

Consultation on the draft London Sport Strategy

ADPH London response, October 2018

About this response

This response is from the Association of Directors of Public Health for London, which represents Directors of Public Health (DsPH) in London's 33 local authorities, and supports them to improve and protect the health of their local populations.

ADPH London brings together DsPH and their teams to work together to address issues which can either only be successfully tackled on a pan-London basis and/or which enhance the ability of boroughs to meet their responsibilities locally, for example through delivering efficiencies, sharing of best practice, reducing duplication, and improving coordination of related work.

Further information on ADPH London, including current priorities, is available online here: <http://adph.org.uk/networks/london/>

This response represents the professional collective response of Directors of Public Health in London local government. At a local level, individual boroughs will submit their own responses to the consultation.

ADPH London welcomes the opportunity to comment on the draft London Sport Strategy. Our response does not attempt to provide a comprehensive public health response, but rather pulls together our thoughts on how the strategy can most effectively:

- Improve public health outcomes in London
- Assist councils in developing high value approaches to support their residents' health and wellbeing
- Reduce demand on health and social care services

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Overview

ADPH London welcomes the opportunities to promote physical activity and to address isolation in London. The idea of London being the sports capital of the world is positive, and provides the potential for London to benefit economically in terms of growth, regeneration, and employment, as well as creating a positive buzz across London, capturing the hearts and imaginations of generations of Londoners.

Given ADPH London's ethos of improving and protecting the health of our local populations, from a public health perspective we have some concerns which we call for the Mayor to take into consideration:

- **Sponsorship.** We are concerned with the potential impact that sponsorship could have on the progress made to date following the Mayor's Food Strategy and the initiation of the Mayor's Obesity taskforce, in addressing advertisement of high fat, sugar and salt food and drinks. This is also relevant when considering the potential for increased spectator food and drink consumption associated with some sporting events.
- **Environment.** ADPH London calls for consideration of the impact of encouraging vast number of visitors at any given time, for example in regards to managing additional litter, noise pollution and the impact on air quality. ADPH London calls for the recommendations and intentions outlined in the Mayor's Environment Strategy to be reflected in his Sport Strategy.
- **Violence.** The risks associated with large crowds, the potential for increased alcohol consumption associated with some sporting events needs to be considered, especially in light of knife crime incidents which have increased, and are involving younger children in London. Moreover, there is evidence of increased domestic violence associated with certain sports, particularly football (Brimicombe and Café, 2012i). Whilst recognising that sporting events can be hugely beneficial, we call upon the Mayor to also consider how these negative consequences can be moderated.
- **Reducing inactivity.** More generally, there is a question of whether those who have the most to gain from becoming more active (those currently inactive) will be reached by the proposals within the strategy. We also note a lack of reference to the huge body of evidence that explores barriers to increased participation in physical activity.
- **Sustainability and legacy.** Finally, there is also the question of how to ensure the sustainability and legacy of major sporting events.

We have addressed the questions outlined in the consultation survey on the following pages.

Question 1: Do you agree with the overall vision and the three themes of this draft sport strategy? If not, why not? Is anything missing?

Generally, ADPH is in support of the overall vision of this strategy.

Sporting Capital of the world:

- The vision of London being the sporting capital of the world is positive, and a vision that we support, providing there is some consideration of the wider impacts on the environment and other determinants of health. For example how would excess visitors travelling across London impact air quality? How would excess litter and waste be managed? How would any increase in noise pollution at anti-social hours, as people vacate sporting events, be managed? We recommend that messaging from recent Mayoral Strategies such as the Environment Strategy which considers air quality, waste and noise, is fed into the Sport Strategy.
- Large events alone are unlikely to increase participation without targeted interventions across the city which create a buzz and provide ownership for communities. We recommend the Mayor consider this in implementing the strategy.
- With any large scale sporting event with high promise of opportunities for improvement, both locally and regionally, there is the question of legacy. From previous sporting events mentioned in the strategy, what evidence is there of the lasting impacts? Has this affected physical activity levels locally in the host region? There appears to be little evidence to support this. Based on previous events, what will be done differently to achieve this ambition?

Increasing participation:

- ADPH London are in full support for this vision. It is however, not clear how this is going to be achieved via the strategy. ADPH London are concerned that efforts to increase participation will be not be focused on the population groups or communities that have the most to gain. For example, increasing facilities and opportunities in areas where demand outstrips facilities as suggested in the strategy, indicates that those already engaged in activity will benefit. Although this is positive, it means that those not currently inspired to engage will continue to be inactive, which could further widen the inequality gap. This contradicts the aims of the Mayor's Health Inequalities Strategy (HIS). At a time of austerity, it is important that limited resources are channelled into the most impactful areas.
- Reference to previous large scale action to increase physical activity such as the *This Girl Can*, campaign, has not been made. Nor does the strategy give sufficient reference to the body of evidence which has explored barriers to participation across population groups. This is concerning, as innovation comes from understanding previous success and failures.
- ADPH London recommends that consideration is given to explore 'badging' a number of more local events e.g. Hackney Half Marathon, Our Parks, Park Run, under a wider London banner. The place-based sports approach discussed in this strategy might provide an opportunity to support this.

