



Articulating Social Value for Leisure Trusts in England



A Research Report produced by Powering Partnerships for Community Leisure UK and Sport England in cooperation with 4global.



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Introduction

In the first phase of this research we identified activities and metrics that could be used by Leisure Trusts (LTs) in England to communicate the social value (SV) that they add to their local communities. We also identified some of the barriers to the development of credible information and its effective use.

In this second phase we report on work with three specific LTs to identify how specific information can be generated and used in practice, with particular reference to the data available through the widely used DataHub reporting system.

Background

The results of the Phase 1 research can be summarised as:

- There is currently little overt demand for measuring social value (MSV) from Local Authorities (LAs).
- SV is not always effectively delivered by LTs and many, especially small, LTs have only a limited capacity to assemble data and process these data into useful information for LAs.
- Much of the social value is delivered through improvements in wellbeing but these can be difficult to communicate credibly.
- Some health and welfare statistics have limited applicability to LAs, as many of the potential savings come from other budgets.
- LAs want information on local 'place' issues and a demonstration of the benefits that go beyond the c.5% of the population who are members of public leisure facilities.
- There is demand for a simple tool ideally based on 'cold hard' numbers along with human stories and case studies, especially to engage councillors.
- Any output should be simple and engaging to read even/especially for non-specialists and flexible enough to be useful to the great variety of LAs, LTs and stakeholders.
- Future tools should seek to complement DataHub rather than replace it.

Objectives

To understand what potentially useful information is available that could be added to supplement DataHub's reports and how it can be easily sourced and captured within the leisure trusts.

To understand what of this information has resonance with the local audiences.

To develop and test an easily replicable format e.g. newsletter, presentation, social media for sharing the information most effectively.

Method

Community Leisure UK in conjunction with Sport England identified three LTs, and within them three specific leisure centre (LC) facilities, with which to develop this project. All three were interested in demonstrating social value, although at differing stages of development of their social value offer and communication (see below).

The leisure centres were visited by Powering Partnerships and key personnel interviewed. Follow-on data and information was provided by each LT.

Powering Partnerships undertook extensive Internet research into positive and negative media comment about each LT, including analysis of social and other media to collect quantitative and qualitative evidence of their impact. Much of this information had been generated by the LTs for the media in the first instance although some had been lost from the corporate 'memory'.

Powering Partnerships and 4Global worked together to identify which data from the DataHub could be used and how, to provide useful evidence of social value delivery.



Sample data were generated for the three LTs and fed back to them for their comment on their level of usefulness and accuracy, and how they could best be delivered.

The final part of the activity, namely testing the information with the LAs could not be undertaken due to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and its effect on the sector.

The Leisure Trusts

Kensington Leisure Centre operated by GLL – this is a new facility in North Kensington a relatively deprived part of the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea and is located next to the Grenfell Tower block of flats that suffered a catastrophic fire in 2017. GLL is the largest provider of leisure facilities in the UK and has a strong commitment to social value for which it relies in part on DataHub information. Kensington LC has been used to pioneer new services and to showcase social value in action in the past.

Orford Jubilee Neighbourhood Hub operated by LiveWire – this is one of the leading examples of the ‘hub’ concept whereby a range of services are brought together under one roof, in this case the leisure facilities, food and beverage, pharmacy, doctors’ surgeries and a library. The hub also has plenty of space for a major tenant – previously the local university and possibly soon as offices for the Police. It is located on the north side of Warrington, a fast expanding town and serves a variety of communities. The Orford Hub has considerably more members than the other two examples – which have similar levels of membership. LiveWire has been very active on delivering social value for some years and as an innovator has developed the dementia-friendly hub at Great Sankey which takes the concept further.

Hereford Leisure Centre operated by Halo – this is set in a city of about 60,000 people with a relatively ageing population. Both Halo and the leisure centre are relatively new to social value but see it as a way to strengthen ties with the local authority and with the local community.

Message Dissemination and Delivery

The three LTs have very different levels of engagement from almost daily visits from the Local Authority liaison officer, to monthly reporting, to very limited contact beyond ensuring that the LT is performing at its contracted levels.

Much of the reporting is already very detailed – with one LT saying that they had to provide evidence against 41 key performance indicators (KPIs) on a regular basis. There was no desire in these LTs to add to the number of KPIs against which they already report.

Feedback from the LA can be very limited and only focused on KPIs that have been missed on the dashboard. In none of the three cases did there seem to be a close collaboration with the LA in setting social value objectives or trying to align the work of the LTs with LA priorities.

