

How trusts' sport and leisure activities improve communities' wellbeing

The arrival of a new year, and indeed a new decade, will undoubtedly spark thoughts of healthy living and ambition to improve their wellbeing for many people across the country. Each new year sees a wealth of resolutions to lead a healthier life. Yet, for some people within our communities, there are seemingly insurmountable barriers to even thinking of health improvement or taking part in a new activity. Health inequalities, stemming from a range of factors, impact people from every background across the country.

Our members, charitable leisure and culture trusts, continually strive to offer a safe and welcoming space, with a range of activities and professional advice on hand. As community anchors, regardless of their location or size, member trusts share a common goal of being accessible to everyone and providing opportunities to encourage everyone to be active and involved, whatever their circumstances.

In Sussex, Wave Leisure operates the fabulous Get Set Club, which encourages children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), and their families, to take part in activities. There is a huge range of activities available, delivered in small group settings including sensory circuits, circus skills and Lego and computer clubs.

Teamwork, communication and effort are at the heart of all Get Set Club sessions, with participants encouraged to show at least one of these core values each time they take part. Every young person has different goals and a mixture of methods work for different participants, whether that's a reward chart, themed activities or other positive reinforcements.

However, it's not just the young people who have support from the team, but also their parents, who enjoy the support and friendship from other parents. This supportive and welcoming environment has led to multiple benefits for the children and young people who take part and is going from strength to strength.

This is just one example of an innovative and inclusive approach from a leisure trust to support and improve health and wellbeing for young people who may be inactive, encouraging them to be active and, above all, to enjoy activities.



Another example of a trust addressing significant health inequalities in its local area is East Renfrewshire Culture and Leisure (ERCL), which has sought to work closely with partners to address inequalities in one of its most disadvantaged communities – Dunterlie in Barrhead. The projects were part of a wider initiative called DIY Dunterlie, where a range of partners delivered programmes, services and support to Dunterlie residents, all with health and wellbeing in mind.

By partnering with East Renfrewshire Council Education Facilities Management, ERCL developed and delivered a series of cooking clubs for Dunterlie families. The sessions involved preparing and cooking a range of low cost, healthy meals, with shopping lists provided for every meal. The biggest successes were family cooking sessions where parents, carers, and grandparents were invited to cook with their children, supported by school catering staff. The cooking clubs reached residents of all ages, both in school and in the Dunterlie community, working with 21 families, with 8 adults achieving basic food hygiene certificated training.

Health inequalities affecting armed forces veterans were also identified in East Renfrewshire, with ERCL launching a Health for Heroes programme, which aims to improve veterans' physical and mental health and wellbeing by connecting them to organisations that can support them in a range of areas. ERCL has the facilities and expertise to support veterans and their families to engage in social, cultural and physical activities, with the hope of supporting their health, confidence and community networking. Local veterans can access free gym and fitness memberships, including a free plus 1, enabling them to bring someone with them to provide support and confidence to participate. ERCL is also working towards providing a monthly Health for Heroes breakfast club for members and the wider local veterans community, enabling them to come together for breakfast, chat, participate in some group exercise and activity classes and get advice and support from local agencies such as the Money Advice Team.

These are a handful of stories and examples from leisure trusts, and further stories can be seen right across the UK. Members' services and activities help to reduce social isolation and loneliness in communities, reduce childhood obesity, improve mental health and wellbeing, and support promoting healthier eating. We are incredibly proud of the work of all our members, and their contribution to supporting and improving the nation's health through a wide and varied range of targeted initiatives. It is crucial that policy makers and strategic partners are aware of the key role that leisure and culture trusts can play within local communities and that we all work together to ensure the trust's longevity and sustainability.

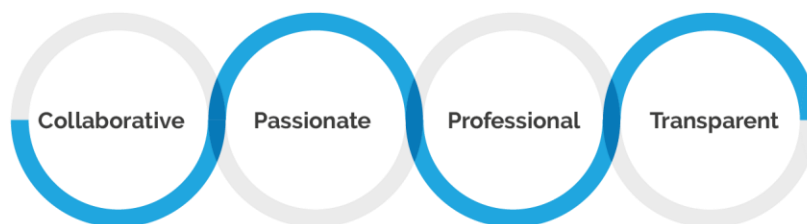
About us

Community Leisure UK is the members' association that specialises in representing charities and social enterprises delivering public leisure and culture services across England, Scotland and Wales.


We:

- provide a nationwide platform enabling members to meet peers and access strategic partners to find best practice solutions to common problems and recommendations to tackle future industry developments; and
- use the power of the collective membership to represent, reach, influence and promote the charitable trust model benefits at a national level, to inform policy and increase understanding of the trust model.

Our Values



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