- It would be helpful if the strategy made reference to guidelines on physical activity for older people e.g. maintaining muscle mass, balance and ultimately avoiding fragility.

ADPH London calls on the Mayor to ensure a thorough review of the evidence and previous innovative practice to inform a clear vision of how best to address inactivity.

Social integration:

- ADPH London are in full support of proposals to improve social integration. We welcome the potential to replicate previous celebrations of sporting success, for example when the nation got behind great athletes such as Sir Mo Farah. However it should also be remembered that whilst sport brings many communities together, there is also some evidence of increased incidence of domestic violence, most commonly against women, during some major sporting events. Increased alcohol consumption is likely to be a contributing factor. This is most associated with football games in the UK and American Football in the US. This has led to charities such as the [National Centre for Domestic Violence](#) running campaigns during the recent World Cup. ADPH London would ask that this emerging evidence is considered when planning the types of sporting events to be hosted in London.
- In order for the strategy to have a genuine impact on social integration, effort needs to be made to ensure that all sectors of the community are considered in all aspects, particularly in respect to large events or London wide promotions, which run the risk of further isolating communities if seen as elitist.

Question 2a: Does chapter 2 (London: socially integrated through sport) identify the main issues that might impact on the role of sport to support social integration? If not, what is missing?

- Generally yes ADPH London is pleased that sport is being recognised as a means of increasing social integration. It is also welcome that non-competitive sport such as dance is being recognised, which will help the strategy to have an impact across genders. Our concern lies more around how actions outlined in the strategy to encourage integration will be evaluated, as this has yet to be communicated. As with any intervention, best practice is to be clear on the indicators of success, how to measure these from the off-set and to establish a clear baseline.
- ADPH London agrees with the funding of initiatives such as Sport Unites, which combine sport with another activity such as music, food, cultural events, or activism. Combining sport with other activities that people enjoy - and are already taking part in - will be a catalyst for people with different interests to come together when they might not have done so otherwise. It would be interesting to see whether there be the opportunity to link with other public health priorities and action at LA level already underway. For example, some local places are applying models to address food poverty by combining sport with food provision during school holidays and at weekends, targeted at children eligible for free schools meals. The strategy could also consider how to harness the opportunities presented via social prescribing which many boroughs are adopting, particularly benefiting older residents, vulnerable adults, and people with low level mental health issues.

Question 2b: How should the Mayor best work with partners to help remove barriers and help improve social integration through sport in London?

There are four key things that would be useful:

- Providing the support, recognition and celebration of these partners and providers in current and future work
- Complementing this with sharing best practice from elsewhere in the UK and globally, as this strategy suggests to inspire and motivate others to improve.
- Combining this with access to world leading behaviour change advice and approaches to tackling health inequalities. This is readily available from experts in London, and can inform future evidence of effectiveness.
- Sharing and supporting robust evaluation of value and to inform continued investment.

Question 3a: What barriers to participation in sport should the Mayor focus on in order to increase participation in sport and so improve Londoners' physical and mental health?

There are two interlinking issues here: firstly, focusing on increasing participation in sport (as oppose to increasing physical activity more broadly) and secondly the suggestion that by tackling a handful of barriers this alone will result in increased participation for those with the most to benefit.

Sport verses physical activity:

- Whilst the positive impact of sports participation cannot be over-stated, promoting other types of physical activity, including walking and cycling, within communities must be prioritised to truly tackle health inequalities. Sport viewed in isolation can create barriers to participation, in particular amongst communities where activity levels are low including BAME groups, females and adults over 65 years. For many, sport has a negative connotation, which in turn can drive health inequalities.

Barriers:

- Some key barriers include: self-consciousness about fitness and weight; self-perception of 'sporting' ability; understanding, consideration and acceptance of social and cultural norms e.g. religious dress; cost; time; location and accessibility; perception of activity; and an individual's current health – both physical and mental.
- Given participation in physical activity carries significant mental and physical health benefits, it should be widely accessible. **We ask the Mayor, as we did in our response to the consultation on his Health Inequalities Strategy, to raise awareness of the benefits of physical activity and commit to promoting physical activity in local communities.**

Question 3b: How can the Mayor help to increase sports participation to improve the physical and mental health of all Londoners, but in particular, for those Londoners who are inactive, or who have poor access to sports activities/facilities?