In all cases there was a feeling that the LA, and still less the LA’s elected members, had a full understanding or appreciation of the activities that were undertaken by the LT and added social value.

We discussed three types of message delivery with the LTs:

- powerpoint slides – these were felt to be useful in framing discussions but not for continuing reporting
- standard long copy report – this was felt to be useful for occasional one-off reporting
- digital portal – this was felt to be the most useful way of delivering a regular or frequent message on social value generation



Key metrics overview

The following metrics were identified and investigated as being key to demonstrating SV (arising from the Phase 1 research and interactions with the three LTs).

To note: Whilst the DataHub provides a powerful tool for estimating an equivalent financial value for the social value of activity undertaken inside the LCs, it has limitations in identifying and quantifying the wider social value delivered by LTs:

- It is reliant on data capture by the LTs, which may be variable in extent and accuracy
- Beyond the socio-demographics of members and the number of visits to the facility the detail can be limited, and there can be significant differences in classification between LTs
- The data for less core activities, such as GP referrals, is of variable quality; this may be due to limited data capture by the LTs
- There is little data on activity that takes place in the community outside the LCs - a key area of interest for many LAs and a demonstration that the LT has reach beyond the 5-10% of public leisure centre users
- It does not capture local economic impacts, which is important for some LAs
- As noted in Phase 1 the great majority of the social value generated is in 'subjective wellbeing' – this is a concept that is difficult to describe

The level of activity and information available varied considerably between the three LCs, as did the level and quality of data capture. This was especially so for the community activities undertaken both within the LCs and outside, and the work with GP referrals.

Key DataHub-based Information

Values in (brackets) indicate the range from the three LCs' data, which are included to give an indication of scale rather than the full national range of values.

Total Social Value (Range £2.3million - £4.6 million)

The total social value for a LC provides an overall impression of the scale of activity. None of the site managers was aware of the value that applied to their LC or specifically how it could be influenced.

Average Social Value per person (Range £400 - £460)

This is calculated by dividing the total social value by the total number of member and non-member users. This can provide a direct comparison between sites without the distortions of scale, although manager awareness and understanding was limited.

Total concessions (Range 8% -14%)

The percentage of members at concessionary rates gives a clear indication of the reach of the LT beyond the young and the fit and is simple to understand. It seems likely to be linked to the level of deprivation in the neighbourhood as well as the activity of the LT. This is easily calculated by 4Global and would appear to have the potential to work well as one indicator of local social value as it is simple for the operator to influence.

Concessions by ward (1.3% – 4.9%)

The importance of 'place' figured strongly in the Phase 1 research, especially the impact of the LT on specific wards which was of interest to local councillors, and on the wards of specific concern to the wider LA as, for example, in their strategic plan. The data can be generated along with a density map by 4Global. For this exercise we took the number of concessions by ward and divided



this by the total ward population to identify the top five wards. This can be used to show the LT targeting the localities of greatest interest or concern to the LA, and to sharpen the focus over time to build a closer working relationship with council members.

Deprivation targeting (4.9% to 43.7%)

Whilst wards give some indication of deprivation, postcode gives additional granularity and allows much more accurate assessment of the LT delivery against, for example, the 20% most deprived people, again this can be automatically generated by 4Global. The results are likely to be extremely variable between LTs as the 20% is a UK number rather than a local one and so areas of high general deprivation are likely to have generally higher numbers than those with generally low areas of deprivation. This makes it difficult to compare between areas with varying demographics but it can be a powerful metric to use locally.

Female participation (50% -61%)

The proportion of female members (17-59yo) in the three cases studied was 50% or greater, which chimes well with the objective of the This Girl Can campaign and the wider drive to increase female physical activity. This is a simple measure for 4Global to generate and highlights the contribution of LTs to improving general physical activity.

Over 65s participation (5.9% - 10.7%)

Another key group is the over 65-year olds. Again the data are simple to produce and address a group that tends to lower levels of physical activity. Interestingly this age-group also tends to be much heavier users of the facilities than younger members - ranging from 9.1% to 21.1% of visits. Either statistic could be used to illustrate the point and the wider financial value of the activity for the LAs in reducing demand on their health and care services.

GP referrals (data unclear)

Two of the LTs were active in GP referrals but neither thought that the DataHub number represented the totality of their efforts in the area. This may be due to insufficient or inaccurate data capture. A key benefit of GP referrals was expressed as dealing with the GP 'frequent fliers' who visit surgeries multiple times but for whom the GP cannot find a 'cure', as the underlying issue may be social rather than medical. Freeing up GPs' time and resources has real impact on life satisfaction for residents more widely and so is of interest to LAs. The average number of visits per referral (27-32) may be a useful metric on the effectiveness or 'stickiness' of the programmes and a rough indicator of the likely saved GP surgery time. This can be automatically generated through the DataHub, which is integrated with the Refer-All GP referral software, but some work is required to match the number of referrals reported.



