they feel does not require their active involvement. The Well Doncaster Team also highlight that in areas where the WDOs are less well known and trust has not yet been built they are less able to contribute which has a detrimental impact on their confidence.

"And that impacts on them and their confidence too. You have one bad experience it's scary to open your mouth again, you don't want to be battling all the time, but also you know what's right."

However, there is a sense that as requests for emergency support decrease, WDOs will have a greater role in the groups as their local knowledge of community demands and assets is key.

"If someone comes in and is struggling with their finances. Then, obviously, I can step in and say, 'Well, did you know that [community group] are running a course on helping you with your finances,' or, 'they've got an advice bureau there every week,' so, something like that. So, it's about us coming in with the knowledge of our local community and the support that is within their communities."

05. KEY LEARNING ON THE OVERARCHING LDP

This section highlights key learning identified throughout the last six months in relation to the overall LDP.

Strand approach to the implementation of the LDP

The programme of work under the LDP is split into strands of work. This represents a practical way of articulating the different aspects of the LDP and engaging individuals from across the Council in the delivery of strands aligned to their specific areas of expertise. However, there is a recognition from the LDP Core Team that this approach can lead to silo working with individuals not always recognising how their work contributes to other strands or the wider LDP objectives more broadly. In the early days of the LDP this was less problematic as strands were 'getting off the ground'; however, as implementation progresses and the number of opportunities for collaboration increase it is critical that these synergies are harnessed to maximise the potential impact of the work. For example, WDOs are tasked with supporting other strands, such as sitting on the park test groups, thereby linking up the Active Communities and Future Parks strands. So far the LDP Programme Manager has been responsible for 'joining the dots' and trying to ensure silo working does not occur but this takes a significant amount of project management time. It is hoped that the appointment of a dedicated Project Manager will help support this objective.

As referred to in Chapter 3 weekly meetings and Deep Dives have been restructured with all individuals who are leading strands of work invited to attend. This is designed to not only encourage distributed leadership but also facilitate more joined up working within the LDP. This will provide strand leads with the opportunity to independently identify synergy in their work to facilitate collaboration with others, and highlight where they need support without the LDP Programme Manager needing to intervene. It is also a mechanism for everyone to keep up to date on the various strands, especially those who do not have a full time role on the LDP.

"[The weekly team meetings] will improve the efficiency of those [individual] conversations... and give more onus to the leads of those themes to provide that connectivity. And, then we're also looking at how the role of project manager can come in and support that and do that connectivity, so that those strands don't develop in isolation of each other. "

Other individuals are invited to weekly meetings when required to make the best use of everyone's time. To support this further the LDP is developing small working groups where certain topics and areas can be discussed in more detail with a limited number of individuals. Leads will then feed the salient points into the weekly meetings. The first of these to be set up was the fortnightly 'Evaluation Progress Meeting'; this has ensured a regular slot where activity is discussed and decisions made quickly.

There is recognition that the major events and sport strand of work in particular so far has been relatively isolated from the rest of the LDP; however, the LDP team are actively applying the learning from this in order to integrate it better moving forward. Much of this relates to the purpose of this strand and role that it is intended to play in the achievement of the LDP's objectives. Unlike the other strands, it does not directly aim to increase physical activity levels amongst residents but rather provide a mechanism through which to engage the community and get them interested in sport. The Council will then harness this momentum to engage them on the topic of physical activity moving forward.

"What it has proved it does, it builds social interaction, it builds personal capital and social capital in those communities, it buys us a lot of credibility to do other work in those communities that we haven't before. And, on a single level, it makes people smile, which is something that a lot of things don't do. "

This is an important piece of work which is influencing not just the local system but also the national system through the sharing of best practice. The LDP is developing a practitioners' handbook for use by councils and wider stakeholders. As a result of this UK Sport are now incorporating social capital/impact as one of its four scoring criteria for investment bids.

Key members

A critical aspect of the LDP which is repeatedly reported as driving change is the consistency of the LDP Core Team, their personalities and work ethic, and established networks both in the Council and sector more broadly. The Business Change Managers and the LDP Programme Manager are repeatedly and consistently referred to by all as vital to ensuring the overall pilot successfully progresses alongside the wider team who all successfully lead their strands of work:

"...a strength for me is the hard work and the amount of work that the three of them in particular, but the whole [LDP] Core Team kick out in the course of a day, never mind a week, is astronomical. And I think its graft and it's not always high profile and it's not always sexy, but I think it's going on in the background and it's the engine room of the pilot."

The LDP Core Team have also successfully linked the LDP investment with other investment opportunities to maximise funding for the Council. This will bring about additional benefits and expand their offer for residents; for example, Sheffield City Region, Well Doncaster and Community Wealth Builder:

"Their nous at joining the dots to other funding regimes, programmes, and showing to me well this is here, this is there, well don't you want to bring them together? Let's work more effectively. I think that's another sort of strength that they exhibit and Vanessa's role, if you think about the community wealth builder, the funding from Sheffield city region."

06. CONCLUDING COMMENTS

This section distils the learning from both this process learning report and the case studies.

Role afforded to physical activity

Physical activity has been a strategic priority of the Council for a significant period and provided the foundation for the LDP. The COVID-19 pandemic has provided an opportunity to reaffirm and consolidate the importance of this to their work. Physical activity was one of the five ways to wellbeing during the COVID-19 outbreak and included in the Mayor's Restart, Recovery and Renewal Plan. The work undertaken by the LDP and GDM Core Teams to raise the profile of physical activity and influence the system has played a vital role in this and supported by the priority afforded to this at the national level in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. It is important that the LDP continues to sustain this momentum and leverage the importance afforded to physical activity at the policy level over the coming months to expand the physical activity system and encourage stakeholders to recognise the role that it plays in the achievement of population outcomes (that is, not just physical health but wellbeing and personal development more broadly).