- Building on from our response to question 3a, physical activity needs to be built into everyday life, as referenced by the Mayor's *Healthy Streets* agenda. Aspirational case studies of cities like Copenhagen could be included within the strategy. Other examples include Cambridge, where more than a quarter of people cycle or walk to work and, Hackney, where 13% cycle and a further 11% walk to work (Census 2011).
- The strategy would benefit from a consistent narrative around the promotion of active travel, linked with air quality.
- ADPH London welcomes the investment in the workforce as proposed in the strategy. It would be hugely beneficial to ensure that the workforce is representative of London's diverse population, and to ensure positive role models from underrepresented groups such as older Londoners.
- ADPH London would urge the Mayor to ensure the strategy considers a full understanding of its target audience, and to work in collaboration with them to ensure innovation to increased participation is relevant, timely and not 'done to' local residents.
- As mentioned earlier, a thorough understanding of the successes, and shortfalls, of previous approaches is important for going forward.

Question 4: Does chapter 4 identify the main issues for creating a thriving sport sector in London? If not, what is missing?

It is worth highlighting ADPH London's role in supporting a thriving sports sector to date. As stated in our response to the consultation on the Health Inequalities Strategy, we will continue to work with London Sport to drive forward physical activity participation across the capital. The established Physical Activity for Health Network provides a system to coordinate work at a London level and thereby support the implementation of the Mayor's ambitions.

Question 5: Do you think these are the right criteria for the Mayor's support of major sports events in London? If not, what should the criteria be?

Broadly speaking ADPH London is in support of the strategy. We would however, as mentioned above, welcome the opportunity to go broader than sport and focus on physical activity. We would also ask that the Mayor considers the possible public health risks associated with becoming the world's sporting capital and how these risks can be managed. This is especially in light of the recent pledges of commitment the Mayor has already made in his Health Inequalities Strategy, Food Strategy and Environmental Strategy.

Question 6: What sort of major sports events do you think should be held in London in future, and why?

ADPH London welcomes any major sporting event that promotes gender equality and inclusion of participants across the full range of physical abilities.

Sports which have the potential to increase segregation of communities groups or put individuals at greater risk should be viewed with caution. For example, proposals for a Monaco-style motor racing event in London, would be less welcomed given the potential to increase poor air quality.

Question 7: If you are a funder of activities, what scope is there to work with you:
i. to align policies;
ii. to align funding pots;
iii. in other areas (please specify).

ADPH London applauds the intention of making applications for funding and evaluation of impact as straightforward as possible. It is imperative that the GLA work with organisations collaboratively to get evaluation right. ADPH London appreciates that there is a fine balance to be met between simplicity and rigorous and robust evaluation.

With regards to contracts awarded at a local level, ADPH London would welcome guidance from the GLA as to what should be in these contracts to ensure high quality service delivery, with maximum impact at local authority level. Moreover, these should complement existing efforts locally to achieve health outcomes through contractual levers. For example the local tobacco declaration and the local government declaration on sugar reduction.

ADPH London would also ask that any partners or sponsors the GLA liaises with under this strategy, have similar views and values to those of the GLA and ADPH London on health and wellbeing. At the very least, such partnerships should not contradict efforts to promote health and wellbeing or distract from the main aim of this strategy - increasing participation and integration through sport.

Previously Coca Cola have sponsored sporting events in local parks across London, and fast food chains such as McDonalds have also been key sponsors at large scale sports events, including the 2012 Olympics. These would be counterproductive partnerships, potentially undermining policy objectives ADPH London shares with the Mayor, which focus on supporting positive behaviour change and increasing physical activity.

Question 8: If you are a potential recipient of funding, what practical issues do you consider important in helping you with delivery?

Not applicable for ADPH London.

Question 9: Is there anything that you would like to add about our proposed involvement in sport as set out in this document? Please also include where you think there are issues that ought to be included but are missing.

Yes, these are bullet pointed below:

- Greater consideration of **young children (early years), families, and older people**, is required, especially with regard to social integration and increased participation. ADPH London would call for the GLA to take a life course approach to ensure all population groups have equal opportunity to benefit from physical activity and thus drive down health inequalities.
- Another population group missing from this strategy are **shift workers** who may not have access to traditional sporting or leisure facilities. Given London's growing night time economy and the huge number of people employed in the health workforce undertaking shift work, ADPH London like to see greater consideration of enabling safe and timely access to physical activity/ sport outside of traditional times.
- Lastly, there should be greater consideration of the **sustainability** of the strategy. Investment with funding attached is very welcome, however a longer term plan post 2021 is needed, particularly around how organisations who are successful in being awarded contracts will be supported once this funding ceases. We would also expect to see plans for integrating with other services, for example linking with housing and planning teams on social integration. We would also be keen for the Mayor to capture the learning and legacy of this strategy to support the evidence base.

ⁱ Brimicombe and Café, (2012) Beware, win or lose: Domestic Violence and the world cup [case study article] accessed 17.09.18 (website) <https://rss.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1111/j.1740-9713.2012.00606.x>