Key Non-DataHub Information

Foregone Value of Concessions (Range £150,000 - £500,000)

This is the total value notionally foregone by the LT as a result of providing concessions, and is derived by taking the number of concession beneficiaries and multiplying this by the difference between the concession price and the non-concession price. This concept was readily understood by all and considered to be quite powerful although also recognised as a likely overstatement of the actual situation - as some concessionaries would not otherwise take out a full price membership. This highlights a key area that LTs deliver in comparison to commercial operators and provides a 'hard' financial number.

For 4Global to calculate this automatically requires the data to be captured at unit level. If this can be done consistently this could be a very useful metric. One of the Trusts extended the concept by also capturing other 'subsidised activities' for example non-member concessionary visits, free swimming and 'Kids for a Quid'.

Other socially valuable activities

Whilst the above can all be demonstrated statistically there are activities for which the numbers are too small or inconsistent to be useful at a national level although the activities have real social value. These are probably best communicated anecdotally, and add interest and human involvement to any formal report as well as providing 'good news' stories to share both verbally and through news and social media. These seem to be captured and used by communications people locally but are then forgotten. It should be relatively simple to collate these into periodic reports.

Local economy

Local employment numbers in individual LCs tend to be low and in conurbations, especially London, are likely to draw from multiple LAs. This will often also apply for the value of local purchases. That said we know that a 'buy local' policy can work well in communications. One of the LCs hosted a showcase event for local firms which gave businesses an opportunity to demonstrate their services, but also attracted new people into the LC. This type of activity could usefully be communicated to LAs.

Chronic disease

Programmes that address chronic disease and risk factors for non-communicable diseases were run in all three centres. These centred on weight loss, smoking cessation and diagnostic sessions, and were often run in conjunction with the LA and/or external partners. Whilst participation in any one programme per LC was usually numbered in tens rather than hundreds, some of the achievements in for example weight loss or smoking cessation and the personal stories that go with them were really inspiring and help bring reporting to life.

Supporting the Elderly

Other programmes were focused more specifically on the elderly such as chair-based exercise classes, and falls prevention and recovery. Again some inspiring personal stories can be identified to enrich reporting to the LA.

Community Development

From the Phase 1 research it was clear that LAs had a real interest in what LTs did outside their facilities and beyond their natural users - 'the young and the fit'. This ranges from youth-based groups run with for example tennis, cricket or football partners to events such as parkrun that have been set up with the local LTs and in two cases were run from their premises and with volunteers from the LT. Here the partnership angle helps to demonstrate the cooperative and outward-facing nature of the LTs and their broad reach. Whilst records are kept of participation at many of these



events they tend to be based on separate systems, some even paper or Excel spreadsheet-based.. It is quite feasible to integrate them technically and to produce them as part of a wider report.

The Importance of the Hub

LiveWire are highly committed to the concept of the hub in which a variety of services are housed under one roof. In the Orford Jubilee Neighbourhood Hub which we visited this included the leisure centre, GP surgeries, a pharmacy and a library as well as space for letting. The concept has been developed further at Great Sankey. This integration of services was seen to be an important way to enhance social value which could be lost in full or in part if the leisure centre and/or library were to be hived off to private operators. We developed a small survey which LiveWire executed by interviewing a random selection of 218 visitors to the Hub.

Key findings were that the leisure services were the main draw for visitors (77%), far ahead of the library at 8%; but that once visitors were in the centre they were quite likely to use the other services e.g. 21% had used the library services in the last year.

It was clear that the concept was very popular - 94% of visitors said that it was 'useful' or 'very useful' to have the services co-located under one roof.

This survey illustrated a very significant social value being delivered by grouping services together and could help to support their case for keeping the services integrated. This is an example of social value that is beyond the remit of this project but with further development could have significant resonance with LA commissioners.



Conclusions

At the moment engagement on social value between LAs and LTs is often minimal or at a quite superficial level. Some of the information identified can be used to engage at a deeper level to make the LTs' work more relevant to the LAs wider objectives and strategic plans. Achieving this alignment of interest is key to getting the LAs' support.