The work of the LDP Core Team

Earlier in the pilot the LDP Core Team demonstrated their ability to adapt effectively to moderating factors such as the floods of November 2019. In this last six months they have built on this experience in order to respond to the challenges presented by COVID-19. The LDP Core Team have embraced an agile approach – supported by their 'sprint' methodology – which have enabled them to adapt and evolve their work in response to emerging issues. Whilst the LDP Core Team have not worked on the activities in the way forecast in March 2020, they have skilfully harnessed the opportunities presented through the wider responsibilities imposed in response to COVID-19 to seek to expand the physical activity system and trial new ways of working that have the potential to achieve ambitions that are long-term in nature. In spite of the pressures of COVID-19, the LDP Core Team have utilised this approach to submit its Phase 4 Investment Plan and Stage 5 Capacity and Evaluation Funding Request as these are vital to the recovery plan and wellbeing of residents. The Core Team have shown how they can effectively employ a 'test and learn' approach, for example, in the development of the physical activity printed publications. Previous process learning has centred upon the pace and scale of change and extent to which the LDP is currently harnessing the potential to contribute to the evidence-base about what works through their 'test and learn' funding. This demonstrates that it is possible to expedite the pace of change in order to increase the volume of interventions that can be trialled as part of the LDP. The LDP Core Team recognise that not everything will be a success – you learn from doing and iterate your approach along the way. It is important that the LDP Core Team takes confidence from the success and learning which has been achieved in the last six months and applies it moving forward.

Throughout the crisis, the LDP Core Team has maintained its monthly Deep Dives and weekly meetings virtually to ensure their practice of learning continues. The sharing of information and lessons in these meetings has led to the increased knowledge and experience of the wider team with more members now able to take actions forward. It will important to maintain the strength of their internal relationships as the necessity for home working continues through the winter.

Systems change

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the LDP Core Team anticipated building on the learning from the previous process learning report to expand its reach across the physical activity network by engaging under-represented groups. The communication strand in particular represented one mechanism through which this would be achieved in addition to potential areas for consideration which included the development of a CRM system to identify and capture key relations. Despite the challenging context of COVID-19, the LDP Core Team has managed to progress its influence and reach through alternative mechanisms and indirect means. The redeployment of members of the LDP Core Team to respond to the crisis has meant they have influenced the Council's COVID-19 response, community work and recovery planning as well as raising the profile of the LDP.

The opportunity to respond to the crisis with printed publications to promote physical activity amongst specific groups has seen both the distributed leadership to a partner organisation and the growth in the number of partners championing physical activity through their distribution of them. As COVID-19 continues to loom large over the pilot's activities the LDP Core Team will need to retain its agile approach to identify further opportunities to achieve their outcomes.

Active Communities

The role of the WDOs

At the time of the last process learning report the WDOs were relatively new in post and they had ambitions to increase the number and strength of the relationships they had started to develop in the communities they serve. In the last six months they have strengthened relationships with anchor organisations in their areas in order to meet the communities' needs in the face of COVID-19. Whilst the pandemic has reduced the opportunities for WDOs to meet with community groups and residents face-to-face (curtailing opportunities to develop new relationships and promote physical activity interventions), they have adapted to the limitations imposed on them and moved some support groups online. In this context, WDOs have similarly demonstrated the agile approach that has characterised the response of both the LDP and GDM Core Teams throughout the past six months. As the threat of national and local lockdowns persist over winter, it will be important for WDOs to consider how they can effectively promote the LDP's objectives longer-term if face-to-face interaction with community groups and residents is not possible.

Locality model

The locality model has provided the Well Doncaster Officers with an opportunity to increase their profile with the other teams in the Council and community organisations who sit on the multidisciplinary teams, and influence their approaches to community solutions. This mechanism aims to empower residents to identify responses to the issues they present therefore reflecting many of the population change outcomes the LDP seeks to achieve. Over the coming months it is anticipated that the WDOs will develop new relationships through this model to help advance the LDP's objectives and progress the achievement of its outcomes.

Active Communities Grants

The Active Communities Grants had only recently launched when the last process learning report was submitted. In the last six months the grants have been an important mechanism to both demonstrate how the LDP is empowering communities to develop their own solutions to address physical inactivity and for WDOs to engage community groups. The Well Doncaster Team demonstrated great agility in adapting the Active Communities Grants process in response to the limitations imposed by COVID-19 and the necessity for remote working and reviewing of the applications. In doing so they also effectively sped up the process. The next steps for the WDOs

are to attract interest in the grants from residents beyond the anchor organisations and encourage more innovative ideas particularly in relation to enabling physical activity within the restrictive context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The LDP Core Team are also seeking to harness learning from the micro-grants for major sporting events to further streamline the process and increase community engagement in it through the application of previous lessons.

Communications

The marketing and communications campaign for residents had been due to launch in the last six months. The campaign strategy aims to challenge people's perceptions about what physical activity is and encourage them to take small steps to get out and be more active. Its delay demonstrates the significant impact that COVID-19 has had on this strand of activity. However, the LDP Core Team has used this as an opportunity to review its messaging and ensure that it will be more relevant to the new 'normal' which is likely to persist for some time to come. The revised campaign will be tailored to reflect the limitations that guidance such as local lockdowns and social distancing places on physical activity initiatives and promote activities appropriate for the context.