The requirements of the various stakeholders and the existing reporting formats means that the delivery of the data is likely to take several different forms, depending on the relationships of the LT with the LA and other stakeholders. They could be delivered as:

- presentations to engage LA staff or members in discussion on how the activities can be aligned
- traditional long-copy reports – although these are likely to have limited readership, be infrequent and require the use of significant resources to write and edit
- standalone short-copy social value reports or newsletters
- statistics and examples that can be lifted for use to supplement other reporting information – for example they could be integrated with 'corporate social responsibility' reporting such as carbon emissions
- a web portal that would allow stakeholders to investigate particular areas of their interest

see Appendix for examples.

With appropriate data capture by the LTs the DataHub can currently generate the following potentially useful statistical insights automatically for all LTs. Those with likely greatest saliency are marked in **bold**:

- Total Social Value (£)
- **Average Social Value per Person (£)**
- **Total concessions (%)**
- **Concessions by ward (%) and map)**
- **Deprivation targeting (%) and map)**
- Female participation (%)
- Over 65s participation (%)
- GP referrals (number)

Additional information can be provided by information collation at the LC/LT, some of which may be automated by the DataHub, but the level and type of content is likely to vary considerably between LCs and LTs making these elements significantly more difficult to systematise.

- **Foregone Value of Concessions (£)**
- **Local economy (£ and/or qualitative)**
- Chronic disease (number/qualitative)
- Supporting the Elderly (number/qualitative)
- **Community Development (number/qualitative)**

The impact of COVID-19

The final testing phase of this project coincided with the onset of self-isolation and social distancing measures to combat the onset of the coronavirus. This has subsequently led to the suspension of operation of leisure centres in the UK – as a result this report has been completed without this final activity.

At the time of writing it seems clear that the pandemic is likely to have a major negative effect on LA finances and depress both LC attendance and revenues. The more at-risk groups of the elderly and/or those with underlying health conditions may be those most put off attending and there may be a reduction in the availability and uptake of concessionary rates. As LAs seek to balance their



budgets there may well also be reduced interest in, and money for, outreach activities and the effect on social value is likely to be strongly negative.

There is an urgent need for LTs to liaise with their LA partners to agree how they will work together in this new reality and for many this process is well underway. If social value is to be considered it must be part of this process as soon as possible.

Two of the focus areas picked out in [The UK Government's COVID-19 recovery strategy](#) beyond the immediate health measures are addressing worsening deprivation and delivering economic recovery. Providing timely support that relates social value to these areas would seem to be prudent, rather than trying to build a more universal approach later.

These map quite well onto the highlighted measures that are likely to have some cut-through and which can be relatively easily delivered via the DataHub (see above), specifically:

- **Average Social Value per Person (£)**
- **Total concessions (%)**
- **Concessions by ward (% and map)**
- **Deprivation targeting (% and map)**

The most pressing need is to present, rather than report on, this information to the LAs in a coherent and effective manner. As part of this work we developed PowerPoint presentations for each of the three trusts, setting out their data and showing how this could form the basis for discussions around social value – with a more comprehensive second phase activity of wider reporting being developed as a second stage. The presentations are not included in this report for reasons of confidentiality.

Recommendations

Immediate activity

4Global produce the data and accompanying ward maps where the data permit for all relevant LTs.

Provide the simple explanation of the four measures above showing why they are an important focus for LTs and especially LAs post-COVID, for use by the LTs with their LAs.

LTs develop simple presentations (possibly based on the prototypes used in this study) for their own use.

Longer term activity

Community Leisure UK create a team of a few LTs to agree a common data capture/reporting protocol for key statistics e.g. on GP referrals, and protocols to improve record keeping by Marketing/Communications and other staff in LTs.

4Global consider automating key metrics so that they can be added easily to the many varieties of LT reporting.

LTs feedback their experience with presenting SV and other data to LAs post-COVID to identify good practice, and formulate this into a how-to guide.

Community Leisure UK undertake work to increase staff, and especially LT managers', understanding of how they can increase the SV 'score' for their own facilities.

Community Leisure UK develop a simple web portal as set out in the appendix for use in longer term annual or similar reporting.



Appendix 1 - Short Copy Standalone Report

Milltown Leisure Social Value Report Jan-March 2020

Total Value Generated £1.6 million
Performance vs Benchmark +7%

Our city

12% more active than UK average
+10%



Our target wards

Furzedown, Manley, Chapelhill and
25% of members up 3%
38% of concessions up 5%
23 football bootcamps
First Furzedown Fun Run



Community organisations

143 community meetings
Joint events with:
All Ages Manley 7
Don't Fall Chapelhill 40

Vulnerable Groups

Falls Prevention - 85% course completion

Simple graphical report showing key statistics and their variance vs for example same period year ago or a national average or benchmark.

This could include a map of the relevant area with the wards marked and the density for example of membership or concessions highlighted.

This also offers an opportunity to show where outreach activities are taking place and how they are distributed. Icons could reflect the different types of activity or partners.

The page would be customised to fit the interests of the audience – for example if the LA is very concerned about the elderly residents this could be highlighted on the front page

Focus on Social Value Football Bootcamp

Where?

Furzedown Ground
and at Milltown FC

When?

Wednesday and
Thursdays 7:30

Who attends?

130 participants



What's the aim?

Improved physical and mental health after 10-12 weeks, including decreases in resting heart rate [Aston University]

Does it work?

35 people shed at least 5% of their body weight, totalling a massive 51 stone
25 people have taken out a gym membership

What's the social value?

Walking football can lead to higher scores on social connectedness/reducing social isolation
"Walking Football ...does have the potential to improve the health and vitality of elderly citizens and .. healthier citizens on average will spend fewer days in hospital and require fewer visits to their GP."
[Blanchardstown]

How do we calculate this financially?

What do they say?

"This has made me feel so much more a part of Milltown, I go out so much more and even volunteer with Age UK. It has transformed my life"



Subsequent pages could focus in on particular activities - in this example a football bootcamp.

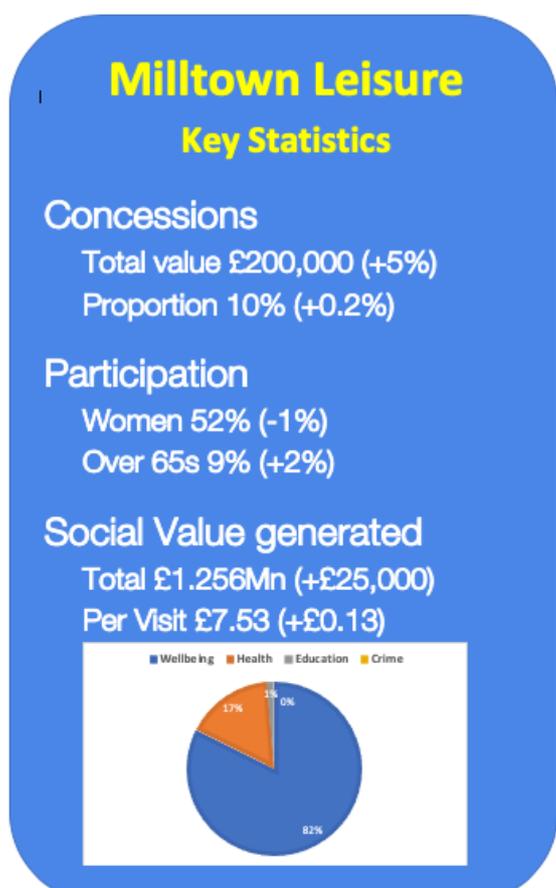
The idea here is to bring the activity to life by giving it a defined time and place – along with real feedback from participants.

This also provides an opportunity to communicate why the activity takes place and how this contributes to 'social value' - in the process making the SV concept, and especially the issue of 'subjective wellbeing', more relatable.

It is important to stress the objectives of the particular activity and, if possible, the achievement against these objectives.



Appendix 2 – Web Portal



A web portal template could be set up centrally by CL-UK allowing each organisation to tailor a version of it that best suited their needs.

At its heart it has a simple graphical mosaic, perhaps with icons or images for each of the buttons, which indicate an area of likely stakeholder interest. There could be a selection of say 20 from which say 12 could be chosen.

The user is then able to click on the buttons of greatest relevance and explore that content.

This could be included in, or referred to by, other LT communications – for example as a page on the LT website, to make it accessible to all including smartphone users.

The clickthrough provides more specific information – in this case on the statistics with the potential to click for further information.

For some subjects such as classes there may be limited local information, statistics and images. For these some standard copy describing the overall social benefit of the activity and images would be provided – perhaps from the activity partner e.g. Age UK or a respected body such as the Royal College of Nursing – which could act as the default



Appendix 3 – Presentation to LAs

We presented the results of our research to the pilot Leisure Trusts in this format and it led to a worthwhile discussion about each measure and its practicality and applicability.

A similar approach could potentially be taken with LA representatives to open up a robust discussion about SV, identifying together which measures are important to the LA and why this alignment of objectives and activities is key to the understanding, valuing and articulation of social value.

